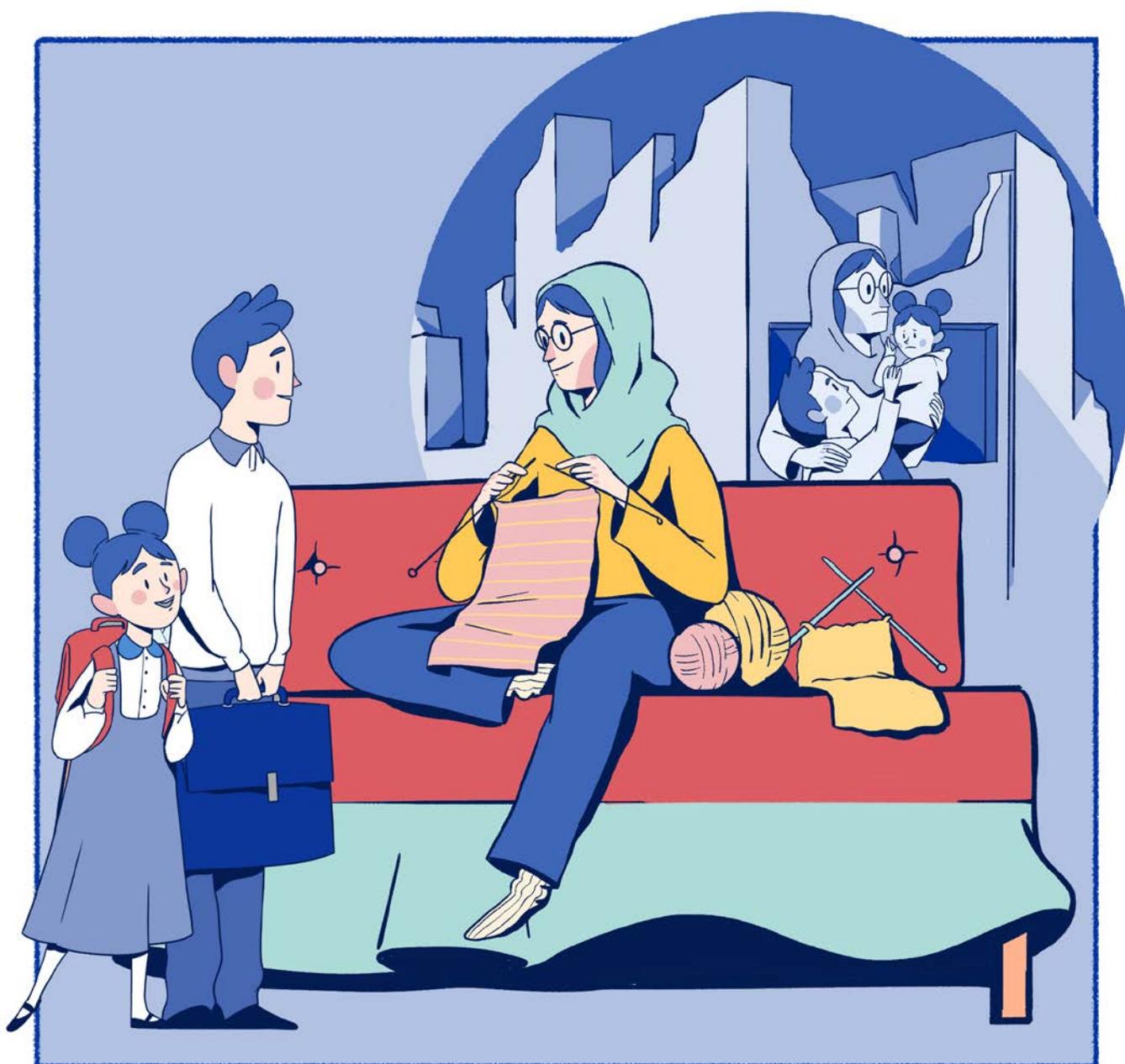


IOM IRAQ

# NEEDS ASSESSMENT: INTEGRATING MHPSS AND LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT IN IRAQ

ANBAR AND BASRA GOVERNORATES – DECEMBER 2020



The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

The opinions expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The information contained in this report is for general information purposes only. Names and boundaries do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

IOM Iraq endeavours to keep this information as accurate as possible but makes no claim – expressed or implied – on the completeness, accuracy and suitability of the information provided through this report.

For more information about IOM Iraq MHPSS programme, please contact Hatem Marzouk: [hmarzouk@iom.int](mailto:hmarzouk@iom.int)

International Organization for Migration  
Address: UNAMI Compound (Diwan 2), International Zone, Baghdad / Iraq  
Email: [iomiraq@iom.int](mailto:iomiraq@iom.int)  
Website: [iraq.iom.int](http://iraq.iom.int)

Report design and layout by We2 – [www.we2.co](http://www.we2.co)

© 2021 International Organization for Migration (IOM)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior written permission of the publisher.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Context	6
Objective and Methodology	6
Sample	7
People with a Disability	8
Demographics	9
Key Findings	11
1. MHPSS Services and Needs	12
2. Livelihood Opportunities, Interests and Challenges	13
3. The Concept of Integrating MHPSS and Livelihood Support	18
4. Relevant Integrated MHPSS and Livelihood Activities	21
5. Recommendations for Integrated MHPSS and Livelihood Support	29

## BASRA GOVERNORATE

Context	32
Objective and Methodology	32
Sample	33
Demographics	34
Key Findings	36
1. MHPSS Services and Needs	37
2. Livelihood Opportunities, Interests and Challenges	39
3. The Concept of Integrating MHPSS and Livelihood Support	44
4. Most Relevant Integrated MHPSS and Livelihood Activities	47
5. Recommendations for Integrated MHPSS and Livelihood Support	54



ANBAR  
GOVERNORATE

## CONTEXT

Integrated MHPSS and livelihood support programming considers the physical and emotional needs of persons affected by humanitarian crises, providing a more inclusive approach to response programming and holistically considering the physical, material and emotional needs of an affected population.

The heightened demand for MHPSS and livelihood support makes integrated programming timely and relevant in Iraq, especially as these needs have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This assessment was conducted to inform the integration of MHPSS and livelihood support in Anbar. Anbar is Iraq's largest and most sporadically populated governorate, located in the south. Anbar has a strong tribal structure and is the least diverse governorate in Iraq. The estimated total population in Anbar is 1.7 million people (2019), excluding Syrian refugees and Iraqi IDPs. Anbar has the highest poverty rate in Iraq and has experienced continuous and severe displacement waves for many years. In 2014, ISIL advanced into Anbar, quickly displacing over 1.2 million people.<sup>1</sup> The conflict demolished much of the governorate's infrastructure and crippled labour markets. In early 2019, Oxfam reported scarce livelihood opportunities, noting that obtaining work is especially difficult for IDPs and returnees.<sup>2</sup> Access to the affected population remains challenging, and needs continue to be severe. A

general lack of livelihood opportunities remains, while basic services, social cohesion and security are also limited.<sup>3</sup>

### DISPLACEMENT

Anbar currently hosts over 36,000 IDPs, with the central districts of displacement being Falluja, Ramadi and Al-Rutba. The primary governorates of origin are Anbar (72%) and Babylon (26%), and others (2%), including Salah al Din and Baghdad.<sup>4</sup> Most displacement families live with host families (43%) or in camps (27%).<sup>5</sup>

### RETURNS

IOM has designated Anbar as a main governorate of return. More than 1.4 million people have returned to Anbar, mainly to districts in Ramadi, Falluja and Heet. Most returnees were displaced within Anbar (43%) or fled to Baghdad (21%), Erbil (16%) and other locations, including Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyah, Babylon, Salah al Din, Kerbala, Ninewa and Diyala (20%).<sup>6</sup> Nearly all IDPs and returnees in Anbar are Arab Sunni.<sup>7</sup>

## OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The MHPSS and livelihood support integration needs assessment evaluates community perceptions regarding integrated MHPSS and livelihood support, as well as the most relevant types of integrated support.

This report specifically focuses on the findings of the assessment conducted in Anbar. The findings subsequently will

inform the design of integrated MHPSS and livelihood activities, scalable and contextualized for Anbar.

1 "Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment Report: Anbar and Ninawa Governorates." Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH), 2019, p. 7.  
 2 "Labor Market Assessment in Salah Al Din and Anbar Governorates." Oxfam International, February 2019. P. 4-5.  
 3 "Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment Report: Anbar and Ninawa Governorates." Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH), 2019, p. 7.  
 4 "Iraq Master List Report 117." IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (IOM DTM), July - August 2020, [http://iraqdtm.iom.int/images/MasterList/20201081929951\\_DTM\\_117\\_Report\\_July\\_August\\_2020.pdf](http://iraqdtm.iom.int/images/MasterList/20201081929951_DTM_117_Report_July_August_2020.pdf), p. 2.  
 5 "Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment Report: Anbar and Ninawa Governorates." Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH), 2019, p. 7.  
 6 "Iraq Master List Report 117," p. 5.  
 7 "Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment Report: Anbar and Ninawa Governorates." Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH), 2019, p. 7.

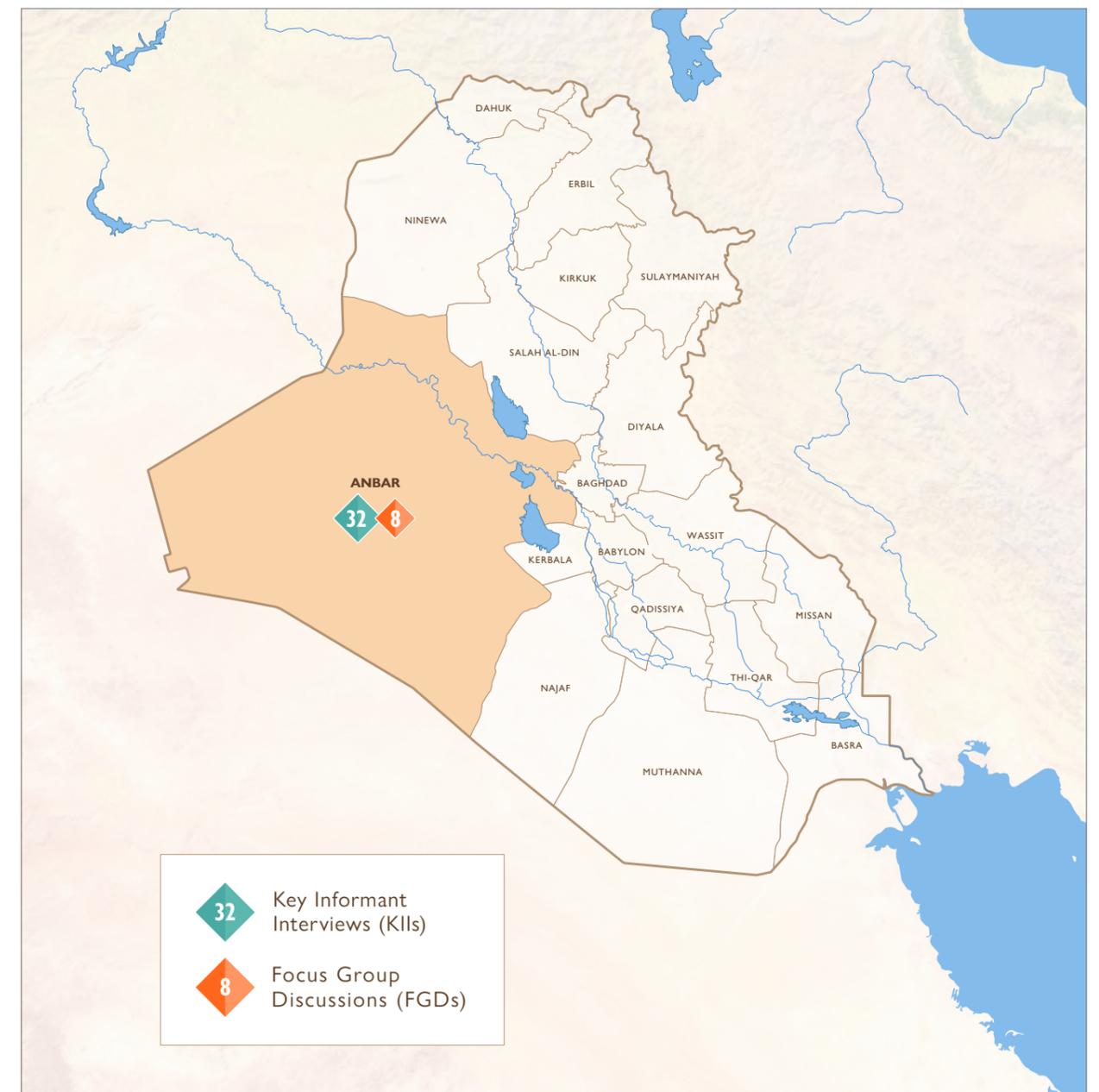
The assessment employed a semi-structured questionnaire designed by IOM Iraq. For mobile data collection, enumerators used the Kobo toolbox platform. The IOM MHPSS team conducted in-person key informant interviews (KIIs) and

focus group discussions (FGDs) in November 2020. IOM staff translated the collected data into English, and the evaluation was a combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

## SAMPLE

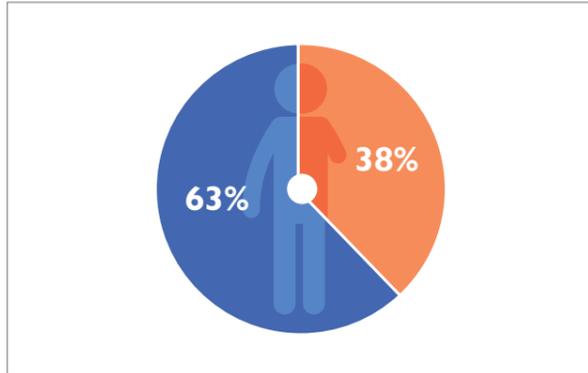
The sample population for the Anbar assessment consisted of 32 KIIs and 8 FGDs with adult women, adult men, female and male youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years. The

assessment took place in Falluja, nearly 70 kilometres west of Baghdad and Al Qaim, close to the Syrian border and around 400 kilometres northwest of Baghdad.

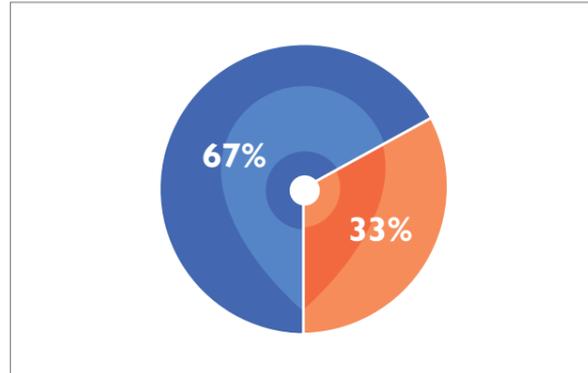


## PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

KIIs with People with Disabilities



KIIs Location: People with Disabilities



Among key informants, thirty-eight percent (38%) reported a disability using the Washington Group Questions. Table 1 outlines the total numbers related to the consulted key informants with disabilities.

In Falluja specifically, sixty-seven percent (67%) of key informants reported a disability, while in Al Qaim, thirty-three percent (33%) said to have a disability.

Table 1: Key Informants with Disabilities

VISION		HEARING		WALKING		REMEMBERING/CONCENTRATING		SELF-CARE		COMMUNICATION	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
13%	88%	9%	91%	13%	88%	3%	97%	6%	94%	0%	100%

Among the 8 FGDs conducted, 6 FGDs included one person with a disability. 1 FGD included three people with a disability, while another FGD had two people with a disability. The primary impairments included seeing difficulties and issues with walking.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (KIIs)

KII Interviews



The MHPSS team conducted 32 KIIs in Anbar, thirty-one percent (31%) with adult women, twenty-eight percent (28%) with adult men, twenty-two percent (22%) with male youth and nineteen percent (19%) with female youth.

Female Headed Households



Twenty-two percent (22%) of key informants reported to live in a female-headed household, while seventy-eight percent (78%) said that they do not live in a female-headed household.

KII Locations



Sixty-six percent (66%) of the interviews conducted in Anbar took place in Falluja, while thirty-four percent (34%) of the interviews were held in Al Qaim.

Employment Status



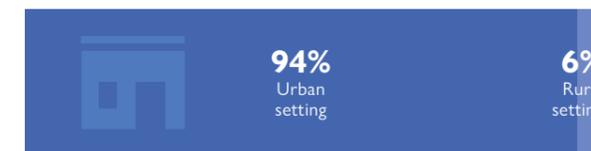
Regarding employment, forty-four percent (44%) of key informants reported being unemployed. Twenty-eight percent (28%) had paid work, while nine percent (9%) were self-employed. Another nineteen percent (19%) reported being students or housewives. Among female respondents, forty percent (40%) were unemployed, thirty percent (30%) had paid work and ten percent (10%) were self-employed. Among men, fifty-six percent (56%) said that they had paid employment, twenty-two percent (22%) were self-employed and another twenty-two percent (22%) reported unemployment.

Displacement



Out of the 32 key informants, ninety-seven percent (97%) were previously displaced. The remaining three percent (3%) have never been displaced. None of the people interviewed were displaced at the time of the interview.

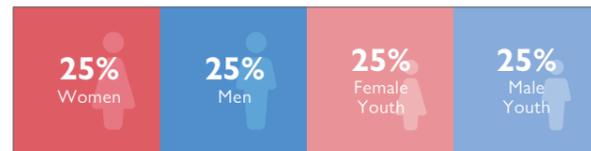
Housing



Ninety-four percent (94%) of key informants said that they are living in an urban setting; six percent (6%) noted to live in a rural setting.

## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)

## KIIs: Knowledge about MHPSS services



The MHPSS team conducted 8 FGDS in Anbar, including 2 FGDS with each group: adult women, adult men, male youth and female youth.

## FGD Locations



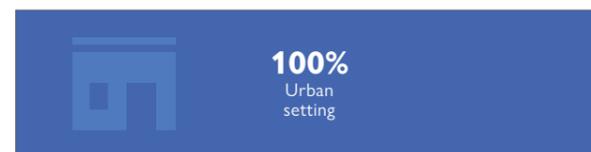
IOM's MHPSS team conducted the FGDS in Falluja and Al Qaim. 4 FGDS were held in each respective location.

## Displacement



Out of the 8 FGDS, 7 were held with returnees only and 1 FGD was held with returnees and host community members. Each FGD comprised of six to seven participants, including at least one person with a disability.

## Housing



All FGD participants reported to be living in an urban setting in Falluja or Al Qaim.



## KEY FINDINGS

To better understand community perceptions on integrated MHPSS and livelihood support<sup>8</sup> as well as current MHPSS and livelihood needs in Anbar, the needs assessment asked a set of related questions to key informants and focus group discussants. Below are the primary findings, which are discussed in further detail throughout this report.

## Perceptions about integrating MHPSS and livelihood support

- One hundred percent (100%) of key informants and 8 out of 8 FGDS reported that integrating MHPSS and livelihood support is a good idea.
- Ninety-four percent (94%) of key informants and 8 out of 8 FGDS said they are interested in integrated MHPSS and livelihood support programming.

## Perceptions of the relationship between emotional health and livelihoods

- Sixty-nine percent (69%) of key informants and 8 out of 8 FGDS indicated that a person's mental health well-being affects their ability to pursue or perform work.
- Ninety-one percent (91%) of respondents stated that psychosocial support could help them pursue and engage in work. In contrast, seventy-eight percent (78%) said that psychosocial support could increase focus at work.
- All 8 FGDS stressed that psychosocial support can help people pursue and engage in work and support people to focus better at work.

## Relevant Integrated Activities

**The most relevant integrated MHPSS activities in Anbar include:** MHPSS awareness sessions, life and other soft skills training, resilience support sessions, individual psychosocial counseling and recreational activities.

**The most relevant livelihood supports in Anbar include:** individual livelihood support, grants to start or re-start a business as well as vocational training and capacity building.

- According to KII and FGD results, the most relevant MHPSS activities to prepare someone for a livelihood project are life and other soft skills training, individual

psychosocial counseling and resilience support sessions. In areas with limited knowledge about MHPSS, awareness sessions are also relevant.

## MHPSS needs and Livelihood Interests

- Seventy-two percent (72%) of key informant respondents did not know about available MHPSS services in their area (100% in Al Qaim; 57% in Falluja).
- The main barriers to accessing MHPSS have been a lack of knowledge about available services and the long distance to services. Also, thirty percent (30%) of female respondents noted stigma as a main barrier to accessing MHPSS.
- The main barriers to accessing or engaging in livelihood opportunities include a lack of financial support, a lack of tools to start or continue a job or business, a lack of training and skills, the inability to find a suitable job and not being able to concentrate enough to engage in and sustain work.
- Livelihood interests and common employment sectors seem related in Anbar and include carpentry, trade, agriculture, livestock, sewing, tailoring and daily work.
- Among respondents, there is a common interest in individual livelihood projects (56% KIIs), and to a lesser extent, group projects (44% KIIs).
- There is a general preference to engage in livelihood projects that can be carried out from at home (63% KIIs).

The following sections provide further detail on these findings. The first section discusses MHPSS needs and services in Anbar. The second section looks at livelihood opportunities, interests and challenges. The third section outlines the community perceptions related to integrated MHPSS and livelihoods, and the fourth section presents relevant integrated activities for programming in Anbar. Recommendations for integrated programming are outlined at the end.

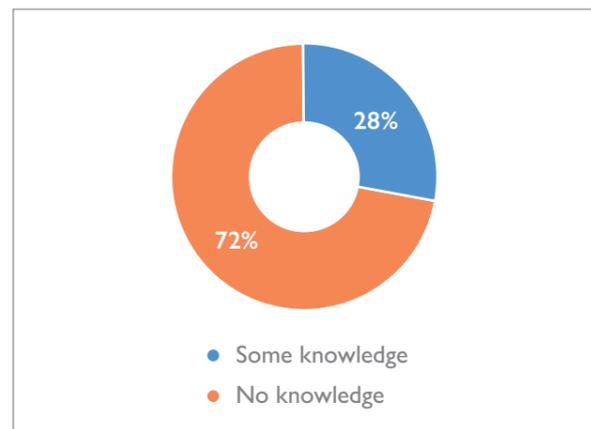
<sup>8</sup> The enumerators and discussion leaders shared and explained the following definitions of MHPSS and livelihood support to the assessment respondents. MHPSS: the term "mental health and psychosocial" relates to the emotional well-being of individuals, families and communities. Such support can help people positively deal with any issues or challenges that might arise as they engage in their work. Livelihood support: livelihood support aids people to engage in and maintain their work, which can be in different sectors and includes numerous activities, including individual support to start a business, financial support or livelihood training.

## 1. MHPSS SERVICES AND NEEDS

To understand the availability of MHPSS services in Anbar, the needs assessment posed a variety of questions on available services, knowledge about such services, general MHPSS needs and common barriers to accessing services.

### Available MHPSS Services

KIIs: Knowledge about MHPSS services



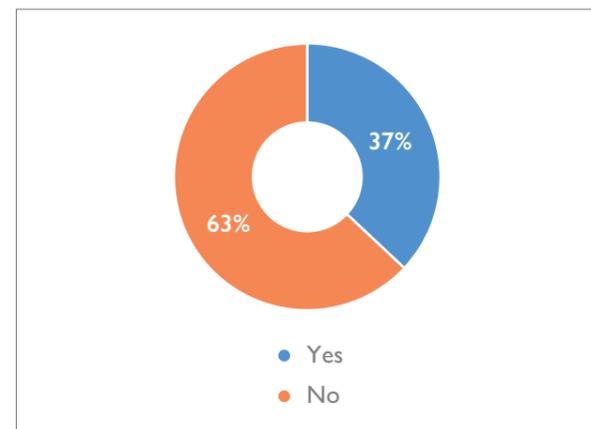
Seventy-two percent (72%) of key informants reported to not know of any MHPSS services. In Al Qaim, one-hundred percent (100%) said that they did not know about MHPSS services. In Falluja, the percentage was at fifty-seven (57%).

These results reflect the situation on the ground. No MHPSS service providers are currently operational in Al Qaim, whereas some case management services have been available in two primary health care centres in Falluja. Overall, MHPSS services for the affected population across Anbar remain limited.

### MHPSS Needs

When asked about the most needed MHPSS activities for the local community, key respondents noted individual psychosocial counseling (41%), peer-support groups (16%), MHPSS awareness sessions (13%) and life and other soft skills training (13%) as most relevant. In Al Qaim, MHPSS awareness sessions are especially important, given the limited knowledge about mental health and psychosocial support in that area.

FGDs: Are MHPSS services available?



The FGD results are similar. For example, 4 out of 4 FGDs conducted in Al Qaim reported no available MHPSS services. In Falluja, 3 out of 4 FGDs said that there are available MHPSS services.

According to KII and FGD findings, barriers to accessing services in Anbar include not knowing about available services and the long commute to available services. Additionally, thirty percent (30%) of female key informants noted stigma as a significant impediment as well as recent COVID-19 restrictions. To address these barriers, initial MHPSS awareness sessions and other services can be provided in closer proximity to the affected population. Online services are relevant if connectivity is not an issue. Online MHPSS support eases barriers related to stigma and the COVID-19 pandemic.

**FALLUJA**  
Individual counseling, peer-support, life and other soft skills training.

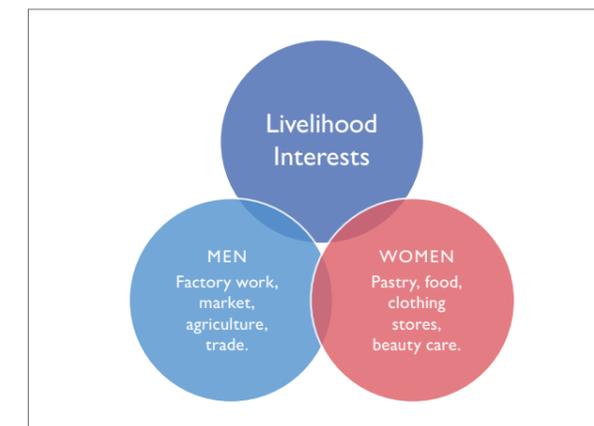
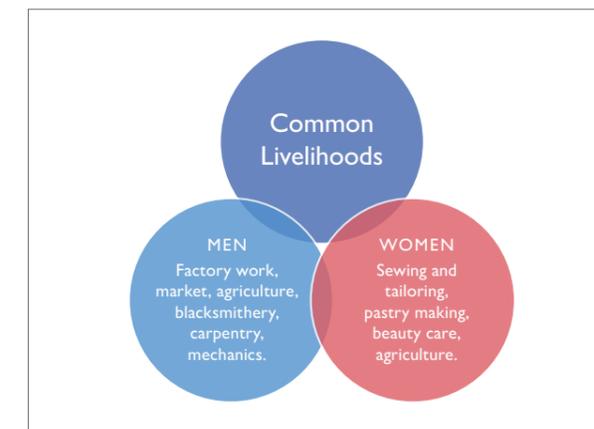
**AL QAIM**  
Individual counseling, MHPSS awareness, life and soft skills training.

## 2. LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES, INTERESTS AND CHALLENGES

This second section discusses employment opportunities, interests and challenges present in Anbar. IOM Iraq designed the needs assessment to better understand common employment opportunities and learn about the local community's livelihood interests. This section also notes barriers to employment and workplace challenges.

### Employment in Anbar

Assessment findings show that the most common employment opportunities in Anbar are sewing and tailoring (26%), running a shop/working at the market (13%) and factory/industry work (9%). Other livelihood opportunities mentioned include agriculture, baking, beauty care, agriculture, trade, construction, blacksmithing, mechanics, carpentry, running a clothing store, a beauty salon or an electronics shop.



### Livelihood interests in Anbar

For women and female youth who participated in the FGDs, work in baking, sewing, or running a small business such as a food store, a salon, a clothing store, or an in-home pastry shop was most relevant. The KII results were similar, showing that women were most interested in running a clothing store (50%), working in a beauty care (30%) or making and selling pastry (20%). Female youth also noted interest in pastry making and selling, beauty care and making and selling accessories (33%).

Among adult men, KII results show interest in running a market shop, including selling foods or agriculture materials (55%), working in carpentry (22%), trade, electricity or conducting factory work (11%). Youths were most interested in running shops (43%), working in electronics repair or the government sector (29%). Some male youths were interested in restaurant work (14%) or motorbike repair (14%).

Assessment findings show that employment opportunities and community interests generally align in Anbar. This allows for livelihood projects that can meet market demand and participant interest – the foundation of any successful livelihood intervention. An IOM labour market assessment conducted in Falluja (May 2020) noted that the main employment sectors are “industry, blacksmithing, groceries, carpentry, mechanics, trade-related businesses, livestock, and agriculture.”<sup>9</sup> According to the labour assessment, these jobs are of interest and desirable by the local community.

The labour market assessment also noted that businesses owned by women usually focus on “farming, livestock breeding and raising, tailoring, beauty salons, hairdressing, food preparation, and retail (clothing and cosmetics).”<sup>10</sup> Any integrated MHPSS and livelihood programme must ensure that a participant's livelihood interests are met and that the livelihoods pursued are in local market demand. To ensure this, further local analysis of markets in the area(s) of intervention are required to determine the type of livelihood support, especially given how localized livelihoods are.

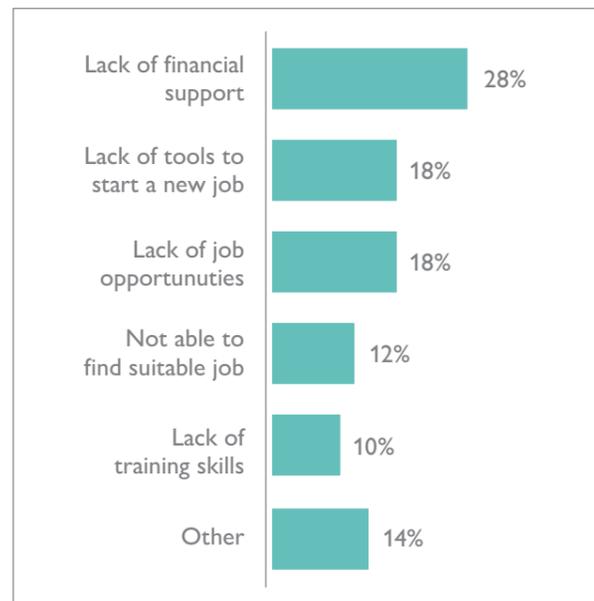
9 IOM Labour Market Assessment, “Labour Market Opportunities and Challenges.” Falluja District, Anbar Governorate, May 2020: <https://iraq.iom.int/files/Anbar%20Falluja%20Amiriya%20LMA.pdf>. P. 4.

10 Ibid, p. 4.

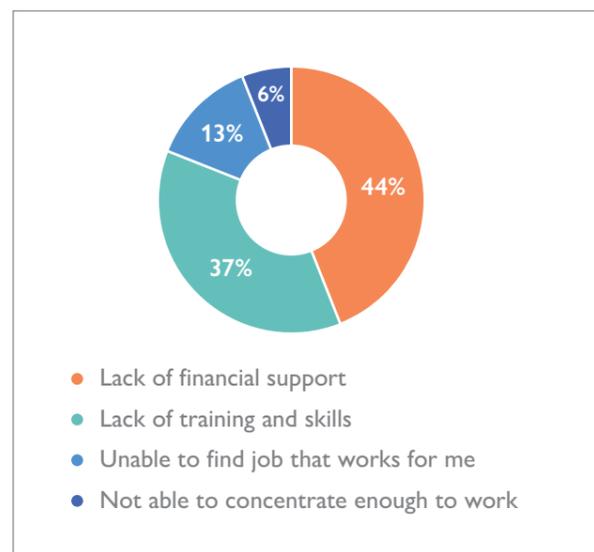
### Challenges to accessing livelihoods

There are five main challenges to accessing livelihoods in Anbar. The most prevalent challenge is the lack of financial support (28% KIIs; 8 FGDs) to start a business. A deficiency in training and skills (10% KIIs; 6 FGDs) and the inability to find a suitable job (12%; 2 FGDs=female youths, adult women) were also mentioned. In addition, 2 male adult FGDs noted the inability to concentrate enough to engage in work as a main challenge due to feeling distracted. Among the KIIs, some stressed the lack of tools to start or continue a job (18%) as a main challenge to accessing work, as well as a general lack of job opportunities (18%).

KIIs: Barriers to accessing livelihoods

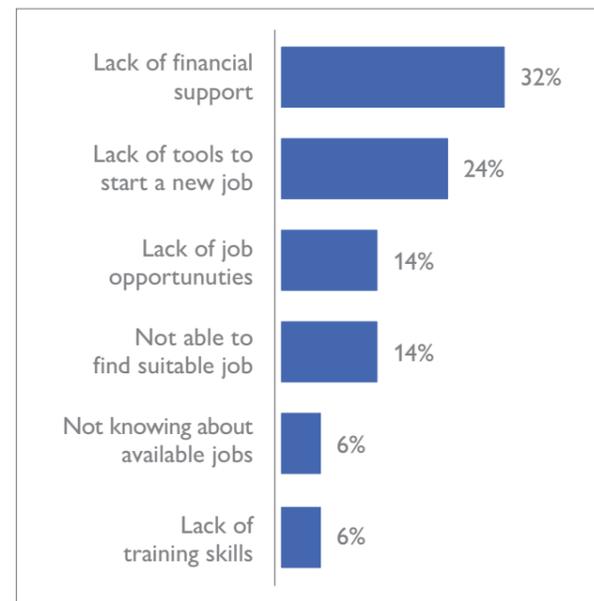


FGDs: Barriers to accessing livelihoods



The key informants with a disability noted comparable barriers to employment, including a lack of financial support to start a business (32%), a lack of tools (24%), a lack of job opportunities (14%), not being able to find a suitable job (14%), a lack of training and skills (6%) and not knowing about jobs (6%). Those who reported to not know about jobs were located in Al Qaim and noted that they do not hear of available job opportunities and think that they do not have a chance to find employment due to stigma. To ensure that people with disabilities are aware of available job opportunities, integrated programming can hold community awareness sessions to facilitate access to the integrated MHPSS and livelihood support programming for people with disabilities.

PwD: Barriers to accessing livelihoods



Integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming should consider the above-noted challenges and the potential need for financial assistance to cover commutes to work. Travel allowances might be especially relevant because employment opportunities are often located far away, which has been a barrier to accessing employment in Anbar.

### Challenges in current or previous jobs

To learn about common stressors and challenges at the work place, the needs assessment asked participants who currently or previously have worked about challenges at their job. The FGDs reported challenges including long working hours, low wages compared to long working hours, unpredictability, communication challenges, as well as issues with employers and a lack of fairness among employees.



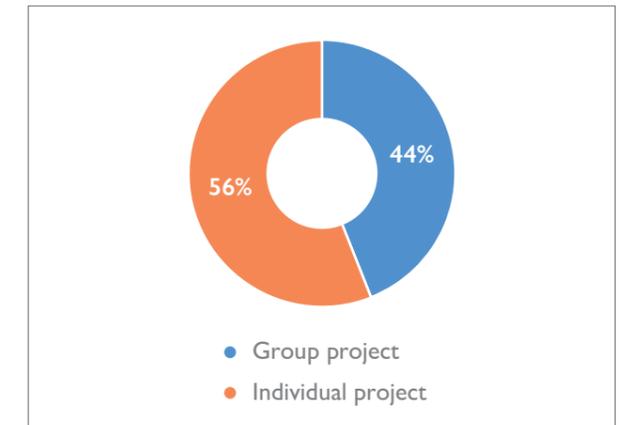
Similar to the FGDs, key informant women and female youth noted that the main challenges at work had been long working hours, strenuous work, poor treatment by managers and the difficulty of getting to work. Men and male youth reported long working hours and the fact that they are not allowed to take breaks as a main challenge, as well as receiving little pay and job insecurity. Pressure from employers and long commutes to work were also highlighted as challenges by men and male youth. Among key informants with disabilities, the primary challenges related to working have been difficult work tasks to carry out, long working hours, demanding managers and long commutes to the workplace.

Integrated MHPSS can be tailored to directly help participants address the most urgent workplace challenges (identified by programme participants). For example, life and other soft skills training or psychosocial counselling can offer coping mechanisms and relevant strategies to manage different stressors. MHPSS activities that focus on managing workplace stressors can prepare participants to feel more comfortable to address daily challenges. This will, in turn, will help make the livelihood opportunity more sustainable, promoting self-efficacy. Integrated MHPSS and livelihood support programming must be aware of the highlighted challenges and alleviate or mitigate such challenges through contextualised and localised programme planning and implementation.

### Group or Individual Livelihood Projects

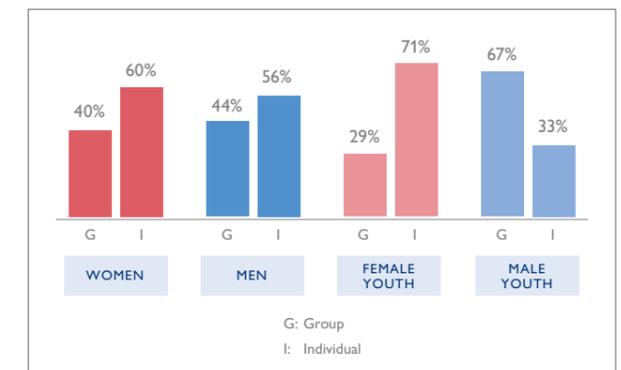
The needs assessment found that respondents slightly prefer individual livelihood projects to group projects. Among KII respondents, fifty-six percent (56%) reported that they prefer to work on individual livelihood projects.

KIIs: Do you prefer to work in a livelihood group or individual project?



When disaggregating the data by group, only female youth specified a higher interest in group livelihoods (67%), as seen in the below graph. Among people with disabilities, fifty-eight percent (58%) were interested in individual livelihoods, including all men. Women with disabilities were split on this question, with fifty-six percent (56%) preferring group projects and forty-four percent (44%) favouring individual projects.

KIIs: Gender and Type of Work



In contrast, among the FGDs in Anbar, there was a substantive preference for group livelihood projects among participants, as 7 out of 8 FGDs preferred engaging in group livelihoods (4=F, 3=M). Only one male FGD in Falluja favoured individual livelihoods.

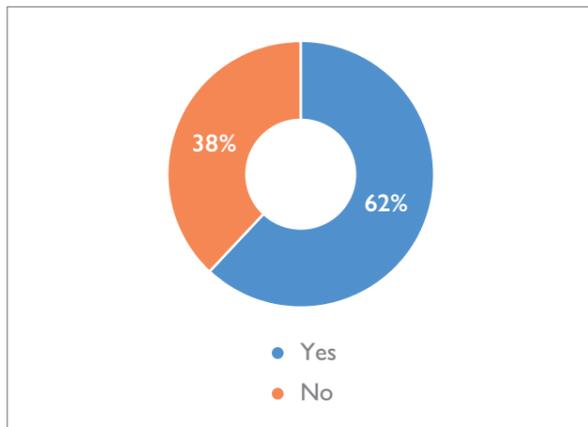
**RECOMMENDATION**

When planning for integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming, project staff should consult the local community and potential participants about their livelihood project preferences. In cases where group businesses are favoured and can be established (e.g., a baking project or group tailoring business), such initiatives should be supported. Group livelihoods provide the foundation for building critical social networks and a sense of community, which is imperative, especially for isolated people.

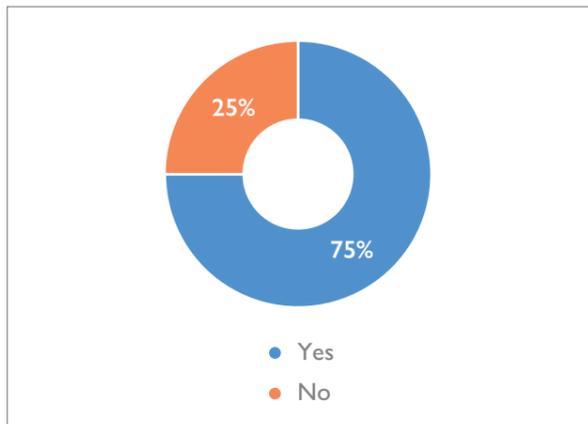
**Livelihoods from home**

In Anbar, according to the assessment, livelihoods that can be carried out from home are preferred (63% KIIs; 67% PwDs; 6 FGDs). Examples include running a bakery, a pastry shop, or a tailoring/clothing business from home.

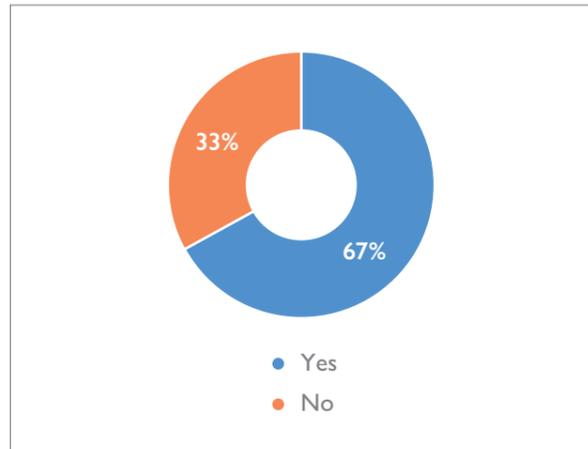
KIIs: Would you prefer to work from home?



FGDs: Would you prefer to work from home?



PwDs: Would you prefer to work from home?



While male KIIs were more interested in livelihoods outside of the home (56%=men; 71%=male youth), adult women were split on this question, with fifty percent (50%) saying that they would like to work from home. Among the FGDs, the result was more apparent, as all female FGDs favoured working from home. In Al Qaim, the FGDs preferred to work from home, while in Falluja, two male FGDs favoured working from outside the home.

**BENEFITS OF RUNNING A BUSINESS FROM HOME**

Many respondents noted child care and the ability to conduct necessary housework as the primary benefits of working from home. Safety and the inability to leave the house due to local customs, which primarily relate to women, were also mentioned. In addition, several respondents stressed the low cost of working from home as a critical benefit of at-home livelihoods, considering a general inability to rent an office or workspace in Anbar due to costs.

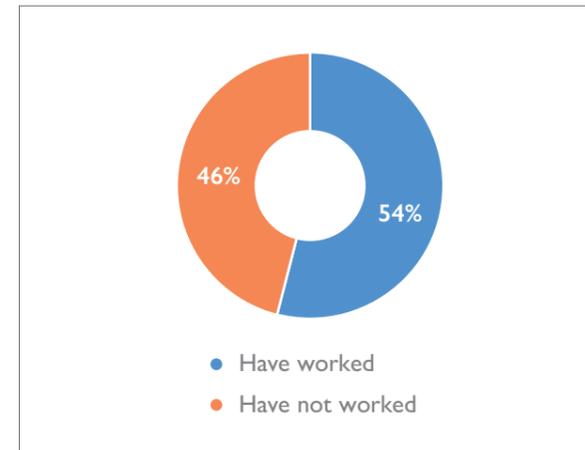
**RECOMMENDATION**

The varied findings highlight that project planning must consider individual preferences. Integrated MHPSS and livelihood support programming should accommodate livelihood projects that can be carried out from home, especially in cases where this is the preference of a participant or participant group.

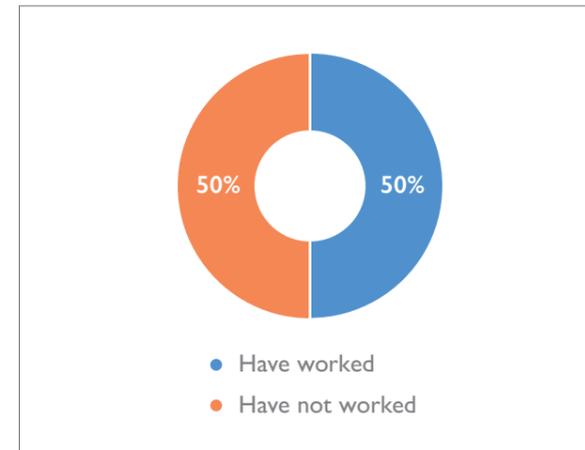
**Youth Employment and Experiences**

To better understand youth employment and livelihood experiences, the needs assessment asked separate questions to youth to learn about their employment and workplace experiences.

KIIs: Youth and Work



KIIs: Youth and Work



Among youth key informants, fifty-four percent (54%) have previously or are currently working (86%=male youth; 14%=female youth). Forty-six percent (46%) reported no work experience (83%=female youth; 17%=male youth). The most common types of employment noted were daily wage work, baking and teaching (1=F). Most youth reported to generally work before or after school hours. One youth woman said that she only began worked after completing her studies. Among the youth FGDs, two reported having work experience (2=Male youth FGDs, 1=Falluja; 1=Al Qaim), primarily working before or after school.

**CHALLENGES AT THE WORKPLACE:**

A key challenge noted by youth key informants includes issues with managers. One male youth noted that he has experienced exploitation at work by the employer who did not provide the needed work tools and requested long working hours. Another male youth reported that his relationships with work colleagues were positive, but that he has experienced issues with his manager who did not allow for sufficient rest time. Three other youths reported mistreatment by employers through long working hours and hostile yelling at work. These challenges are substantive, as such issues can decrease productivity and engagement, negatively affecting the employees.

Other noted challenges at the work place noted by youth include generally long work hours, little pay, tedious work with few breaks. Despite these challenges, various youth reported good relationships with peers and colleagues.

The youth FGDs noted unpredictable work appointments as a challenge, often being hired hourly and at an ad hoc basis. In addition, the youth FGD in Al Qaim pointed out that while the employment opportunities have provided them with useful experience and skills, the jobs have not lessened their financial burdens.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Youth in Falluja and Al Qaim, especially graduates, should be considered for integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming. Integrated programming can offer livelihood reflection sessions to provide mentorship and an opportunity for the youth to reflect on their work experiences and objectives. Integrated MHPSS can prepare youth to deal with difficult managers and employers constructively through resilience support and life and other soft skills training, including leadership skills. Peer-support groups are also relevant and can offer a safe space for the youth to share experiences and build a support network.

### 3. THE CONCEPT OF INTEGRATING MHPSS AND LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT

#### Is it feasible to integrate the two?

While the previous sections highlighted the relevance of MHPSS and livelihood support in Anbar, due to a persistent need for MHPSS and livelihood support, this section discusses community perceptions regarding integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming.

The assessment found that there is a wide interest in integrated MHPSS and livelihood support. One-hundred percent (100%) of key respondents and 8 out of 8 FGDs stated that incorporating MHPSS and livelihood support is a good idea.

FGDs: Integrating MHPSS and livelihood



KIIs: Integrating MHPSS and livelihood

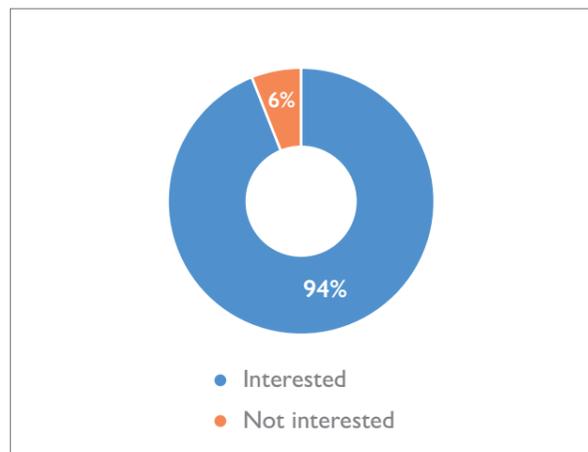


Respondents offered the following explanations as to why they believe that integrating MHPSS and livelihood support is a good idea:

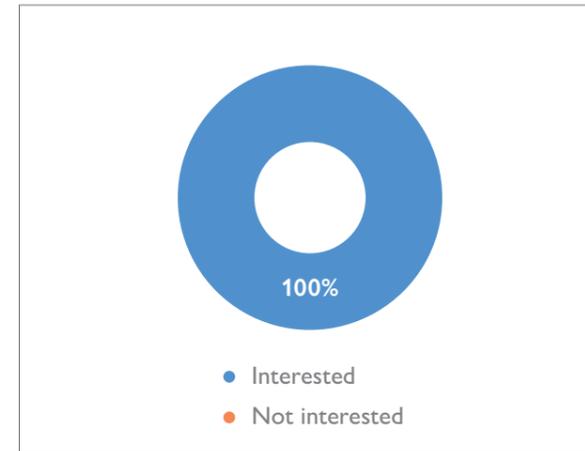
- Psychosocial support helps with motivation at work, male employee in Al Qaim
- Psychosocial support helps managing work difficulties, male employee in Falluja
- Psychosocial support helps with solving problems at work and it makes us more content at work, unemployed female adult in Falluja
- Psychosocial support helps us feel reassured and encouraged to give more effort at work, male youth in Falluja

In addition, ninety-four percent (94%) of key informants and 8 out of 8 FGDs said they are interested in integrated MHPSS and livelihood support programming. The six-percent (6%) of key informants who were not interested in integrated programming (3%=M; 3%=male youth) emphasised that they are not in need of psychosocial support because they do not have emotional issues. However, these key informants stressed that they believe combining the two supports is valuable for people in need of MHPSS.

KIIs: Interest in integrated MHPSS and livelihood



FGDs: Interest in integrated MHPSS and livelihood



#### WHAT RESPONDENTS SAID

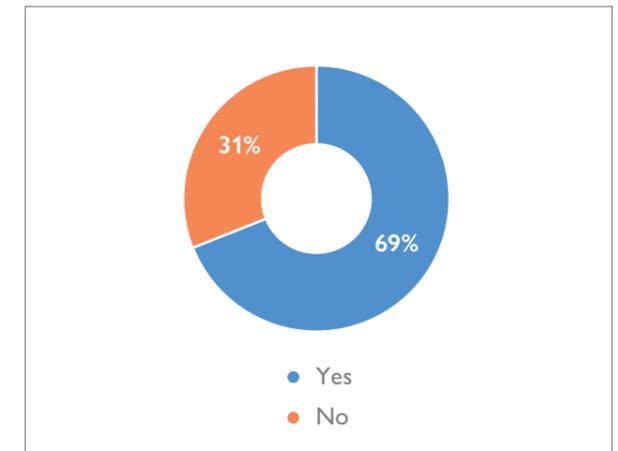
*When people suffer from psychological pressures, they are unable to be innovative at work and achieve results. This is why integrated programming attracts my interest. – Self-employed female from Al Qaim*

Survey respondents noted that they are interested in combined programming because it allows them to learn how to better manage stress and challenges at work, which will ultimately help them to better engage in their work and produce better results. The outlined findings show positive community perceptions and a common interest in integrated MHPSS and livelihood support programming in Anbar.

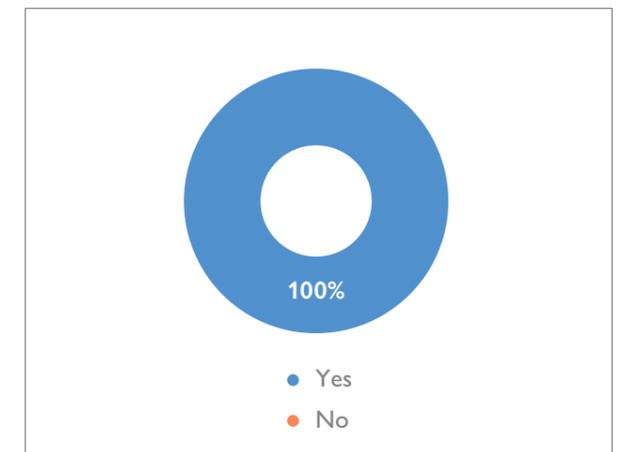
#### Mental health well-being and pursuing a work opportunity

The assessment was also eager to learn whether or not people believe that their emotional well-being affects their ability to pursue and perform work. Findings show that the majority of key informants (69%) and all FGDs said that emotional well-being affects a person's ability to pursue and perform work. All male key respondents (adult and youth) found that their mental health affects their ability to work, while among women key informants, forty percent (40%) thought so. These results are comparable with those from IOM's initial needs assessment on MHPSS and livelihood support integration conducted in the northern governorates.<sup>11</sup>

KIIs: Does your mental health well-being affect your ability to pursue and perform work?



FGDs: Does your mental health well-being affect your ability to pursue and perform work?



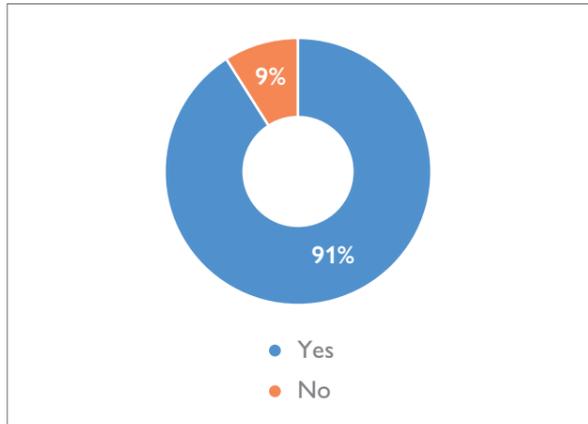
Among the sixty-nine percent (69%) of key informant respondents who answered that their emotional well-being affects their ability to pursue and perform work, some said:

- With better emotional health, I can focus better and get work done well, male adult
- Poor mental health causes stress and an inability to focus at work, male adults
- With poor mental health, there are difficulties performing daily tasks, adult women
- Stress causes tension at work, which has physical effects such as fatigue, male youths

<sup>11</sup> "Needs Assessment: Integrating MHPSS and Livelihood Support in Iraq: Duhok, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah Al-Din." IOM Iraq, November 2020.

The assessment also inquired about whether people think that psychosocial support activities can help them pursue and engage in work. The overall results were positive, with ninety-one percent (91%) of respondents saying that psychosocial support can help them pursuing and engaging in work. 8 out of 8 FGDs noted the same.

KIIs: Do you think that psychosocial support activities will help you pursue and engage in work?



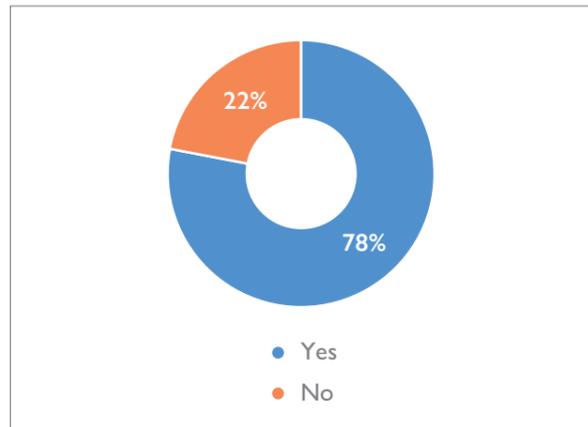
The nine percent (9%) of respondents who answered no to this question said that they are doing well at work and do not need further support. Those who noted that psychosocial support could help with pursuing and engaging in work said that...

- Psychosocial support will help me overcome all challenges at work, which will allow me to do better at work and manage difficulties, unemployed female adult in Al Qaim
- Psychosocial support will help me be free of pressures and deal better with other people, employed male adult in Al Qaim
- Problems and pressures at home or at work sometimes reduce my motivation to work. Psychological support will help me face and overcome these problems, self-employed male adult in Falluja

KII respondents also noted that psychosocial support can encourage people to be more productive and motivated to work. In addition, respondents remarked that people who receive integrated MHPSS would be able to manage work challenges more effectively and achieve better work results.

The FGD findings were comparable, noting that psychosocial support can help people to better manage challenges at work and increase self-confidence, especially among women. The FGDs also noted that psychosocial support could support people in learning how to build positive work relationships and managing different people.

KIIs: Do you think that psychosocial support activities will help you focus more at work?



When asked if respondents believe that psychosocial support can help them focus more at work, seventy-eight percent (78%) of key respondents and all FGDs said yes.

Increased motivation to work, heightened self-confidence, the ability to positively manage work challenges and build strong work relationships (e.g., with employers, colleagues or customers) as well as being able to better focus at work will ultimately promote sustainable livelihoods, emphasizing the positive impact integrated MHPSS can have on livelihood projects.

The findings outlined in this section make a strong case for integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming to increase participants' emotional well-being while providing a livelihood opportunity that they can effectively pursue. Only offering technical skills training for a livelihood project is often not enough. Social, life and other soft skills training are equally important for a livelihood programme's success, significantly building and strengthening a participant's self-efficacy.

The needs assessment results outlined in this section illustrate that people recognize that positive emotional well-being can help them pursue sustainable livelihoods. This is why integrated MHPSS and livelihood support is relevant, especially in contexts where mental health challenges prevail. Considering this, the following section looks at the most pertinent integrated MHPSS and livelihood activities in Anbar.

## 4. RELEVANT INTEGRATED MHPSS AND LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES

### WHAT SUPPORT PROGRAMMING IS MOST NEEDED?

A main objective of this needs assessment was to examine which integrated MHPSS or livelihood activities resonate most with community members. To explore this, the assessment inquired about the most relevant MHPSS activities for people who are about to start a livelihood project, people who are self-employed, business owners, unemployed people, people with severe MHPSS disorders and female-headed households. The results are outlined below.

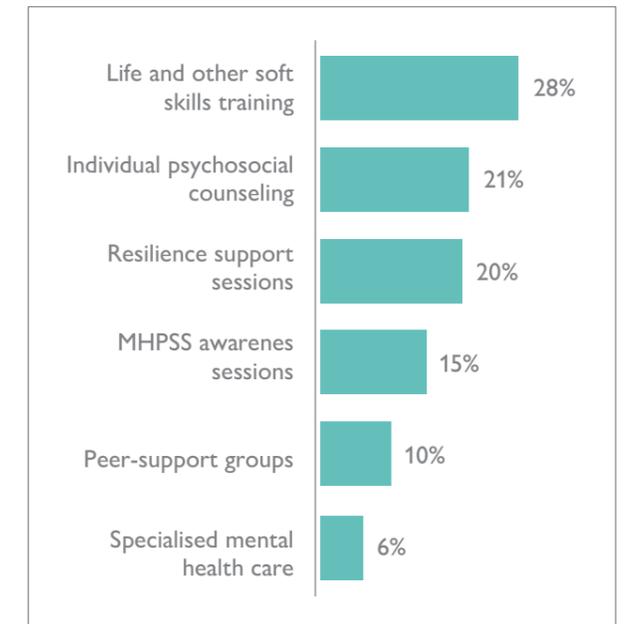
#### a. Relevant MHPSS activities to prepare people for a livelihoods project

*“ It is necessary to combine psychological support with work because when exposed to pressures, we cannot work, but with awareness and counselling sessions, we can overcome problems and we can work more easily. – Female youths in Falluja*

Survey respondents in Anbar noted that to be best prepared for a livelihood project; people require life and other soft skills training (28%), individual psychosocial support (21%) and resilience support sessions (20%). MHPSS awareness

sessions (15%) and peer-support groups were mentioned to a slightly lesser extent, as seen in the graph below. An interesting finding was that peer-support sessions seemed less relevant in Anbar. In needs assessments conducted in Duhok, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah Al-Din, peer-support was among the most demanded MHPSS activities. In Anbar, however, only ten percent (10%) of the assessed men and seven percent (7%) of the women found that peer-support groups would be relevant to prepare a person for a livelihoods project.

KIIs: Most relevant MHPSS to prepare people for a livelihoods project



Among men, life and other soft skills training (23%), psychosocial counseling (19%), MHPSS awareness sessions (19%) and resilience support (16%) were noted as most relevant supports. Women respondents had similar views and found life and other soft skills training (32%) to be the most relevant MHPSS activity, followed by resilience support (25%), psychosocial counseling (21%) and MHPSS awareness sessions (14%).

While people with disabilities noted similar relevant supports overall, including life and other soft skills training (26%), they also found that recreational activities (18%) would be useful in supporting people who are about to begin a livelihood project.



PwD: Most useful MHPSS to engage in work



The FGD results were comparable to the KII findings. However, MHPSS awareness sessions were more relevant to the FGDs (7 out of 8 FGDs) as compared to the KIIs. In addition, FGDs found life and other soft skills training (6 FGDs) and resilience support sessions (5 FGDs) to be most valuable. Individual psychosocial counseling ranked considerably lower among FGDs (4 FGDs) when compared with the KIIs (21%).

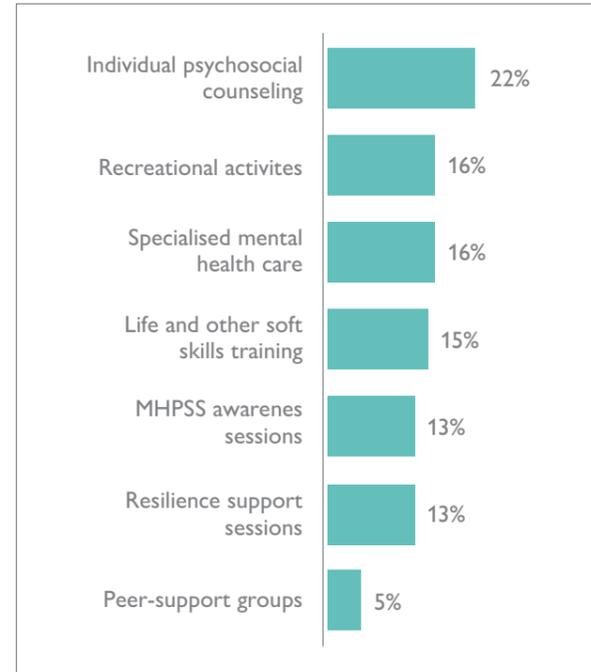
In addition to the above, both the KIIs and FGDs stressed the importance of encouraging people regarding finding and engaging in employment, as well as providing strategies to problem-solve at work (19%), stress management (9%) and resilience building (9%).

**RECOMMENDATION**

Life and other soft skills training, individual psychosocial counselling, resilience support sessions (especially for women) are the most relevant MHPSS activities to prepare someone for a livelihood opportunity. In communities with limited MHPSS knowledge, awareness sessions can also be integrated at the start of a programme. Based on KII and FGD responses, integrated MHPSS activities should focus on encouragement, problem-solving, stress management and resilience building.

**b. Relevant MHPSS activities to encourage people with severe mental health disorders to work or start a business**

KIIs: Opinion on supports needed for people with severe mental health disorders to work or start a business



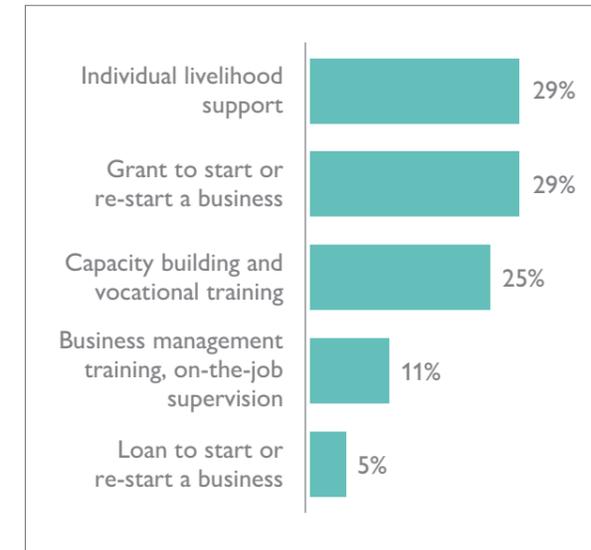
The needs assessment found that individual psychosocial counseling would be the most relevant support (22% KIIs, 8 FGDs) to encourage people who suffer from stress, anxiety and more severe mental health disorders to take up work. Other relevant MHPSS activities, according to KII and FGD findings, include specialised mental health care and recreational activities (16%). Life and other soft skills training were slightly less relevant (15% KIIs, 3 FGDs).

**RECOMMENDATION**

Integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming targeting people with severe MHPSS disorders should focus on supporting these individuals to be ready to engage in work. Relevant integrated MHPSS for people with severe MHPSS disorders include individual psychosocial counseling, recreational activities, life and other soft skills training, as well as referrals to specialised health care when required. In some cases, recreational activities can be provided in a group format to generate a sense of belonging and allow participants to share experiences and learn from one another.

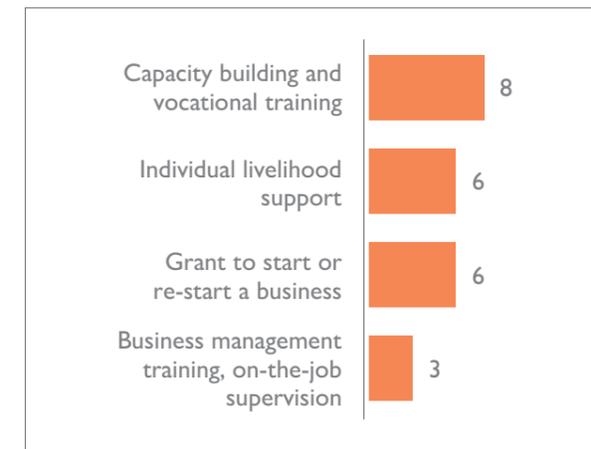
**c. Relevant livelihood opportunities for people who require increased MHPSS**

KIIs: Most relevant livelihood opportunities for people who require emotional support



According to key informants, people in need of increased emotional support benefit most from livelihood opportunities such as individual livelihood projects (29%), grants (29%) and vocational training (25%). Among male and female respondents, individual livelihood support, the provision of grants and vocational training were equally important. The FGD results were comparable. Out of 8 FGDs, 8 noted the need for vocational training, 6 noted the need for individual livelihood support and grants.

KIIs: Most relevant livelihood opportunities for people who require emotional support



Individual livelihood support or the provision of grants seem to be the most relevant livelihood supports for people with mental health disorders. However, such livelihood projects can come with an increased number of psychosocial stressors. If an integrated programme provides a grant or individual livelihood support as the primary livelihood intervention, the project should comprehensively integrate MHPSS to prevent or alleviate stressors that can arise, support participants in managing stressors and enabling them to successfully build and maintain their livelihoods in the long-term.

When inquiring about livelihood supports, the assessment also found that skills-building remains a significant need in Anbar (8 FGDs; 34% KIIs). A joint MHPSS and livelihood project can focus on directly integrating sessions that focus on skills building, tailored to the exact skills required by participants to successfully carry out their livelihoods.

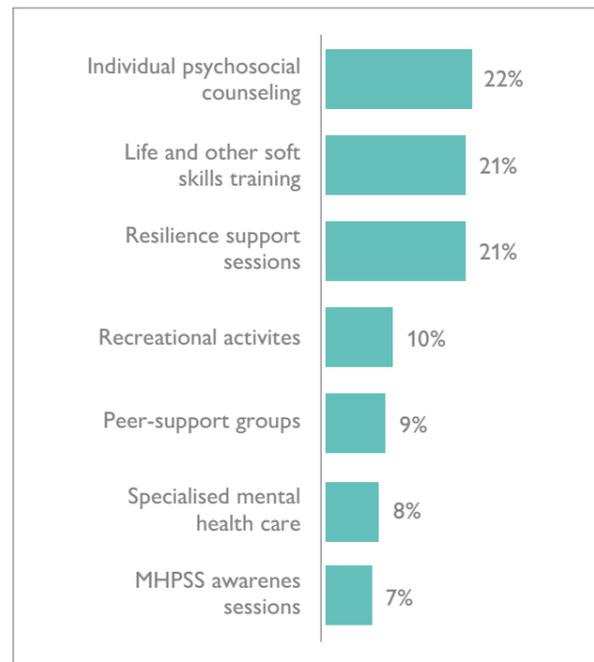
**RECOMMENDATION**

Considering the results of 3c., relevant integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming in Anbar can include individual livelihood support, the provision of grants or vocational training. Such livelihood interventions should be combined with, as according to the results of 3a. and 3b., individual psychosocial counseling, life and other soft skills training and MHPSS awareness sessions. According to 3.b, recreational activities can also be integrated, especially at a later stage of the project. Additionally, referrals to specialised mental health care services must be available throughout.

**d. Relevant MHPSS for business owners or persons who are self-employed**

The assessment asked one question about the most important kind of MHPSS for a business owner or a person who is self-employed. Twenty-two percent (22%) of key informants noted that individual psychosocial counseling would be most relevant, followed by life and other soft skills training (21%) and resilience support sessions (21%). Key informants further noted that it is essential to support business owners in dealing with pressure and managing employees respectfully. FGD respondents had similar views regarding the most relevant services, as highlighted in the graph below.

KIIs: Most relevant MHPSS activities for business owners and people who are self-employed



Out of the 4 male FGDs (adult and youth), resilience support sessions were most relevant (4), followed by individual counseling (3), MHPSS awareness sessions (2), life and other soft skills training (2) and peer-support groups (2). The 4 female FGDs (adult and youth) found individual counseling sessions (4) most valuable, followed by resilience support sessions (3) and life and other soft skills training (2).

FGDs: Most relevant MHPSS for business owners or people who are self-employed



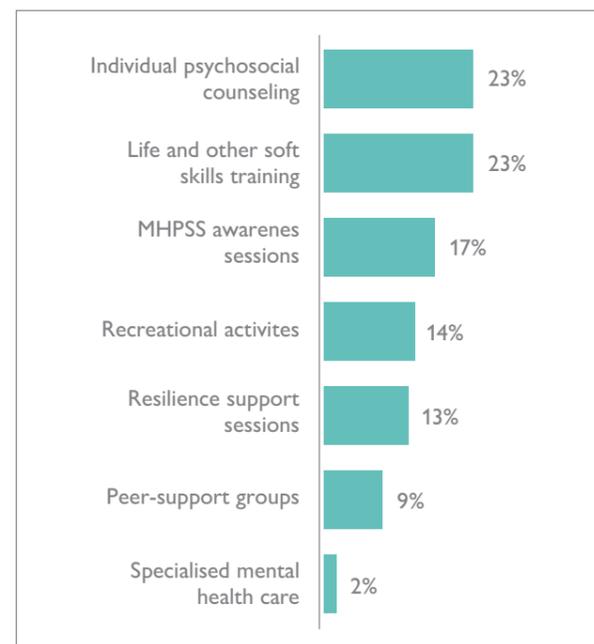
**RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the assessment, business owners and people who are self-employed, including those who are developing or running start-up businesses, are most effectively supported through integrated MHPSS and livelihood support that includes individual psychosocial counseling, resilience support and life and other soft skills training. To promote the sustainability of livelihood projects, peer-support groups and recreational activities can also be an effective part of integrated programming, bringing together different business owners to exchange experiences and learn from one another, building a robust social network and an increased sense of community.

**e. Relevant MHPSS activities for people who are unemployed**

For unemployed people, psychosocial counseling (23% KIIs; 7 FGDs) and life or other soft skills training (23% KIIs; 3 FGDs) were reported to be the most relevant MHPSS activities in Anbar. Both adult male FGDs in Anbar stated that individual psychosocial support would be most essential. Other relevant MHPSS services for people without a job included awareness sessions (17% KIIs; 5 FGDs), recreational activities (14% KIIs; 6 FGDs), resilience support sessions (13%), and peer-support groups (10%).

KIIs: Most relevant MHPSS activities or people who are unemployed



**RECOMMENDATION**

Integrated programming targeting unemployed people should focus on providing individual psychosocial counseling, recreational activities and life and other soft skills training. Peer-support groups and resilience support sessions might also be relevant, especially when such supports address anxiety, confidence building and managing responsibilities, as emphasized as a need by some FGD respondents. MHPSS awareness sessions can be employed as introductory sessions to familiarise participant with MHPSS concepts, encouraging them to take advantage of the other integrated MHPSS activities.

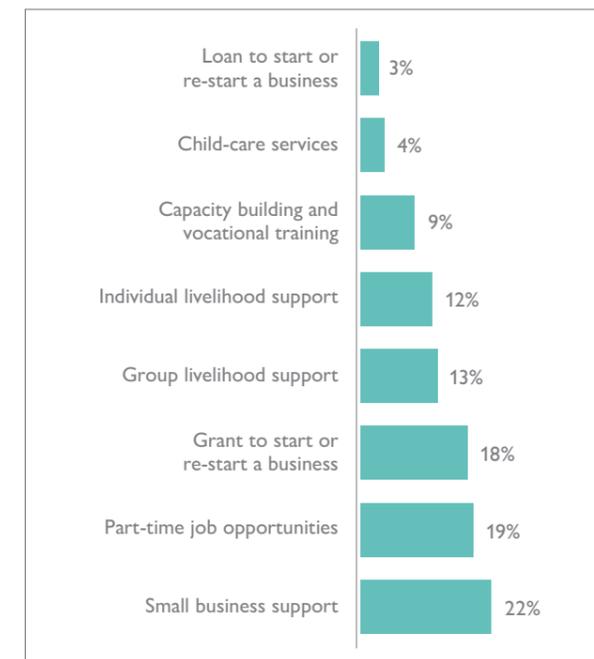
**RELEVANT MHPSS AND LIVELIHOODS FOR FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS**

To better understand the relevant MHPSS and livelihood needs and supports for women in female-headed households, the assessment asked one question about relevant livelihood support and one question about the most relevant MHPSS activities that can encourage and empower women from female-headed households to engage in work.

**a. Relevant livelihood support for female-headed households**

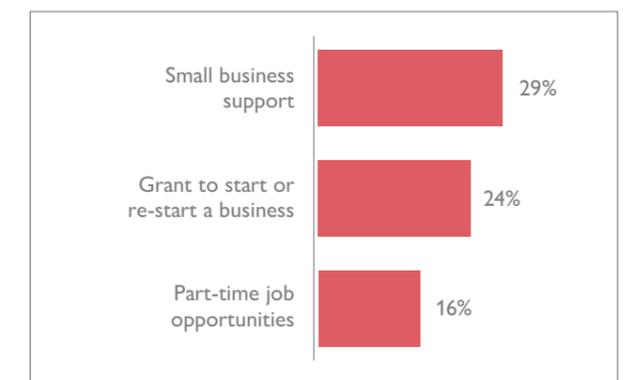
When asked about the most relevant supports for women to engage in livelihoods in female-headed households, twenty-two percent (22%) of key respondents in Anbar noted small business support (22%), part-time job opportunities (19%), the provision of grants (18%), group livelihood support (13%) and individual livelihood support (12%). Less frequently mentioned were vocational training and capacity building, child-care services and the provision of loans.

KIIs: Most relevant MHPSS activities or people who are unemployed

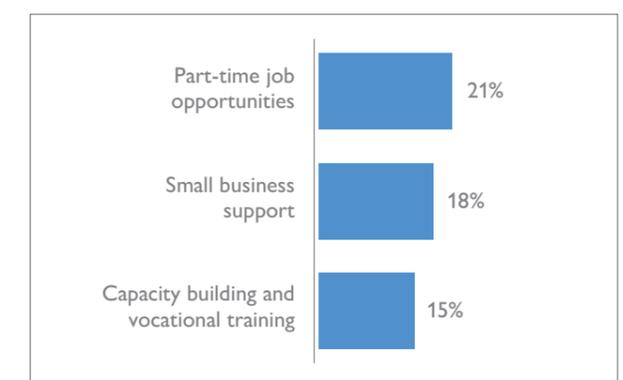


Adult women and female youth respondents found small business support most essential (29%), while male respondents thought part-time job opportunities would be especially relevant (21%). According to respondents, part-time job opportunities are especially useful as they allow women enough time to engage in childcare, housework and their livelihoods.

Women and Female Youth

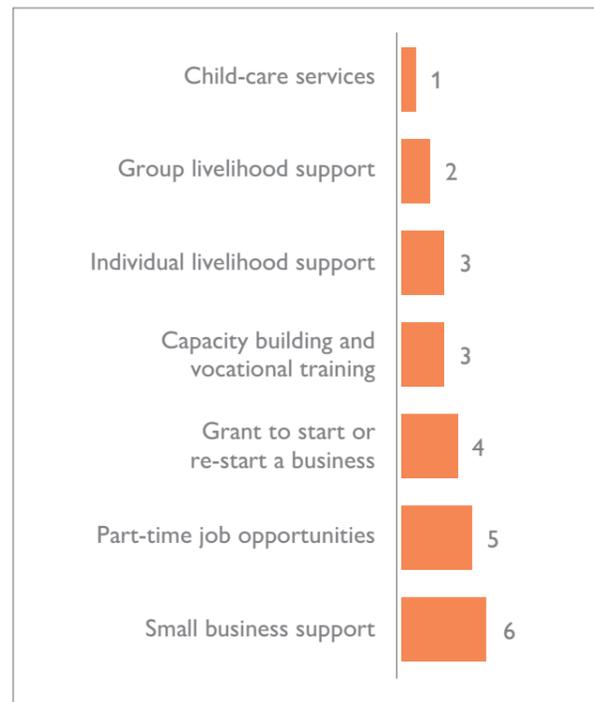


Men and Male Youth

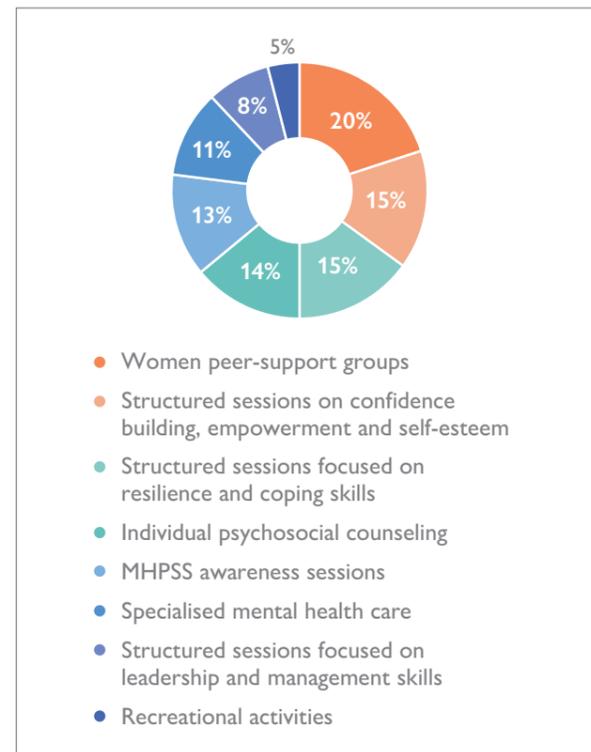


The FGDs produced similar results, with small business support (6 out of 8), part-time job opportunities (5 out of 8) and the provision of grants (4 out of 8) being the most relevant supports for female-headed households. Additionally, 3 out of 4 female FGDs noted that individual livelihood support would also be relevant.

FGDs: Most relevant livelihood support for women in female-headed households



KIIs: Most relevant MHPSS activities or support women in female-headed households to engage in work

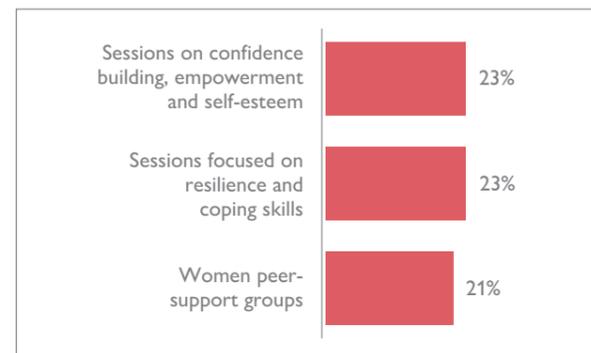


According to male youth in Al Qaim, there are multiple families headed by women who are able to work. To ensure that those women engage in work, one adult male FGD in Falluja mentioned the need to provide more encouragement to women in female-headed households in regards to livelihoods and employment. IOM's recent labour market assessment conducted in Falluja noted that it is essential to target female-headed households in Anbar with livelihood interventions.<sup>12</sup>

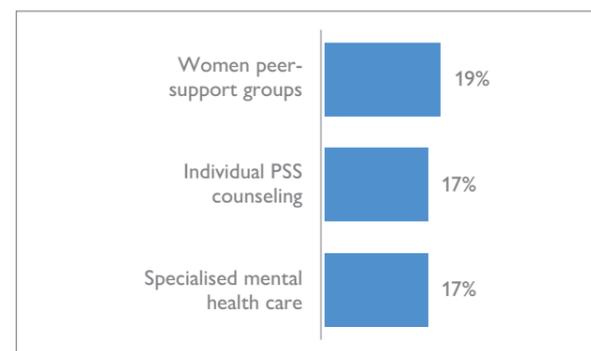
**b. Relevant MHPSS for female-headed households**

The most relevant MHPSS activities to encourage women in female-headed households to engage in work include women peer-support groups (20%), structured sessions focused on confidence building, empowerment and self-esteem (15%), structured sessions focused on resilience and coping skills (15%), individual psychosocial counseling (14%) and MHPSS awareness sessions (13%).

Women and Female Youth



Men and Male Youth



**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING TARGETING FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS**

Female-headed households are among the most vulnerable in Iraq and are an important target group for integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming. Integrated programming for female-headed households in Anbar can focus on providing small business support and part-time job opportunities. Where appropriate, grants for projects should be offered, for individual or group livelihood projects. In addition to the outlined livelihood support, it is essential to provide a variety of MHPSS activities, including individual psychosocial counseling or sessions that focus on confidence building, empowerment, self-esteem, resilience and coping skills. As noted in other parts of this report, MHPSS awareness sessions can be delivered at the beginning of a project to familiarise participants with MHPSS and the other available services. Throughout project implementation, women peer-support groups can be facilitated. Such groups promote a sense of belonging and ensure that the women build a social support network, creating a safe space to share experiences and learn from one another.



<sup>12</sup> IOM Labour Market Assessment, Falluja 2020, p. 5.

## INTEGRATING MHPSS ACTIVITIES INTO LIVELIHOOD INTERVENTIONS

As a final step, the needs assessment asked the FGDs participants to select a variety of MHPSS activities, which they consider most appropriate to be integrated with four types of livelihood interventions. Across the different

livelihood interventions, integrated life and other soft skills training, individual psychosocial counseling and resilience support sessions seemed most relevant. For a list of the overall findings, see Table 2.

Table 2. Relevant MHPSS activities to be integrated with specific livelihood interventions

TYPE OF LIVELIHOOD	MHPSS ACTIVITY
Individual livelihood support (to help start a new business based on skills and experience), vocational training, job placement, skills training, on the job training, start-up or business expansion packages	Individual psychosocial counseling (6)
	Life and other soft skills training (5)
	Resilience support sessions (4)
	Peer-support groups (1) Specialized mental health care (0)
Financial support for small and medium-sized businesses to help them grow.	Life skills or other soft skills training (4)
	Individual psychosocial counseling (3)
	Resilience support sessions (3)
	Peer-support groups (3) Specialized mental health care (1)
Provision of grants or materials provided to support group business.	Life skills or other soft skills training (6)
	Individual psychosocial counseling (5)
	Resilience support sessions (3)
	Peer-support groups (3) Specialized mental health care (0)
Job referrals to available livelihood opportunities	Individual psychosocial counseling (4)
	Peer-support groups (4)
	Life and other soft skills training (3)
	Resilience support sessions (3) Specialized mental health care (0)

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The relevant activities for integrated MHPSS and livelihood support are the actual livelihood activity (e.g., individual livelihood support, financial support, vocational training) combined with individual psychosocial counseling, life and other soft skills training and resilience support sessions. When relevant, peer-support groups can also be an effective way of strengthening overall resilience and a sense of belonging, which can be imperative for people engaged in new livelihoods.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTEGRATED MHPSS AND LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT

- To ensure sustainability and positive livelihood outcomes, elements of MHPSS should accompany any livelihood intervention to improve participants' self-efficacy. Integrated MHPSS helps ensure that participants are well-equipped to take full advantage of their livelihood opportunity.
- Combined livelihood and MHPSS programming in Anbar can include a variety of the following activities:
  - MHPSS awareness sessions
  - Life and other soft skills training
  - Individual psychosocial counseling
  - Resilience support sessions
  - Integrated recreational activities (especially when working with people who suffer from severe stress or anxiety and unemployed people)
- Female-headed households in Anbar are best supported through a variety of livelihood and MHPSS activities. Small business support can be a relevant livelihood project, which for example could help women create a tailoring business or clothing store that can be managed from at home. Part-time job opportunities or individual grants can also be useful ways to support female-headed households. The most relevant MHPSS for such families includes women peer-support groups, sessions on confidence building, empowerment and self-esteem, structured sessions focused on resilience and coping skills and individual counseling.
- Combined MHPSS and livelihood programming should directly address work-related stressors, including how to manage long working hours, the unpredictability of employment and job insecurity, as well as challenges with employers or customers.
- The livelihood component offered should consider a participant's preference to work from home. For example, women in Anbar often prefer working from home due to local customs and to simultaneously engage in housework and child care. Child care in itself could also make interesting livelihood opportunities.
- Group livelihoods should be supported when possible and when there is interest. Group projects can be carried out from home and are effective in developing social support networks, strengthening resilience, and a sense of belonging.
- Integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming should employ a far-reaching awareness campaign to inform people, including those most vulnerable (e.g., female-headed households or people with disabilities) in remote locations, about the programme. In Anbar specifically, female-headed households, people with disabilities, youth, graduates, unskilled workers, IDPs and returnees should be encouraged to participate in integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming.
- Integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming in Anbar should organize activities in accessible locations. Where this is not possible, programme staff should consider organizing transport to the training sessions and MHPSS activities or provide a travel allowance. This is significant, as the long distance to services has been a primary barrier to accessing livelihood or MHPSS services in Anbar.

These activities support participants in taking full advantage of livelihood opportunities, enabling them to successfully and sustainably carry out their work. Based on the local context, integrated activities must be adjusted to fit participant needs.



BASRA  
GOVERNORATE

## CONTEXT

Integrated MHPSS and livelihood support projects consider both the physical and emotional needs of persons affected by humanitarian crises, providing a more inclusive approach to response programming and holistically considering the physical, material and emotional needs of an affected population.

The heightened demand for MHPSS and livelihood support in Iraq makes integrated programming timely and relevant, especially as these needs have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic and are expected to remain constant in a post-COVID-19 context.

IOM Iraq conducted the here presented needs assessment to inform the merging of MHPSS and livelihood support programming in Basra governorate. Basra is located in southern Iraq, bordering Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to the south and Iran to the east. Security concerns remain widespread, and serious infrastructure needs prevail. High infrastructure needs, unemployment and growing poverty have recently

led to unrest.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Basra is severely affected by a water shortage and crisis, which has negatively impacted the governorate's agriculture and livestock sectors.<sup>14</sup>

### DISPLACEMENT

Basra hosts over 6,000 IDPs, with the main districts of displacement being Basra, Al-Zubair and Abu al-Khaseeb. The governorates of origin of the IDPs in Basra are Salah Al Din (33%), Ninewa (30%), Anbar (20%), Kirkuk (10%) and others, including Diyala, Baghdad and Babylon (7%).<sup>15</sup> No returns have been recorded in Basra.<sup>16</sup>

## OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

This assessment evaluates what types of integrated MHPSS and livelihood support initiatives are most desirable and relevant in Basra. The assessment provides insight into community perceptions related to integrated programming and whether the affected population is interested in integrated MHPSS and livelihood support.

The assessment findings will subsequently inform the design of integrated MHPSS and livelihood activities that are scalable and contextualised for Basra.

The assessment employed a semi-structured questionnaire designed by IOM Iraq. IOM's MHPSS team conducted the data collection for two weeks in November 2020, using the Kobo toolbox platform for mobile data collection. All

interviewees and discussants participated voluntarily and gave their consent before the assessment. IOM staff translated all data into English, and the evaluation was a combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

<sup>13</sup> "Labor Market Opportunities and Challenges – Basra District, Basra Governorate," IOM Iraq, April 2019, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> "Livelihood and Market Assessment -- Basra Iraq." Norwegian Refugee Council, October 2018. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Basra%20Livelihoods%20Technical%20Assessment%20FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> "Iraq Master List Report 117," p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> IOM Iraq. Displacement Tracking Matrix, accessed on 29 October, 2020, <http://iraqdtm.iom.int>.

## SAMPLE

The sample population for this assessment consisted of 29 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and 19 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), conducted with adult women, adult men,

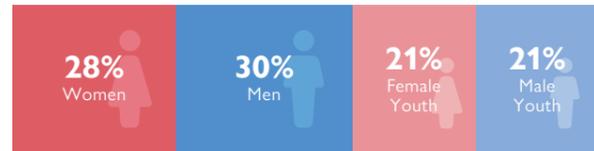
youth females and youth males between the ages of 15 and 24 years. IOM conducted the assessment in Shat Al Arab, Tuaisa, Zubair, Mudaina and Abu Al-Khaseeb.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (KIIs)

#### KII Interviews



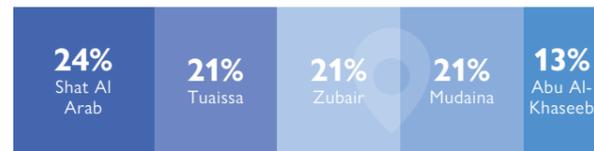
IOM Iraq conducted 29 KIIs in Basra, including thirty-one percent (31%) with adult men, twenty-eight percent (28%) with adult women and twenty-one percent (21%) with youth males and youth females. One KII was held with a woman with disabilities, reporting issues with vision and walking.

#### Employment Status



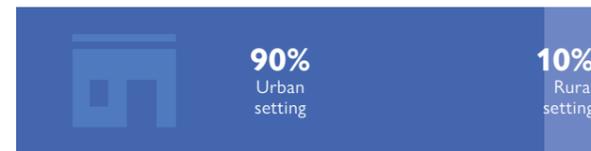
Forty-one percent (41%) of KIIs reported to be unemployed (92%=F, 8%=M), thirty-nine percent (39%) said they were self-employed (91%=M, 9%=F), twenty-one percent (21%) stated to work as employees engaging in paid work (67%=M, 33%=F).

#### KII Locations



The MHPSS team conducted the interviews in five locations across Basra governorate, including Shat Al Arab (24%), Tuaissa (21%), Zubair (21%), Mudaina (21%) and Abu Al-Khaseeb (14%).

#### Housing



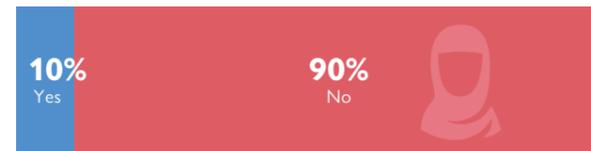
Among the key informants, ninety percent (90%) said to live in an urban setting, while ten percent (10%) reported living in a rural area. None of the respondents reported having been displaced in the past.

#### Interview Conducted...



Ninety-three percent (93%) of the key informant interviews were held in person, while seven percent (7%) of the interviews were conducted over the phone.

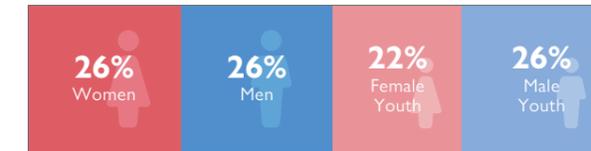
#### Female-Headed Households



Out of the 29 people interviewed, ten percent (10%, 100%=F) reported living in a female-headed household. Ninety percent (90%) said that they do not live in a female-headed household.

### FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs)

#### Focus Group Discussion



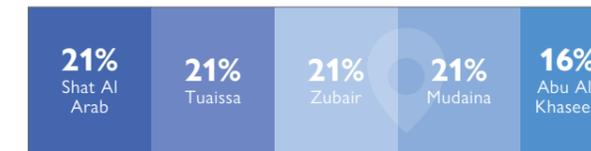
IOM Iraq held 19 FGDs in Basra, including 5 FGDs with men, 5 FGDs with women, 5 FGDs with youth males and 4 FGDs with youth females. All FGDs met in person and included 6 to 8 participants. 2 out of 19 FGDs had people with disabilities who reported walking issues.

#### FGDs with persons from Female-Headed Households



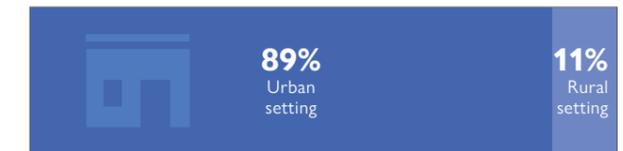
Out of 19 FGDs, one included only participants from female-headed households (female youth FGD in Zubair). 7 FGDs included some participants from female-headed families, and 11 FGDs did not include participants from female-headed households.

#### FGD Locations



The IOM MHPSS team conducted the FGDs in five locations, including Shat Al Arab (4), Tuaissa (4), Mudaina (4), Zubair (4) and Abu Al-Khaseeb (1).

#### Housing



Among the 19 FGDs, 17 groups reported living in urban settings, while 2 FGDs said to live in a rural neighborhood (2=Mudaina).

## KEY FINDINGS

The surveyed respondents were asked a set of questions related to MHPSS and livelihood support services and needs, as well as the integration between the two types of programming. Below are the primary findings, which are discussed in detail throughout this report.

### Perceptions about integrating MHPSS and livelihood support

- There is broad interest in integrated MHPSS and livelihood support.
- One hundred percent (100%) of key respondents and all 19 FGDs reported being interested in integrated MHPSS and livelihood support.
- One hundred percent (100%) of key respondents and 19 out of 19 FGDs said integrating these two supports is a good idea.
- Forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents also said that they would participate in a programme that offers MHPSS and livelihood support at the same time. Those who said no, stated that it would be too difficult to attend both at the same time.

### Perceptions of the relationship between emotional health and livelihoods

- Ninety-seven percent (97%) of respondents said that psychosocial support could help them better pursue and engage in work. 19 FGDs had the same opinion.
- Seventy-six percent (76%) of respondents and 11 out of 19 FGDs said that their emotional-well-being affects their ability to pursue and perform work.
- One hundred percent (100%) of respondents and 18 out of 19 FGDs noted that psychosocial support activities could help a person focus more at work.
- Considering the positive community perceptions regarding integrated MHPSS and livelihood support and the encouraging effect that psychosocial support can have on a person's livelihoods speak for integrated programming in Basra.

### Relevant integrated activities

**The most relevant integrated MHPSS activities in Basra include:** MHPSS awareness sessions, life and other soft skills training, resilience support sessions, individual psychosocial counseling and recreational activities.

**The most relevant livelihood supports in Basra include:** Grants to start or re-start a business, vocational training and capacity building, individual livelihood support and the provision of loans to start or re-start a business. The provision of loans has been noted to be especially relevant to women.

- The most relevant MHPSS supports to prepare people for livelihood projects include MHPSS awareness sessions, life and other soft skills training, individual psychosocial support and resilience support sessions.

### MHPSS needs and Livelihood Interests

#### MHPSS

- Ninety-three percent (93%) of key informants reported not knowing about MHPSS services; 17 out of 19 FGDs said the same.
- The most needed MHPSS to improve emotional health in Basra include MHPSS awareness sessions (34% KIIs, 15 FGDs), psychosocial counseling (17% KIIs, 11 FGDs), resilience support sessions (17% KIIs, 11 FGDs), life and other soft skills training (14% KIIs, 14 FGDs) and recreational activities (10% KIIs, 10 FGDs).
- Barriers to services include the long distances to support services, a general lack of transport, not knowing about services and the fear of stigma (women).

### LIVELIHOODS

- Reported livelihood interests did not entirely match available employment opportunities in Basra. The employment sectors to target in Basra, according to a 2020 IOM labour market assessment, include the industrial sector, manufacturing, tourism, food processing, agriculture, health and education.
- Barriers to accessing livelihoods include a lack of financial support, a lack of job opportunities (27%, 19 FGDs) and a lack of training and skills (18%, 15 FGDs).
- Livelihood-related challenges and stressors include long working hours, heavy workloads, low wages, a lack of required tools, issues with employers, long commutes to work and local traditions or customs.

- Livelihoods that can be carried out from home are slightly preferred in Basra, especially among women (67%).
- Men favour individual livelihood projects (64%), while women prefer group projects (86%), including group ownership and participation.

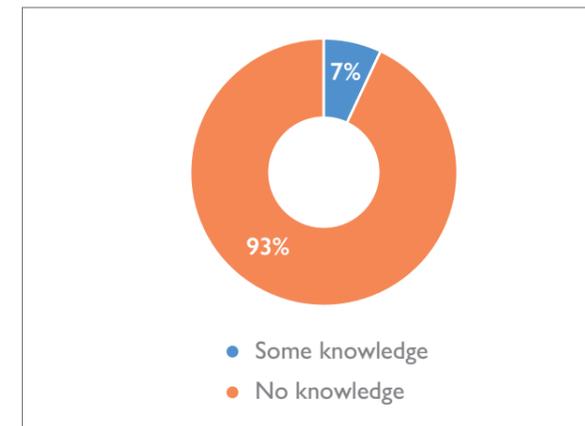
Details on these findings are provided in the following sections below. The first section discusses MHPSS needs and services in Basra, providing an overview of the perception of available services and barriers to services. The second section looks at livelihood opportunities, interests and challenges. The third section outlines community perceptions related to integrated MHPSS and livelihoods, and the fourth section presents the most relevant integrated activities. Recommendations for integrated programming are outlined at the end.

## 1. MHPSS SERVICES AND NEEDS

To better understand the availability of MHPSS in Basra, the needs assessment asked questions about availability and knowledge of services. Another main objective was also to better understand what types of MHPSS services are most needed and what some of the common barriers to accessing MHPSS are.

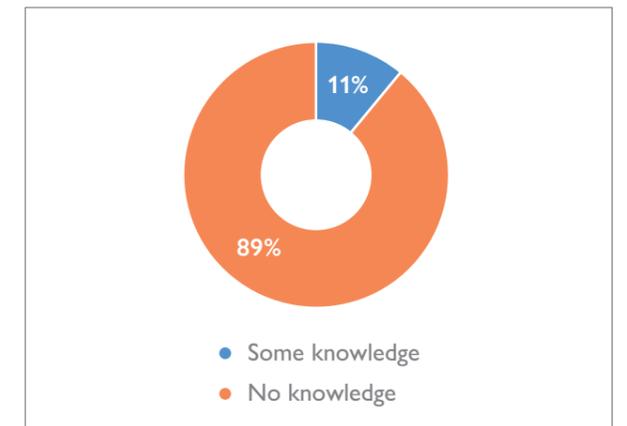
### Available MHPSS Services

KIIs: Knowledge about MHPSS services?



Among the key informants, ninety-three percent (93%) reported that they did not know of any MHPSS services in their area. Seven percent (7%) said that they had some knowledge of services.

FGDs: Knowledge about MHPSS services?

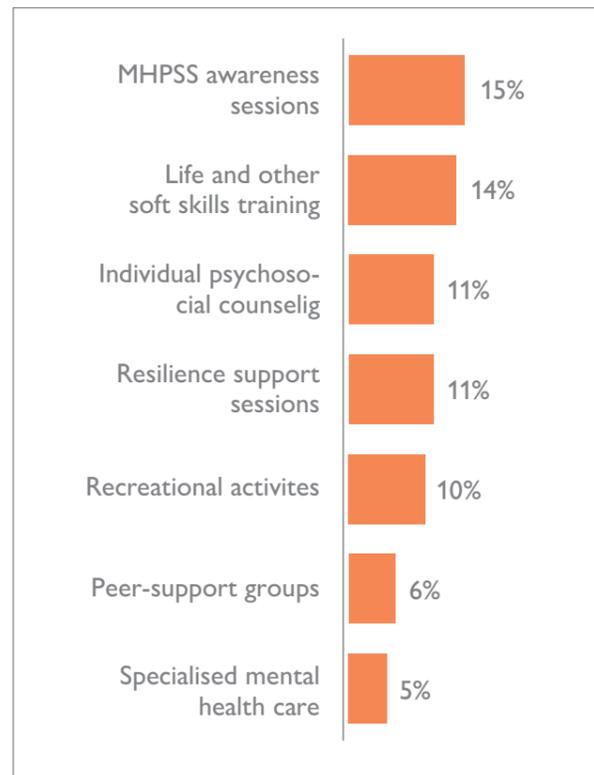


The FGD results are similar, as only 2 FGDs reported having some knowledge of available MHPSS. 17 out of 19 FGDs said to not know about available services.

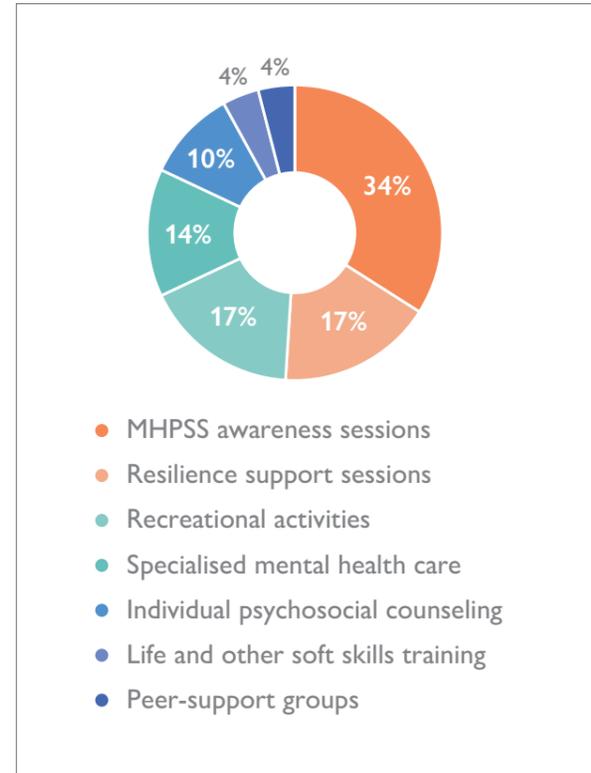
MHPSS Needs

The most relevant MHPSS to improve emotional well-being in Basra are MHPSS awareness sessions (34% KIIs, 15 FGDs), individual psychosocial counseling (17% KIIs, 11 FGDs), resilience support sessions (17% KIIs, 11 FGDs), life and other soft skills training (14% KIIs, 14 FGDs) and recreational activities (10% KIIs, 10 FGDs).

FGDs: Revelant MHPSS to improve emotional well-being in Basra



KIIs: Revelant MHPSS to improve emotional well-being in Basra



Barriers to accessing services

The main barriers to accessing MHPSS in Basra include the long distance to services, a lack of available transport (46%), not knowing about services (39%) and having a disability (8%). One male key informant also noted the fear of stigma as a critical barrier to accessing MHPSS in Basra.

The assessment findings show a persistent need for MHPSS services in Basra, including MHPSS awareness sessions, individual psychosocial counseling, resilience support and life and other soft skills training.

2. LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES, INTERESTS AND CHALLENGES

This second section discusses employment opportunities, interests and challenges present in Basra. IOM Iraq designed the needs assessment to better understand common employment opportunities and learn about the livelihood interests of the local community. This section also notes barriers to livelihoods and workplace challenges.

Employment in Basra

According to our needs assessment, the most common employment in Basra is in agriculture and food processing (18%). In addition, people reportedly work at or manage shops (9%) and engage in sewing and tailoring or find employment as barbers or drivers (8%). Jobs were also reported in petroleum, construction, pastry making and selling, farming, carpentry and the dairy and restaurant industry. The FGDs highlighted similar available employment opportunities but mentioned pastry making and selling at a higher rate (6=Female FGDs).

Livelihood interests in Basra

The needs assessment found similarities and deviations among employment opportunities and interests in Basra. Similarities include interest in and demand for sewing and tailoring among women (33%=F, 6/9 female FGDs) as well as pastry making and selling. Female respondents were also interested in working in hairdressing (40%), trade or government jobs. 3 out of 9 female FGDs noted interest in running a women’s gym, which was also reported by several female key informants.

Among men, thirty-three percent (33%) of key informants and 5 out of 10 FGDs (adult and youth) reported interest in working as a barber. Ten percent (10%) of male key informants and 4 out of 10 male FGDs were interested in working at the market. Five percent (5%) of male KIIs and 1 out of 10 FGDs reported interest in being drivers. The other noted employment interests among male respondents deviated from the mentioned livelihood opportunities. They included working in electronics repair and maintenance (33% male KIIs, 5 FGDs), blacksmithing, carpentry and mechanics.

A 2020 IOM labour market assessment noted the following as the primary economic sectors in Basra: “Grocery shops, bakeries, construction, oil, electrical installations, marketing, restaurants, and less mentioned sectors such as manufacturing (blacksmith, carpentry), security companies, barbering and pharmacies.”<sup>17</sup> The assessment recommends to especially support “the industrial sector, manufacturing (metal, carpentry), tourism, food processing, agriculture, health and education” in Basra,<sup>18</sup> with the most relevant activities being “welding, plumbing, mechanic services, electrician services, smitheries, carpentry and aluminium work.” In contrast, the labour market assessment noted to avoid the restaurant sector and trade (clothes/cosmetics).<sup>19</sup> These findings must



17 “Labour Market Opportunities and Challenges,” Basra District, Basra Governorate, IOM Labour Market Assessment, May 2020, <https://iraq.iom.int/files/Basra%20district%20LMA.pdf>, p. 5.

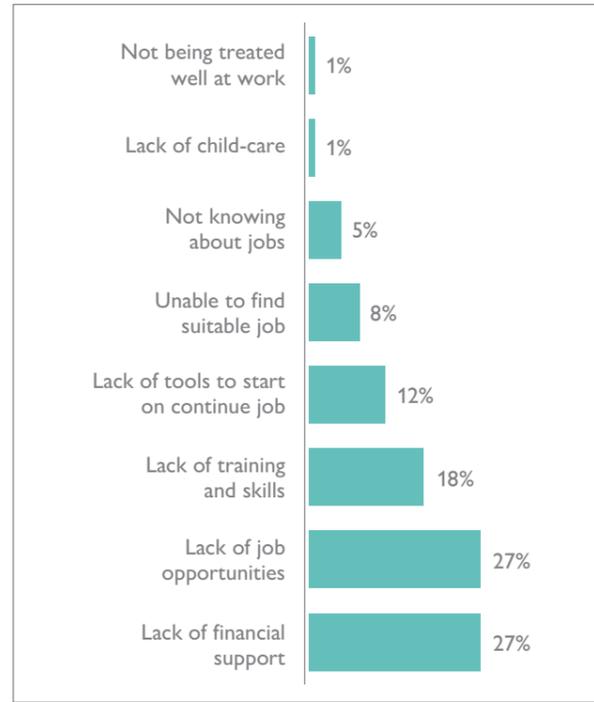
18 Ibid. p. 8.

19 Ibid. p. 5.

be considered when developing an integrated MHPSS and livelihood programme in Basra, to ensure that participant interests match market demands.

**Challenges to accessing livelihoods**

**KIIs: Barriers to accessing livelihoods**

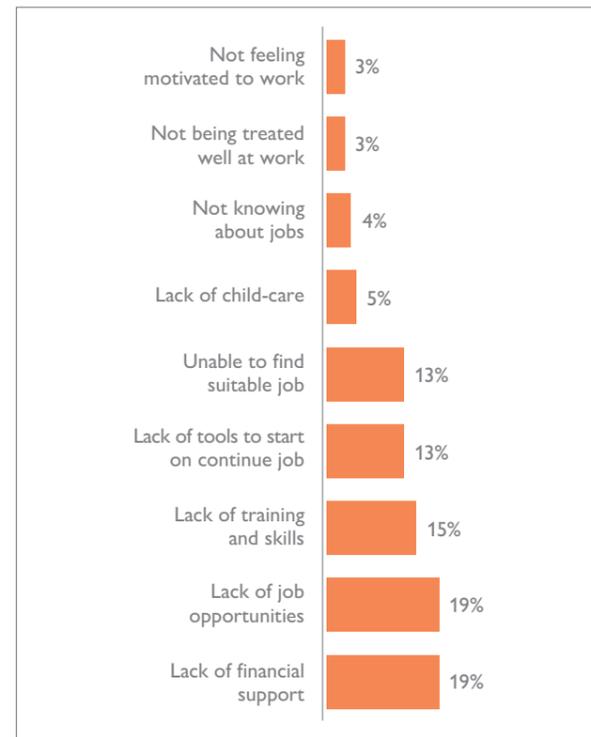


There are various barriers to pursuing or accessing livelihoods in Basra. Among the KIIs, twenty-seven percent (27%) reported that a lack of financial support (56%=M, 44%=F)<sup>20</sup> and a lack of job opportunities (52%=M, 48%=F) are the most severe challenges. These challenges were also the main barriers noted by the interviewed person

with a disability. In addition, eighteen percent (18%) of respondents stated the lack of training and skills as the main barrier to employment (61% = M, 39% = F), while twelve-percent (12%) said that the lack of tools to start or continue a job had been a barrier (58% = M, 42% = F).

Women respondents also noted not being able to find a suitable job, for example, a part-time opportunity (8%), not knowing about jobs (5%), the lack of child care (1%) and not being treated well at work (1%) as challenges to accessing and engaging in work. The FGDs reported the same difficulties as illustrated in the below graph.

**FGDs: Barriers to accessing livelihoods**



**Challenges in current or previous jobs**



<sup>20</sup> Financial support for businesses or other livelihood projects to assist in initiation or growth.

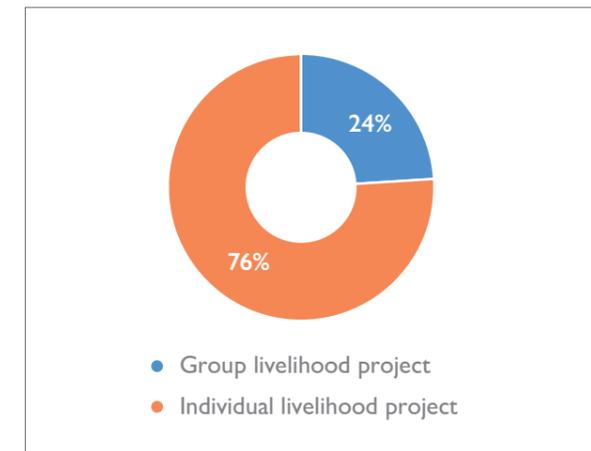
To learn more about everyday stressors and challenges at the workplace, the assessment asked participants about challenges at their jobs. The KIIs and FGDs reported the following issues: long working hours, heavy workloads, low wages compared to long hours, traditions and customs that make work challenging, problems with employers (e.g., mistreatment), a lack of required tools to properly work and the long distances and difficult commutes to work.

Integrated MHPSS services can be tailored to directly address some of these challenges, offering coping strategies and guidance on engaging positively with employers, managing heavy workloads as well as other difficulties. Life, social and other soft skills training or psychosocial counseling focused on managing stressors arising through employment help people feel better prepared to address work-related issues. Hence, integrated MHPSS promotes self-efficacy, which, in turn, will create a more sustainable livelihood opportunity.

**Group or Individual Livelihood Projects**

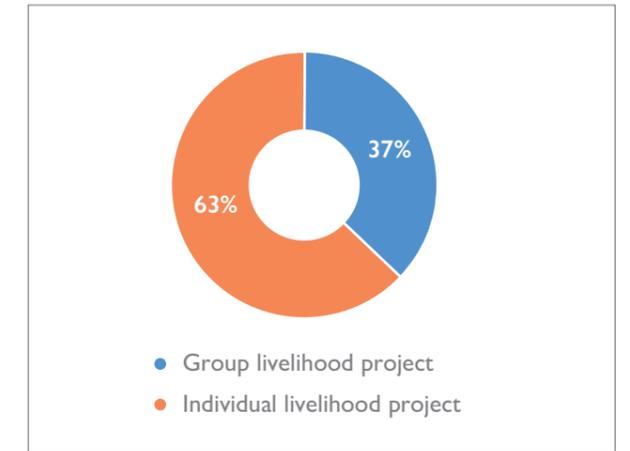
When inquiring about whether people prefer to engage and participate in group or individual livelihood projects, the needs assessment found that overall, people, and especially men, favour individual livelihood opportunities and individual ownership.

**KIIs: Individual livelihood project or group livelihood project?**



Seventy-six percent (76%) of key informants noted a preference for individual livelihoods (64%=M, 36%=F), while twenty-four percent (24%) said that they would prefer to engage in a group project (86%=F, 14%=M). Overall, male respondents were especially more interested in individual livelihoods.

**FGDs: Individual livelihood project or group livelihood project?**



The FGD results were similar. 12 out of 19 FGDs preferred working individually (8=M, 4=F) and 7 FGDs favored to engage in group livelihood projects (5=F, 2=M). The person with a disability noted that she would be interested in a home-based group project.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Integrated MHPSS and livelihood programme planning should consider these preferences. In situations where group businesses are favoured, which would most likely be female-run businesses, they should be supported (e.g., a baking project or group tailoring business) through livelihood and MHPSS support. Group livelihoods can provide an imperative social support network and build a sense of community. Ideally, an integrated MHPSS and livelihood programme supports individual and group livelihood projects to meet participant interests.

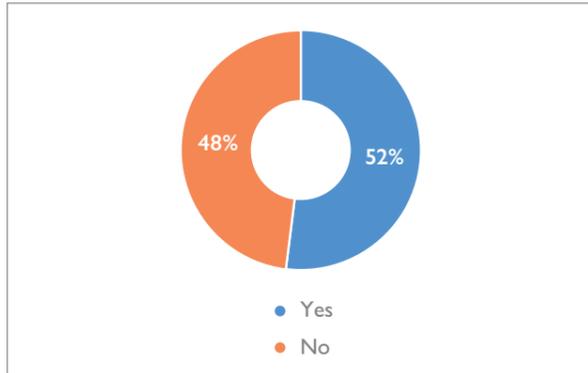
**Livelihoods from at home**

The needs assessment found that overall, women and youth females prefer to engage in livelihoods that they can engage in from home, including food making and delivery or sewing and tailoring. Respondents noted that such businesses could be advertised from at home using social media. The preference to work from home was evident among FGD (13 FGDs, 5=M, 8=F).

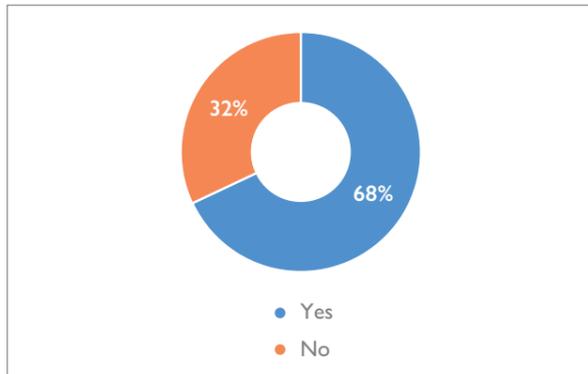
Key informants were split on this question, with fifty-two percent (52%) preferring to work from home (67%=F, 33%=M) and forty-eight percent (48%) preferring to work outside of the house (71%=M, 29%=F). Again, female respondents were those more predominantly reporting a preference for working from home. When asked about the benefits of working from

home, respondents noted that working at home generally feels safer, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

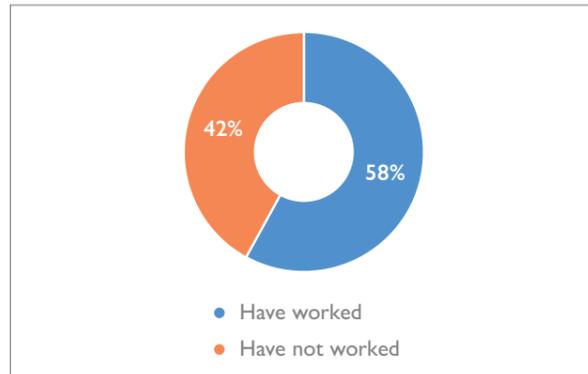
KIIs: Would you prefer to work from home?



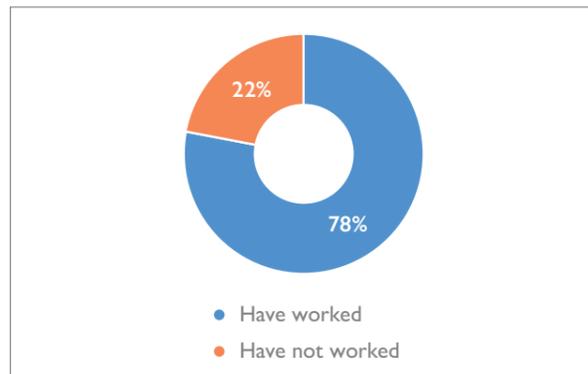
FGDs: Would you prefer to work from home?



KIIs: Youth and Work



FGDs: Youth and Work



Fifty-eight percent (58%) of youth key informants reported having work experience (86% youth males, 14% youth females), while forty-two percent (42%) of the assessed youth had not yet worked (100% females). Among the FGDs, 7 out of 19 reported to have work experience (5=male, 2=female). The main areas of work included construction, restaurant work, barber and sewing. All youth reported to work before or after school.

**CHALLENGES AT THE WORKPLACE:**

The noted challenges at the workplace for youth were work overloads (57%), unpredictable hours and issues with managers or employers.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Integrated MHPSS and livelihood support programming should accommodate livelihood projects that can be carried out from home, especially for women and youth women, considering their preference, safety, local customs and culture. Programming should further explore the reasons behind the hesitancy to work outside of the home to note whether there is a way for the programme to promote a sense of safety or community acceptance that allows women to engage in work outside the home.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Considering the IOM labour market assessment (2019) and the needs assessment on MHPSS and livelihood integration, youth, including recent graduates, should be included in integrated programming.

**Youth Employment and Experiences**

To better understand youth employment and youth employment experiences in Basra, the needs assessment asked separate questions to youth.

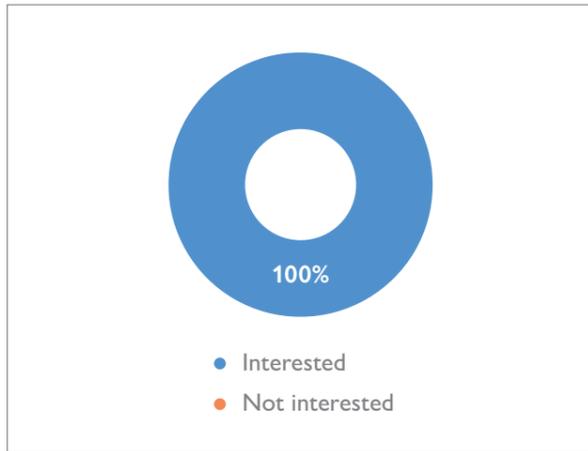


### 3. THE CONCEPT OF INTEGRATING MHPSS AND LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT

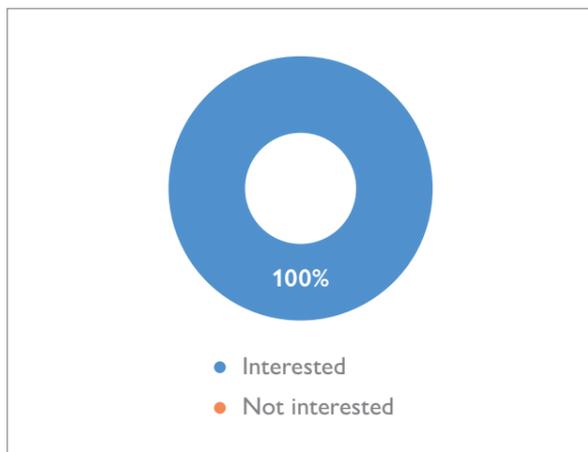
#### Is it feasible to integrate the two?

The first two sections of this report highlighted the relevance of integrated MHPSS and livelihood support in Basra due to persistent needs. This third section discusses community perceptions regarding integrated MHPSS and livelihood support, further outlining why integrated supports are both timely and relevant in the governorate.

FGDs: Interest in integrated MHPSS and livelihoods



KIIs: Interest in integrated MHPSS and livelihoods



FGDs: Integrating MHPSS and livelihood support



KIIs: Integrating MHPSS and livelihood support



Generally, the assessment found that there is broad interest in integrated MHPSS and livelihood support. One-hundred percent (100%) of KIIs and 19 out of 19 FGDs said they are interested in a programme that addresses both their livelihood and emotional well-being needs. All key informants (100%) and all focus groups (19) stated that integrating MHPSS and livelihood support is a good idea.



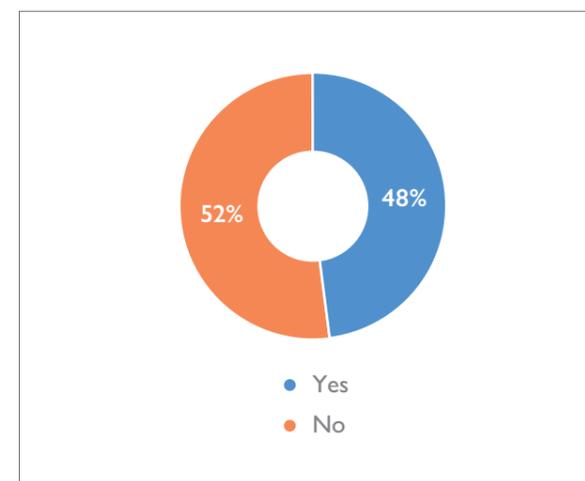
#### WHAT RESPONDENTS SAID

Respondents offered the following explanations when asked about their interest in combined MHPSS and livelihood support and why they believe that integrating the two is a good idea:

- Psychosocial support can help us to better manage and engage with people, (e.g., work colleagues, employers, employees, customers), as said by a male youth
- If someone has emotional needs, it is difficult to improve at work, as said by a male adult
- Psychosocial support will help us reduce stress at work, as said by adult woman and youth
- Better emotional health makes us more motivated to work, as said by women and men
- Combining both is a good idea to reduce stress and psychological pressures to be able to complete the livelihood project successfully, as said by one female FGD

While interest in integrated MHPSS and livelihood support programming is evident, when asked whether people in their communities would be willing to participate in a programme that offers MHPSS and livelihood support at the same time, only forty-eight percent (48%) of key informants said yes (85%=F, 15%=M). Fifty-two percent (52%) said no (86%=M, 14%=F). The female key informant with a disability noted that she would be the first to sign up for integrated programming if available to her.

Would you participate in a programme that offers MHPSS and livelihood support at the same time?

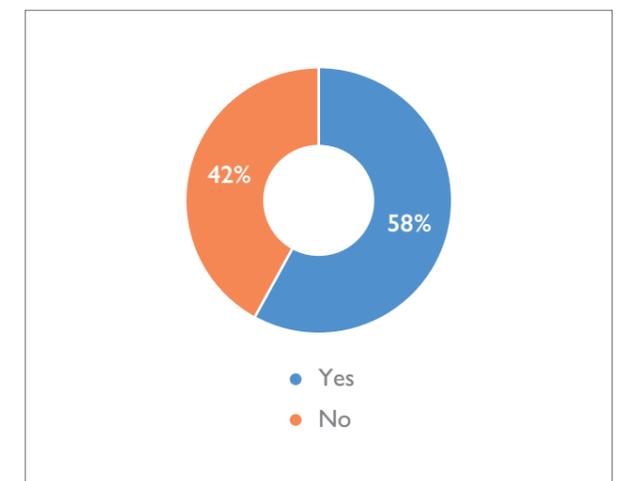


The most common explanation by respondents who said that they are not willing to access MHPSS and livelihood support simultaneously was that it is too difficult to receive or attend these services at the same time. Some respondents also said that they did not know of a place where both services are available. This critical finding illustrates that while people are interested in integrated programming, they are somewhat unsure about its logistic feasibility. Therefore, any integrated programme implemented in Basra should ensure comprehensive and easy-to-understand communications about the specifics of programming. This is to ensure that community members understand that participants will receive MHPSS and livelihood support concurrently in a way that allows enough time for both supports, which complement each other.

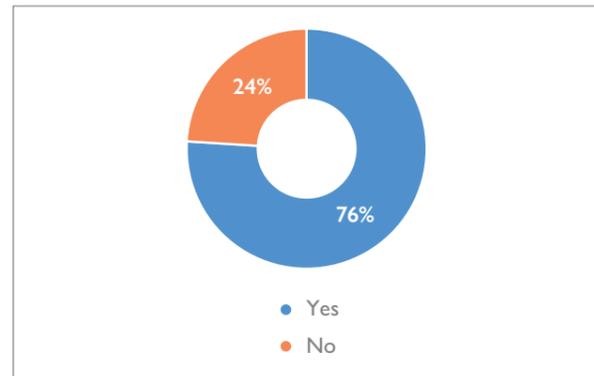
#### MENTAL HEALTH WELL-BEING AND PURSUING A WORK OPPORTUNITY

One additional objective of the assessment was to determine whether community members feel that their emotional well-being affects their ability to pursue and perform work. The majority of key informants (76%) and FGDs (11 out of 19) found that emotional well-being affects a person's ability to pursue or perform work, as shown in the below graphs. These results highlight that people recognize that emotional well-being can positively impact a person's work and livelihoods. This is why integrated MHPSS and livelihood support programming is relevant, especially in contexts where mental health and psychosocial issues prevail.

FGDs: Does your emotional well-being affect your ability to pursue and perform work?



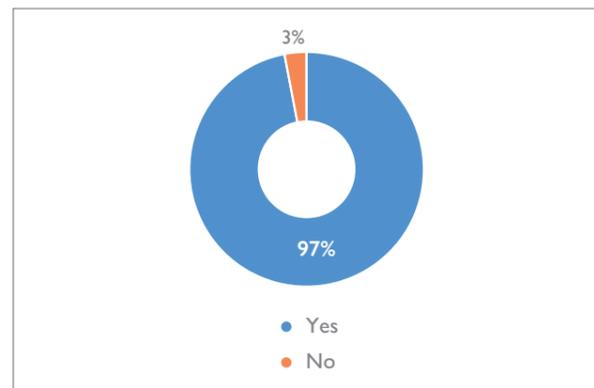
KIIs: Does your emotional well-being affect your ability to pursue and perform work?



The assessment also inquired about whether people think that psychosocial support activities can help them pursue and engage in work. The overall results were positive, with ninety-seven percent (97%) of KI respondents saying that psychosocial support can help them pursue and engage in work. All 19 FGDs noted the same.

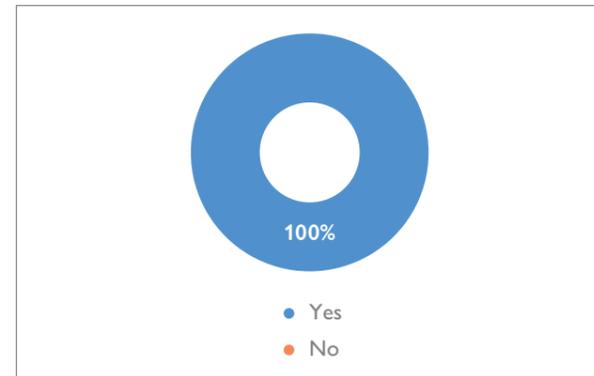
- Psychosocial support will motivate us to work, as said by men and youth males
- Psychosocial support is a good way to empower and motivate people, making them more qualified for work as they will be better able to cope with challenges, as said by youth males
- It reduces sadness and makes us more comfortable to work, as said by youth women
- It reduces pressures at work, as said by adult women
- A good psychosocial state means that I am creative at work, said by a male youth
- It boosts my confidence at work, as said by an adult woman with a disability

KIIs: Do you think that psychosocial support activities will help you pursue and engage in work?



When asked if respondents believe that psychosocial support can help them focus more at work, one hundred percent (100%) of key respondents and 18 FGDs said yes.

KIIs: Do you think that psychosocial support activities will help you focus more at work?



Respondents explained that MHPSS can help increase focus at work because:

- ... it enables you to clarify your thoughts and work plans, as said by a male youth
- ... it helps you reduce stress, as noted by adult women
- ... it helps you focus more because your mind is more stable, as said by an adult male
- ... we can work with more care and focus when we do not have psychosocial problems, as noted by adult men and youth males

The results outlined in this and the preceding sections note the relevance of implementing integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming in Basra.

Integrating MHPSS with livelihood interventions is essential to ensure that participants can take full advantage of their livelihood opportunity, engage productively in daily tasks, and address challenges positively. Frequently, only offering technical skills training for a livelihood project is not enough. Social, life and other soft skills are equally crucial for a livelihood project's success, as such skills strengthen participant self-efficacy, which will positively impact community-efficacy. Considering the optimistic community perceptions related to integrated MHPSS and livelihood support in Basra, the following section discusses some of the most contextually relevant integrated MHPSS and livelihood support activities.

## 4. MOST RELEVANT INTEGRATED MHPSS AND LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES

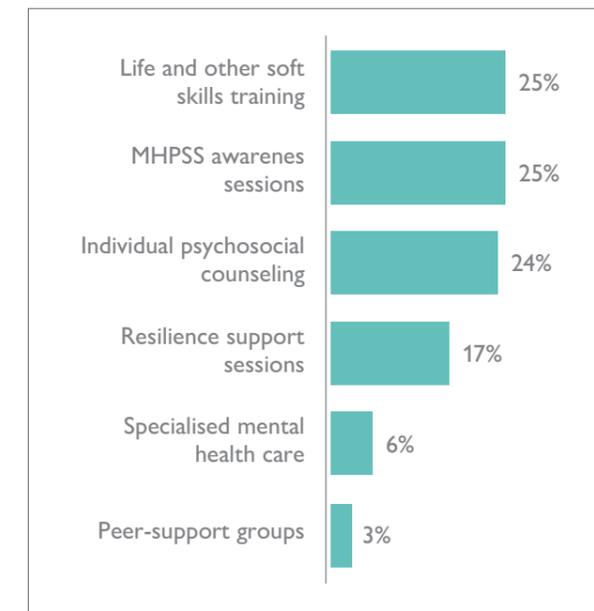
### What support programming is most needed?

A primary objective of this assessment was to examine which integrated MHPSS and livelihood activities resonate most with the community. To explore this, the assessment inquired about the most relevant MHPSS activities for people who are about to start a livelihood project, self-employed people, unemployed, business owners, people with MHPSS disorders and female-headed households. The results are outlined below.

#### a. Relevant MHPSS activities to prepare people for a livelihood project

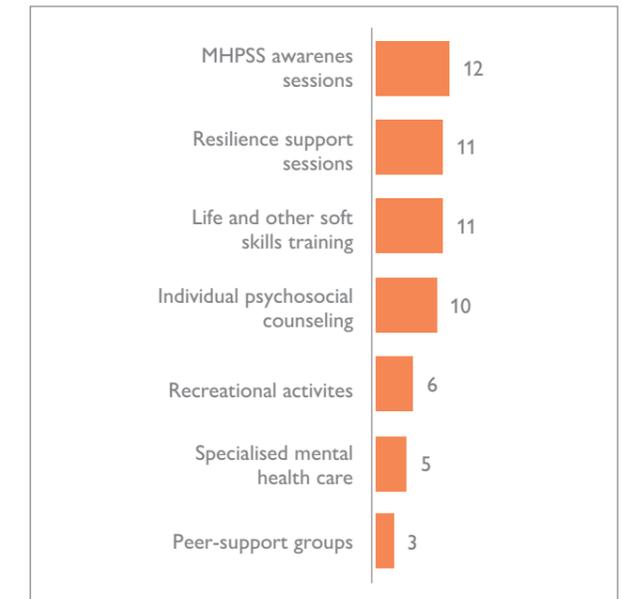
When asked about most relevant MHPSS activities to prepare someone for a livelihood project, twenty-five percent (25%) of key informants noted life and other soft skills training (49%=F, 51%=M) as well as MHPSS awareness sessions (62%=M, 38%=F). Psychosocial counseling was noted by twenty-four percent (24%; (58%=F, 42%=M) and resilience support was relevant for seventeen percent (17%), especially men.

KIIs: Most relevant MHPSS to prepare people for a livelihood project



The FGD results found MHPSS awareness sessions to be most relevant (12 FGDs, 8=M, 4=F), followed by resilience support (11 FGDs, 5=F, 6=M) and life and other soft skills training (11 FGDs). In addition, male FGDs found life and other soft skills training (7 out of 10) to be relevant, while 6 out of 9 female FGDs favoured individual psychosocial support. 5 female FGDs also noted the importance of specialised mental care, while 3 female FGDs mentioned peer support groups, as illustrated in the below graph.

KIIs: Most relevant MHPSS to prepare people for a livelihood project



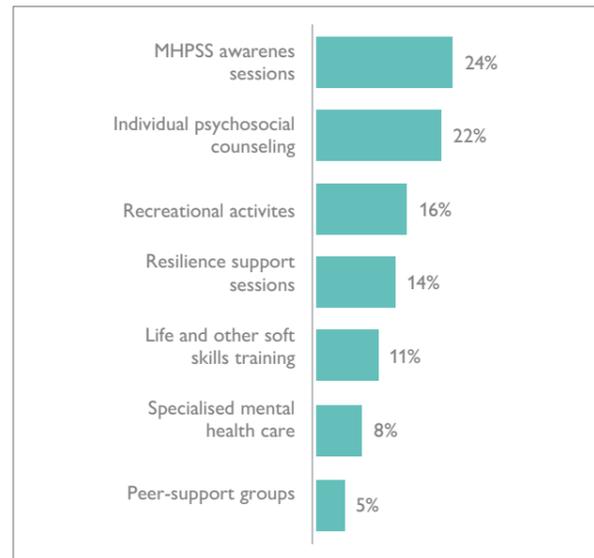
#### RECOMMENDATION

To prepare people for a livelihood project, MHPSS awareness sessions, life and other soft skills training, resilience support sessions and individual psychosocial counseling are the most relevant MHPSS to be provided. MHPSS awareness sessions can be provided in the lead up to the livelihood support. The other MHPSS activities can be made available throughout implementation (e.g., life and other soft skills training, resilience support and counseling). Once the integrated programme is underway, a referral system should be in place to refer vulnerable participants in need of more specialized mental health care.

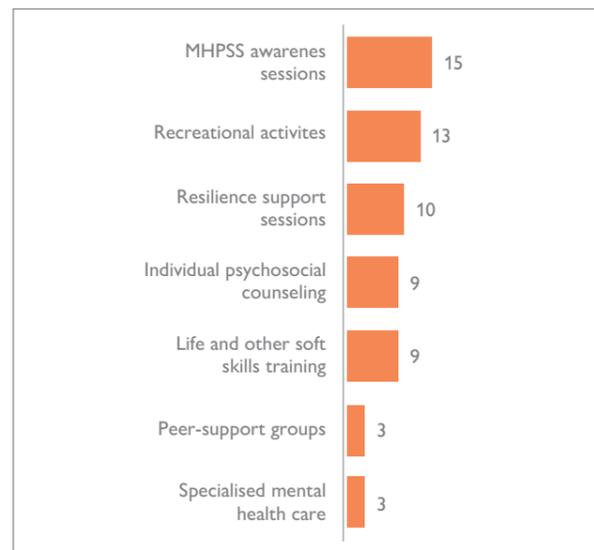
**b. Relevant MHPSS activities to encourage people facing stress, anxiety or severe mental health disorders to work or start a business**

According to the assessment, the most relevant MHPSS activities to empower people facing stress, anxiety and severe mental health disorders to work or start a business include MHPSS awareness sessions (24% KIIs, 15 FGDs), integrated recreational activities (16% KIIs, 13 FGDs), individual psychosocial counseling (22% KIIs, 9 FGDs) and resilience support sessions (14% KIIs, 10 FGDs). Life and other soft skills training, peer-support groups and specialized mental health care seemed less relevant.

**KIIs: Most relevant MHPSS to empower people facing stress, anxiety or severe MHPSS disorders to engage in work**



**FGDs: Most relevant MHPSS to empower people facing stress, anxiety or severe MHPSS disorders to engage in work**

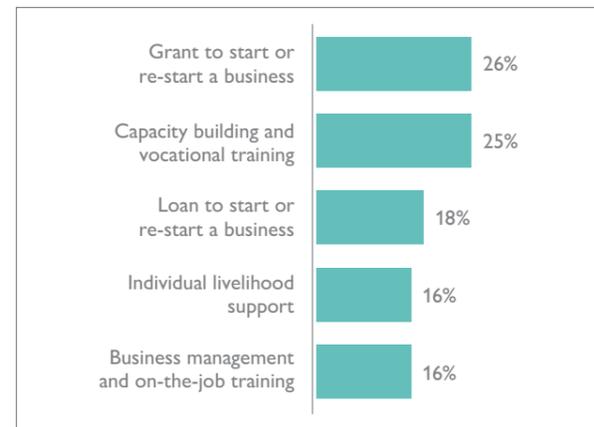


**RECOMMENDATION**

When targeting people who face stress, anxiety or severe mental health disorders, integrated MHPSS should include awareness sessions, recreational activities (potentially group activities to promote social networks and a sense of belonging), resilience support sessions and individual psychosocial counseling. The awareness or resilience support sessions can integrate life and social skills exercises to ensure some soft skills training.

**c. Relevant livelihood opportunities for people who require increased MHPSS support**

**KIIs: Most relevant livelihood support for people in need of MHPSS**



Overall, assessment results show that people in need of increased emotional support can benefit most from livelihood opportunities such as grants to start or re-start a business (26%, 52%=M, 48%=F), vocational training and capacity building (25%, 56%=M, 44%=F) and the provision of loans (18%, 22%=M, 78%=F). Individual livelihood support was also relevant among the KIIs, and specifically among women. Out of the sixteen percent (16%) of key informants who noted individual livelihood support as most applicable, sixty-three percent (63%) were women.

The FGD results were comparable with the KIIs. However, individual livelihood support was more relevant to the FGDs (14 FGDs, 6=F, 8=M). Among female FGDs, vocational training and capacity building (7 out of 10 FGDs), as well as grants and loans (6 out of 10 female FGDs), seemed especially relevant. Among male FGDs, 10 out of 10 stressed that grants are the most pertinent livelihood support for people in need of MHPSS, reflecting the KII findings. 9 male FGDs found vocational training most relevant.

**FGDs: Most relevant livelihood support for people in need of MHPSS**



Since most respondents noted that the provision of a grant would be relevant, it is imperative to note that providing grants (and loans) can cause various immediate MHPSS stressors. Hence, a livelihood intervention that provides grants as the primary intervention should comprehensively integrate MHPSS support to help participants manage such stressors.

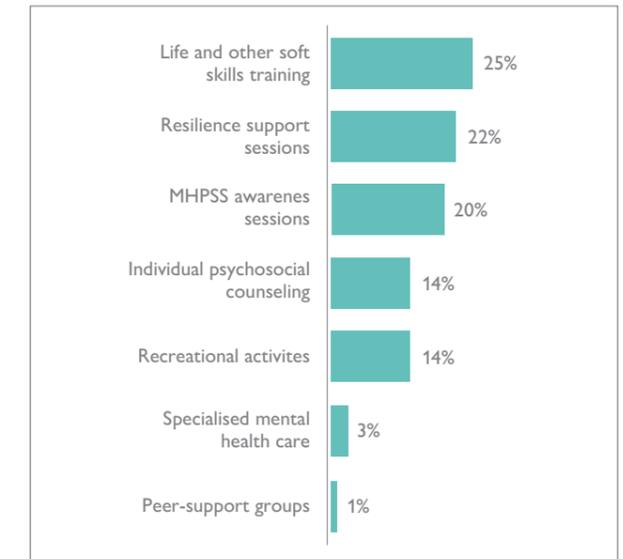
**RECOMMENDATION**

Relevant livelihood programming for people with MHPSS needs in Basra should emphasize providing grants, vocational and capacity training, individual livelihood support and potentially the provision of loans. Based on the findings from sub-sections 4a. and 4b., such livelihood interventions are best positioned to reach positive, sustainable outcomes when combined with MHPSS awareness sessions, life and other soft skills training, and resilience support sessions. Individual psychosocial counseling can, in some instances, also have a positive impact.

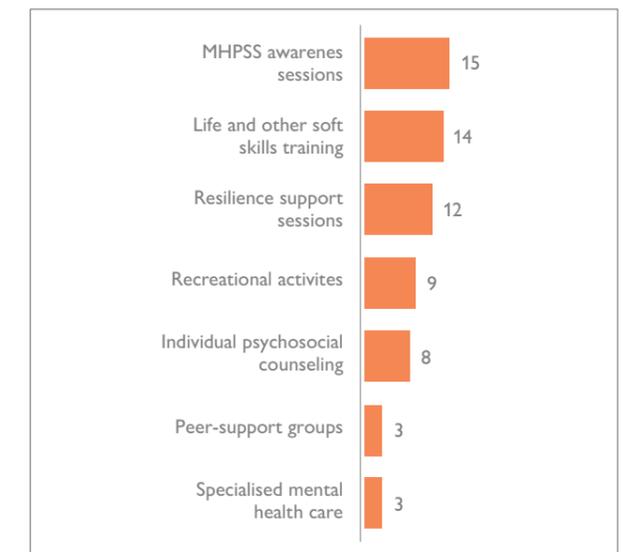
**d. Relevant MHPSS for business owners or persons who are self-employed**

To understand the MHPSS needs of business owners and self-employed people, the assessment asked one question about the most relevant MHPSS for those individuals. Based on the assessment findings, the most pertinent MHPSS activities include life and other soft skills training (25% KIIs, 14 FGDs), resilience support sessions (22% KIIs, 12 FGDs) and MHPSS awareness sessions (20% KIIs, 15 FGDs). Recreational activities (14%, 9 FGDs), individual psychosocial counseling (14% KIIs, 8 FGDs), specialised mental health care (3% KIIs, 3 FGDs) and peer-support groups (1% KIIs, 3 FGDs) were less relevant.

**KIIs: Most relevant MHPSS for business owners and people who are self-employed**



**FGDs: Most relevant MHPSS for business owners and people who are self-employed**



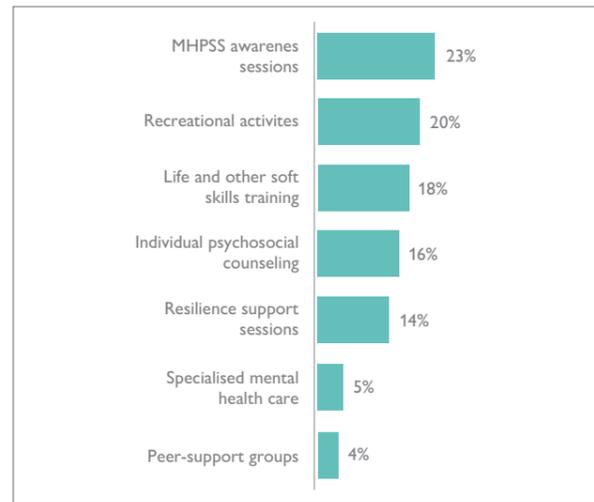
**RECOMMENDATION**

Business owners and those who are self-employed, as well as people who develop or run start-up businesses, are best supported through integrated programming that focuses on integrating MHPSS awareness sessions, life and soft skills and resilience support sessions. Recreational (group) activities can also be incorporated during implementation, while individual psychosocial counseling could be offered on a needs-basis. Specialised mental health care should be available upon referral.

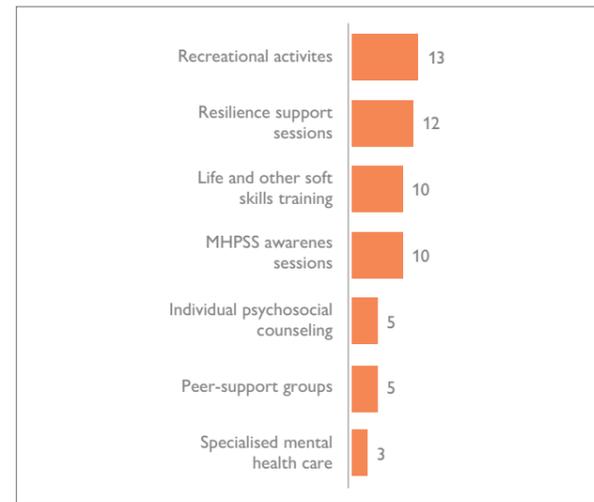
**e. Relevant MHPSS activities for people who are unemployed**

The most relevant MHPSS activities to encourage unemployed people to pursue employment include MHPSS awareness sessions (23% KIIs, 10 FGDs), integrated recreational activities (20% KIIs, 12 FGDs), resilience support sessions (14% KIIs, 12 FGDs) and life and other soft skills training (18% KIIs, 10 FGDs).

**KIIs: Most relevant MHPSS for people who are unemployed**



**FGDs: Most relevant MHPSS for people who are unemployed**



**RECOMMENDATION**

Integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming that targets people who are unemployed should focus on implementing activities such as initial MHPSS awareness sessions, resilience support sessions, life and other soft skills training and integrated recreational activities. Individual psychosocial support should be available based on need, and a referral system to specialised mental health care must be in place.

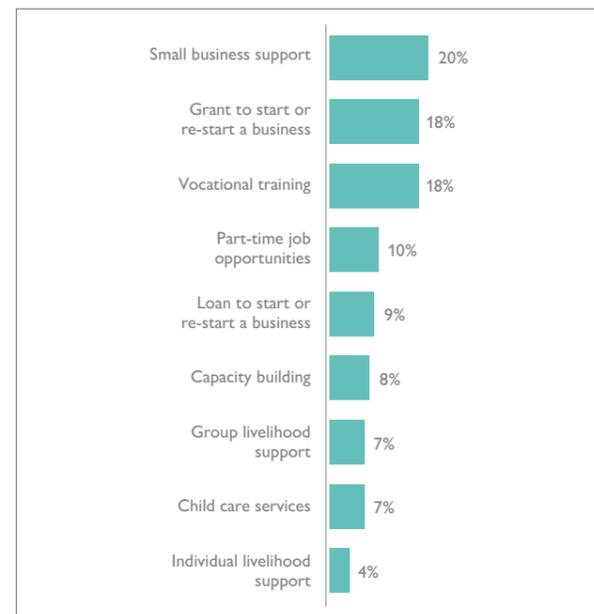
**MHPSS AND LIVELIHOODS FOR FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS**

To better understand the needs and relevant MHPSS and livelihood supports for women in female-headed households, the needs assessment asked one question about the most pertinent livelihood support for female-headed households and appropriate MHPSS activities that can encourage women to engage in work.

**a. Relevant livelihood support for female-headed households**

The most relevant supports for women in female-headed households to engage in livelihoods include small business support (20% KIIs, 54%=M, 46%=F; 19 FGDs), the provision of grants (18%, 50%=M, 50%=F; 16 FGDs) and vocational training (18%, 61%=M, 39%=F; 17 FGDs). Among women respondents, part-time job opportunities were also highly relevant (10%, 77%=F). The seven percent (7%) of respondents noting the importance of child care to enable women to work were one hundred percent (100%) adult and youth women.

**KIIs: Most relevant livelihood support for women in female-headed households**



All 9 female FGDs (adult and youth) said that small business support, part-time job opportunities and the provision of either grants or loans are essential. Moreover, 8 out of 9 female FGDs stressed the relevance of vocational training and capacity building. 8 out of the 9 FGDs that mentioned the need for child care services were female FGDs. Group and individual livelihood projects were relevant to 7 out of 9 female FGDs.

**FGDs: Most relevant livelihood support for women in female-headed households**



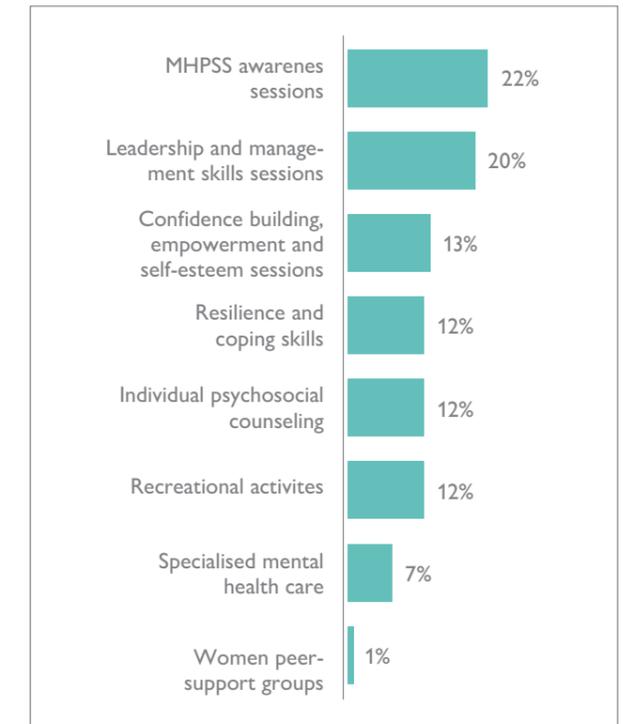
Among the male FGDs, 10 out of 10 noted a primary need for small business support, while 7 male FGDs emphasized the need for grants. Out of 10 male FGDs, 4 FGDs also stated that part-time job opportunities would be relevant for women in female-headed households. Since all FGDs selected multiple suitable supports to encourage and enable women in female-headed households to engage in livelihoods, a combination of assistance is most relevant.

**b. Relevant MHPSS for female-headed households**

The most relevant MHPSS to encourage women in female-headed households to engage in work include MHPSS awareness sessions (22%, 50%=F, 50%=M), leadership and management skills sessions (20%, 53%=M, 47%=F) as well as sessions that focus on confidence building, empowerment and self-esteem (13%, 64%=F, 36%=M). Moreover, twelve percent (12%, 30%=F, 70%=M) of respondents noted that resilience support sessions and individual counseling sessions (12%, 70%=F, 30%=M) were relevant. Recreational activities were also relevant to twelve percent (12%, 60%=M, 40%=F) of respondents. Specialised mental health care (7%) and women peer-support groups (1%) were only noted by female key informants (100%).

Among the FGDs, sessions on leadership and management skills stood out as most relevant, selected by 12 out of 19 FGDs.

**KIIs: Most relevant MHPSS to encourage women of female-headed households to engage in a livelihood**



**RECOMMENDATION FOR PROGRAMMING TARGETING FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS**

When targeting female-headed households with integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming, the most relevant supports to encourage and enable women to engage in work include small business supports, the provision of grants, vocational training, capacity building and offering part-time job opportunities. Part-time job opportunities are especially relevant as they allow women to still engage in child care and manage household responsibilities. Offering child care services can also be a useful incentive for women to attend livelihood projects. In addition to livelihood-related support, programming should integrate a variety of MHPSS, including structured sessions focused on leadership and management skills, sessions on resilience and coping skills, sessions that focus on confidence-building and self-esteem as well as individual counseling. The women are best introduced to MHPSS through an MHPSS awareness session, followed by the noted activities.

### INTEGRATING MHPSS ACTIVITIES INTO LIVELIHOOD INTERVENTIONS

As a final step, the needs assessment asked the FGDs participants to select various MHPSS activities that they consider most appropriate to be integrated with four types of livelihood interventions. Across the different livelihood

interventions, integrated life and other soft skills training, resilience support sessions and individual psychosocial counseling seemed most relevant. For a list of the overall findings, see Table 1.

Table 1. Relevant MHPSS activities to be integrated with specific livelihood interventions

TYPE OF LIVELIHOOD	MHPSS ACTIVITY
Individual livelihood support (to help start a new business based on skills and experience), vocational training, job placement, skills training, on the job training, start-up or business expansion packages	<b>Life and other soft skills training (19)</b>
	<b>Resilience support sessions (15)</b>
	<b>Individual psychosocial counseling (8)</b>
	Specialised mental health care (6)
	Peer-support groups (4)
Financial support for small and medium-sized businesses to help them grow.	<b>Life skills or other soft skills training (18)</b>
	<b>Resilience support sessions (16)</b>
	<b>Individual psychosocial counseling (5)</b>
	Peer-support groups (5)
	Specialised mental health care (5)
Provision of grants or materials provided to support group business.	<b>Life skills or other soft skills training (17)</b>
	<b>Resilience support sessions (17)</b>
	<b>Individual psychosocial counseling (7)</b>
	Peer-support groups (3)
	Specialised mental health care (3)
Job referrals to available livelihood opportunities	<b>Life and other soft skills training (17)</b>
	<b>Resilience support sessions (16)</b>
	<b>Individual psychosocial counseling (5)</b>
	Specialised mental health care (4)
	Peer-support groups (2)

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The relevant activities for integrated MHPSS and livelihood support are the actual livelihood activity (e.g., individual livelihood support, financial support, vocational training) combined with life and other soft skills training, resilience support sessions as well as individual psychosocial counseling. When appropriate, peer-support groups can also be an effective way of strengthening resilience and promote a sense of belonging, which is especially important for people engaged in new livelihoods. As noted in other recommendations, referrals to specialised mental health support should be available throughout an integrated MHPSS and livelihood programme, to accommodate the needs of people who suffer from more severe MHPSS disorders.



## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTEGRATED MHPSS AND LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT

1. To ensure positive and sustainable livelihood outcomes, elements of MHPSS can accompany livelihood interventions, which can improve the self-efficacy of participants. Integrated MHPSS helps ensure that participants are well-equipped to take full advantage of their livelihood opportunities.
2. Combined livelihood and MHPSS programming in Basra should entail a variety of or all the following activities and focus on integrating the MHPSS components into individual livelihood support programming:
  - MHPSS awareness sessions
  - Life and other soft skills training
  - Resilience support sessions
  - Individual psychosocial support
  - Integrated recreational activities (relevant in some instances)

These activities support participants in taking full advantage of livelihood opportunities, enabling them to successfully carry out and maintain their livelihoods. Based on the local context, programming must adjust the integrated activities to fit the needs of participants.
3. Combined programming should directly address the managing of relevant work-related stressors, including how to manage to have heavy workloads, long working hours, job insecurities, issues with employers and more.
4. The livelihood and MHPSS activities offered should consider the participants' preferences related to working from home. In Basra, this will be especially relevant for female programme participants.
5. While men prefer individual livelihoods, women have shown interest in engaging in group projects. Programming in Basra should support individual and group livelihood projects based on interest. Group livelihoods can often be carried out from at home and are useful for developing social support networks and strengthening participants' resilience.
6. Integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming should ensure a far-reaching awareness campaign to inform people, including those most vulnerable (e.g., female-headed households or people with disabilities) in remote locations, about the programme. In Basra specifically, female-headed households, people with disabilities, youth, recent graduates, unskilled workers and older people should be encouraged to participate in integrated MHPSS and livelihood programming. Outreach and awareness raising is especially relevant in Basra, because people noted to not know about MHPSS in their areas and some were unsure about how to logistically pursue integrated MHPSS and livelihood support.
7. Due to the remoteness of the affected population in Basra, integrated MHPSS and livelihood projects should consider providing transport allowances to participants, to ensure that they can reach livelihood training sessions and MHPSS activities. Any transportation support or allowance should be the exact equivalent or slightly less than the average transportation cost in the local area to ensure that it is not an incentive to participate or a confounding variable changing the psychosocial status on its own.



## IOM IRAQ

 [iraq.iom.int](http://iraq.iom.int)

 [iomiraq@iom.int](mailto:iomiraq@iom.int)

UNAMI Compound (Diwan 2),  
International Zone,  
Baghdad / Iraq

     
@IOMIraq



© 2021 International Organization for Migration (IOM)

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the publisher.