



# SUCCESS STORY

## Statement on Patients' Rights Empowers Patients of Primary Health Care Clinics in Duhok



Photo: USAID / PHCPI

*Halima Miho Hassan with her granddaughter, Mina Hushiar Sulayman, age five.*

**“Now I can go to the health care centers more easily, get respect and have a clearer understanding of what to expect during my visit. This is because the Statement [on Patients’ Rights] has helped us to interact with each other more respectfully.”**

*Halima Miho Hassan, Duhok  
Primary Health Care Center patient*

Sixty-year-old Halima Miho Hassan remembers what it used to be like visiting a Primary Health Care Clinic (PHCC). In Duhok PHCCs, a long wait to see a doctor was to be expected, but the difficulty getting accurate information and the lack of courtesy from clinic staff made Halima reluctant to seek medical care even when it was necessary. But things are changing for patients at the 298 clinics targeted under the USAID-funded Primary Health Care Project in Iraq (PHCPI), including the clinic that Halima frequents in the Duhok Governorate in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

A new Statement of Patients’ Rights has been developed by the Iraqi Ministry of Health in collaboration with PHCPI, which clearly defines a patient’s rights and responsibilities when visiting PHCCs. In addition, the Statement emphasizes preventive care and access to user-friendly health information and education allowing patients to more effectively participate in decisions which will enhance the outcome of their treatment. The Statement of Patients’ Rights is displayed and available at each clinic and information related to patients’ rights has also been included in clinical guidelines, trainings, and BCC materials that were developed to support MCH services. Patients like Halima are now empowered to ask questions and demand better services when seeking medical care. To further promote this important initiative, PHCPI organized workshops to engage with the local communities in the targeted clinics, as well as distributed posters and booklets explaining the details of the Statement.

When asked about the impact of the Statement on her interaction with the clinic staff, Halima replied with signs of happiness and satisfaction, “Now I can go to the health care centers more easily, get respect and have a clearer understanding of what to expect during my visit. This is because the Statement has helped us to interact with each other more respectfully.”

And it’s not only patients who are happy with the new Statement. Dr. Mohammed Haji Mohammed, who works at Halima’s clinic, shares the same enthusiasm. “In my view, if this Statement is to be adopted across the entire country, then it will be a major step forward in improving PHC services in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region as well.”

Halima’s experience is not unique. Many other patients seeking primary health care services across Iraq have responded with similar enthusiasm. The Statement of Patients’ Rights is one way PHCPI is working to reorganize and strengthen Iraq’s PHC services in partnership with the Government of Iraq. The project is working closely with the Ministry of Health to improve the quality of PHC services, especially those that have the largest impact on reducing maternal and neonatal mortality rates.