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**EVALUATION REPORT**



**UDF-IRQ-08-242 – Preparing Iraqi women as leaders, advocates, participants in  
the political process (Iraq)**

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**Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of UNDEF nor of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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## I. Executive Summary

### i. Project Data

From 1 November 2009 to 30 October 2011,<sup>1</sup> the Iraq Civic Action Network (ICAN) implemented the project: *Preparing Iraqi women as leaders, advocates, participants in the political field*. The project received USD150,000 in support from UNDEF (including USD15,000 held for final evaluation), all of which was expended.

The long-term objective of the project was: “to prepare Iraqi women for full and equal participation in the democratic process”. This was to be done: “by equipping them with knowledge of their rights and by providing a practical set of skills to empower them to implement this knowledge in the political arena”.

The project targeted as intermediaries in this endeavour non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are members of the ICAN network. Project components included Training of Trainers (ToT) for NGO participants; internships for 14 young women who were placed with the NGOs; knowledge-sharing workshops and civic forums organized by the trainees to reach out to a wider public, including decision makers and media; and the reinvigoration of a National Committee for the Political Participation of Iraqi Women. These actions were supported by the issue of regular newsletters (in part written by the participants), website development and brochures.

### ii. Evaluation questions

Evaluation questions relating to **relevance** focused on the design of the project (in particular how the separate components complemented each other) and how the participants were selected (to see whether the project was appropriately targeted). A number of interviewees also noted that the project was timely, since it allowed for women to consider participating in elections scheduled for early 2013.

The evaluators asked about the involvement of men in the project, given that interviewees consistently identified men as obstacles to women’s participation. While men were invited to participate in the knowledge-sharing workshops and civic forums, they were not given the opportunity to be trained and were not considered for internships.

The training component of the project was well received and seen as highly relevant by the participants. The internships were less successful, with some interns explaining that they would have preferred to be placed with political offices rather than NGOs. Some of the interns, conversely, were employed and promoted by the NGOs accepting them, and several remained engaged within their communities.

The National Committee was established and members were enthusiastic and active, both during the project and since it ended. Materials produced were not entirely successful: the training materials were of high quality and the trainees continue to use them; the website was seen as under-developed; and the newsletter/newspaper was poorly targeted so that some readers welcomed it while others questioned its usefulness.

In exploring the project’s **effectiveness**, it was noted that the project achieved all its objectives and targets. The project was designed for a 12-month duration but a contract of 24 months was issued in accordance with UNDEF standard practice. ICAN consequently ran the project

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<sup>1</sup> The project duration is given inconsistently in documentation. Despite the start and end dates given, the project was described as taking 12 months, and the budget was calculated accordingly. This is further explained in the text.

over 12 months but did not report until 24 months had passed. In hindsight, the project might have been spread over more than 12 months to allow closer follow-up of the trainees and interns.

Both trainers and trainees considered that the training, although it was very good, would have benefited from some practical application through visits to political offices or placements with relevant political players. In 12 months there would not have been time for this, however using the 24 months allowed might have allowed it.

In relation to **efficiency**, the evaluators note that the budget was acquitted appropriately. The activities were well planned and the few minor delays as a result of security considerations did not interrupt plans unduly. Many of the interviewees noted that the project needs to be followed up, in particular through advanced training and practical application.

Unusually, the evaluators were able to conclude that there had been significant **impact** at a number of levels: importantly, the project resulted directly in a large number of participants (ICAN estimates 50%) deciding to stand for election at provincial and occasionally federal level. The impact on individuals was also clearly demonstrated.

Apart from the women who decided to stand for office, there were examples of women who started their own NGOs, got jobs in political offices, organized campaigns for women's rights and delivered training to others. The impact on NGO partners was marked but may be short-term as a result of staff turnover.

Questions relating to **sustainability** focused on examples of how the project had become embedded in the daily actions of participants, either through continuing membership of the National Committee or through other actions relating directly to the training. The training materials have a continuing "life" and are being used both within the NGOs and by individual participants.

The evaluators noted that the broader outcomes of the project on promoting women's participation in democratic processes in Iraq are of course subject to the volatility of the security and political situation in that country.

Specific examples were cited of **UNDEF value-added**, in particular the fact that support for this project allowed training in women's rights to be extended beyond what other organizations do, to include women's participation in democracy and leadership.

### **iii. Conclusions**

- The evaluators concluded that the project was **relevant, well planned and implemented and in particular that it came at an important time to prepare women for elections to be held in 2013.**

- However, when considering the lofty development objective and the nature of the actions implemented, it was considered that **the project might have more appropriately been presented as a capacity building project for members of the ICAN network (first phase) and outreach to other stakeholders (second phase).** Presented this way, the project might have justifiably been submitted as a 24-month project, allowing better follow-up and support to participants.

- The evaluators believe strongly that **ICAN should have extended the training and internships to men**, since most of the NGOs would have accepted that and it would have provided more opportunities for "spreading the message" to men's networks.

- ***The internships seem to have been only partly successful and needed to be thought through in more detail.*** A more sophisticated intern programme, with some interns placed with political offices, for example, might have led to improved outcomes from this component of the project.

- ***The training component was well received but there were many comments on the lack of opportunity to put the training into practice.*** ICAN might consider in future including site visits to local or overseas political offices, or placements with political parties or parliamentarians.

- ***The outreach components of the project – the knowledge-sharing workshops and the civic forums – were particularly successful*** because they linked the trainees to decision makers, media and community members.

- ***The communications materials (newspaper, website) met with mixed reactions.*** It is important to develop content for such materials based on clear identification of the target audience(s). In this case the newspaper, in particular, hit the mark for some readers but not for others.

- The evaluators concluded that ***the project had a positive impact at a number of levels: on individual participants, NGO partners and importantly, on the level of democratic participation of a significant number of those who participated.*** The impact on NGO partners will to some extent be diluted over time by staff turnover and inevitably the overall impact of the project on women's democratic participation will be subject to the volatile security and political environment.

#### ***iv. Recommendations***

##### ***For ICAN***

- i. Do not be afraid to present projects for funding support that focus on reinforcement of the network and partners,*** since this is a relevant step in achieving longer-term development objectives. Above all, it can be linked directly to Impact at a number of levels.

- i. Include men in project activities wherever possible, even when the project's focus is women's rights.*** Men are crucial to building a supportive environment in which women can claim those rights.

- ii. When designing training or ToT programmes and processes such as internships, try and link them to practical application of the issues learned.*** Although in this project participants did have the opportunity to participate in the workshops and forums, they would have benefited from individual experience in political institutions such as a female parliamentarian's office.

- iii. Consider taking on communications expertise*** in a project to help target the communications output (newsletters, website, media materials, brochures) and advise on content as well as format.

##### ***For UNDEF***

- iv.*** There is a valuable lesson to be learned in the idea that, even where there are organizations active in training and promoting women's rights, ***UNDEF support provides the opportunity to extend this beyond the 'normal' range of topics covered*** and introduces the important right to participate in democracy and leadership. This trend is to be maintained.

## I. Introduction and development context

### *i. The project and evaluation objectives*

From 1 November 2009 to 30 October 2011,<sup>2</sup> the Iraq Civic Action Network (ICAN) implemented the project: *Preparing Iraqi women as leaders, advocates, participants in the political field* with activities in a number of governorates across Iraq. The project received USD150,000 in support from UNDEF (including USD15,000 held for final evaluation), all of which was expended.

The long-term objective of the project, as stated in the Project Document, was: “to prepare Iraqi women for full and equal participation in the democratic process”. This was to be done: “by equipping them with knowledge of their rights and by providing a practical set of skills to empower them to implement this knowledge in the political arena.”

The project targeted as intermediaries in this endeavor non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are members of the ICAN network. In particular, NGOs were selected that have female leaders and are primarily staffed by women.

### *ii. Evaluation methodology*

This evaluation took place in an extremely complex environment characterized by poor security on the ground and sporadic violence, and limitations on the processes of evaluation and movement of the evaluators should be taken into account when this report is read.

An international expert designated to lead the evaluation prepared a preliminary planning note (Launch Note) in March 2013 based on a review of project documentation (see Annex 2). Because of the fragile security situation in Iraq, and in particular in anticipation of elections in April 2013, it was decided that a national expert would conduct the field work under the remote guidance of, and in regular contact with the international expert. Five different sets of questions were developed by the team, one for each specific category of respondent (grantee, NGO partners, trainers, interns and members of the national committee that was established), to guide the interviews. Many of the respondents were involved in one way or another in the elections or in pre-election campaigning, which resulted in the interviews taking place over an extended period of several weeks.

The respondents included staff of the grantee, ICAN, trainers and trainees, interns, and members of the national committee that was established as part of the project. When a curfew was imposed in Baghdad in the days before the elections, some interviews had to be conducted by telephone.

Information was collected, analysed and is presented in this report according to the DAC criteria of: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation criteria are outlined in more detail in Annex 1.

### *iii. Development context*

*As this section is written, elections are under way in Iraq, heralding potential changes in the development context outlined here. This section should therefore be read as relating to the context current before the 2013 elections and in particular during the implementation of the project under evaluation.*

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<sup>2</sup> The project actually took 12 months, and the budget was calculated accordingly. It ran from 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010, according to ICAN.

Following a national referendum in 2005, Iraq approved a new constitution and elected a 275-member Council of Representatives. Cabinet ministers were approved in May 2006 and in January 2009 elections were held for provincial councils. National legislative elections were held in 2010, which resulted in an expanded Council of Representatives of 325. The *Failed States Index* ranked Iraq as the world's seventh most politically unstable country in 2010; by 2012 it had improved only slightly to ninth position.<sup>3</sup>

Political tensions marked the early years of the Council, in particular between Sunnis and the Shiite-dominated government. In January 2012, Vice-President Tariq Al-Hashimi was forced to flee in the face of accusations that he had commanded sectarian death squads. Protests marked the end of 2012 as Sunni citizens took to the streets, claiming to be marginalized by the Shia government. Tension continues, also, with Turkey as a result of historical repression of Iraqi Kurds, who established their own autonomous region in the early nineties.

Both literacy levels and school participation are highly gendered, with a literacy rate of over-15 year-olds of 86% for men and 70.6% for women. While boys/men remain in education for an average 11 years, girls/women complete only eight years schooling on average.

Iraqi citizens are eligible to vote at the age of 18 and suffrage is universal. Implementation of the constitution and relatively gender-sensitive laws, however, is undermined by official recognition of Sharia law alongside common law. This, and entrenched social attitudes towards women, mean that the protections included in the law often do not extend to women in practice. While women have the right to vote and to participate in political processes, for example, and despite a 25% quota for women in the Iraqi parliament, women are under-represented at all levels of government and discouraged from participation by violence and repressive family and community traditions.<sup>4</sup>

Women continue, also, to be disproportionately affected by the aftermath of conflict, with large numbers of war widows. Ironically, the shortage of men following the Iran-Iraq war in the late eighties had allowed women to enter fields of employment and education once closed to them, however this changed following the 2003 invasion as the economy and social structures were torn apart. Many women are unable to leave their homes without a male escort. Many fear reprisals at the hands of Islamist militias for having transgressed unwritten rules on dress and behaviour. As a result, freedom of movement and consequently employment is limited. In 2012, Iraq ranked 59 out of 86 in the Social Institutions and Gender Index and 117<sup>th</sup> out of 146 in the Global Gender Gap Index.

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<sup>3</sup> *Failed States Index* 2012.

<sup>4</sup> *Gender Equality in Iraq*, 20 April 2013



## II. Project strategy

### *i. Project approach and strategy*

The project had three short-term objectives to advance the long-term objective:

- To create a cadre of women leaders with strong skills in advocacy, coalition building and networking, and organizational management;
- To strengthen women-led NGOs by increasing coordination and cooperation among them, including by establishing a committee to empower women's political participation; and
- To increase acceptance of women's political participation and women's rights among key stakeholders.

To achieve this, the project strategy comprised two main areas of activity:

#### *Capacity building*

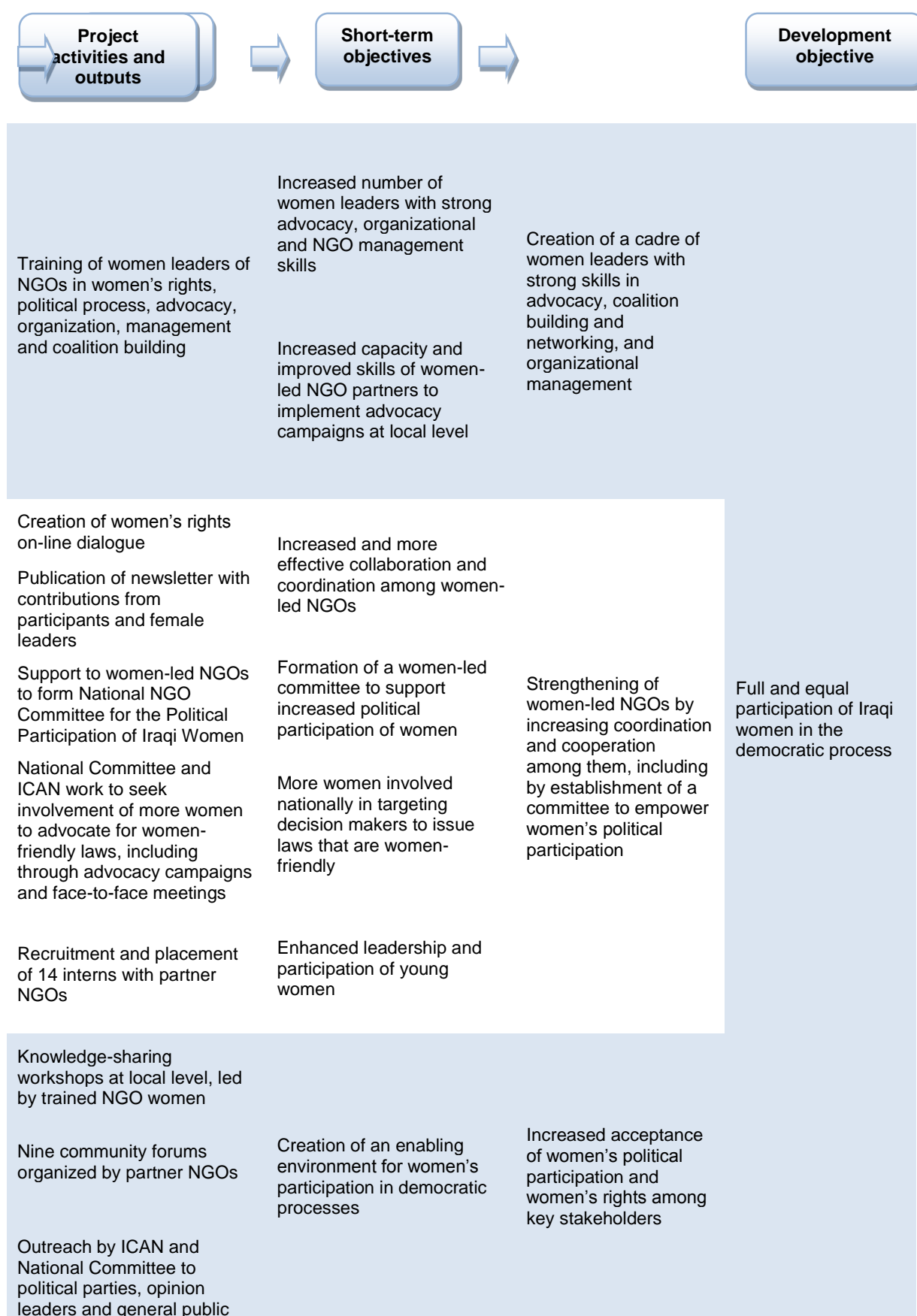
- Training of 50 women-led NGOs in the Shia-controlled governorates of Babil, Najaf, Karbala, Basra, Misan, Thi Qar, Wasit, Al Mutan and Al Quadisiyyah. The training was also to be extended to selected high school students, female university teachers and women members of political parties.
- This was followed by a series of knowledge-sharing workshops led by the trainees, forums for a wider public led by the NGO partners, and meetings with political parties and decision makers.
- Recruitment and placement of 14 women with partner NGOs through a student internship programme.

#### *Coalition building*

- Revival of a National NGO Committee for the Political Participation of Iraqi Women.
- Creation of a women's rights on-line dialogue forum, women's rights resource centres and publication of a newsletter, *Women in the new Iraq*.

Activities and project outputs are summarized in the logical framework diagram that follows:

## ii. Logical framework



### III. EQ answers / findings

#### i. Relevance

- **Window of opportunity**

All the interviewees (see full list in Annex 3) considered that the project’s activities were relevant to the aims of promoting the participation of women in democracy. Indeed, it was considered that there is at this time a window of opportunity for women to step up as candidates in national elections and as representatives of women’s issues.

It is important to note that, although the long-term development objective of this project was to contribute to increasing the number of Iraqi women participating in democratic processes, its primary aim within the period of implementation was to strengthen the role of NGOs working towards this aim. Since ICAN is a federation of NGOs, it was therefore to some extent a project designed to build the capacity of its own membership. This is valid and relevant as a means of promoting women’s participation in the longer term, however it was not clearly stated in the Project Document, perhaps because organizations making submissions are reluctant to ask for funds to focus on their own members as beneficiaries.

The outward-looking components of the project – the knowledge-sharing workshops, the public forums and the meetings with decision makers put the training into practice and opened the project up to participants outside ICAN.

- **Involvement of men**

Several interviewees noted that there remains a gap between the potential for women in cities/towns and those in rural areas. In a society where men are still seen by most respondents as making decisions on behalf of women, it is in the urban areas that the groundswell of women’s rights is making most headway.

Since many respondents mentioned men as the main reason why women do not participate in elections in Iraq, the evaluators asked about the extent to which the involvement of men had been considered in the project planning. ICAN advised that they did not include men as participants in the training, nor consider them for internships “because the project title is ‘Preparing Iraqi women as leaders’”. This is unfortunate, because influencing men’s understanding and behaviour is clearly a prerequisite to the full and equal participation of women in Iraq. The NGO partners were asked whether they would have accepted a man as an intern; they all said “yes” and added that they have male members of staff who would have benefited from the training and internships. Men did attend the public forums and were targeted in the meetings with decision makers. However this is not the same as engaging them fully through training and internships.

“The main obstacles to women participating in democracy are tradition, tribal norms, religion and men’s dominance. As a voter, women have to choose the same candidate that their fathers and husbands vote for. As a candidate, most of the political parties take the decisions and the female member has to accept it without discussion or asking for her opinion.”

**Trainer in the project (male)**

- **Training**

Both the trainees and the trainers believe that the training was highly relevant. The trainers confirmed that ICAN had briefed them thoroughly on the aims of the project and provided the results of a needs assessment that the organization had conducted among the targeted participants. The trainers – academics and professionals in relevant fields -- were thus able to tailor the training to the needs of the trainees. One trainer noted that ICAN has “great resources” and experience that helped him prepare the materials.

The evaluators asked to what extent gender considerations were integrated into the training. One trainer confirmed that the needs assessment conducted by ICAN included input from both women and men and that the preparatory research for the training took gender issues into account, especially in relation to the cultural/institutional environment. He mentioned in particular that the training dealt with the belief that “culture prohibits gender responsiveness”.

▪ **Internships**

The project included the placement of 14 young women as interns in partner NGOs. In fact, in most cases this seems rather to have been a case of funding probationary positions for women already working with the NGOs. One intern, for example, was already working as a volunteer with one of the NGOs and, as a result of the internship and training, took up the position of programme officer there. She now holds the same position in another NGO. Another intern who had been working as a data collection officer moved to become a branch manager and advocacy trainer. A number of respondents reported similar moves from volunteer work to staff positions following the internship/training. Some changed areas of specialisation: two interns had been working with IDPs and moved into women’s issues; one had been a primary school teacher and joined another ICAN member NGO as a senior programme manager.

The interns were chosen in a closed but competitive selection process in which ICAN called for nominations from partner NGOs and then selected the successful candidates based on a number of criteria including their educational achievements, ability to volunteer, mobility within the region and interest in political affairs. ICAN attempted to reflect geographical distribution in the selection. Here again, the project essentially worked to increase the capacity of the NGOs themselves – again relevant but not specified in the Project Document. The internships were an important component of the project because they seem to have had significant impact (see below) on both the individual women and the overall aims of the project.

▪ **Publications and website**

As outputs from the project, ICAN made the training materials available to participants, some of whom have since used them for training others.

ICAN also produced 13 issues of its newsletter *Women in the new Iraq*, 2,000 copies of which were distributed to various organizations, through forums and conferences, to interested members of the public and to decision makers, as well as through partner NGOs. A number of the interns said that they had written articles for the newsletter.



An edition of *Women in the new Iraq* (F'el)

ICAN also used some funds for its website, designed as an on-line forum for the participants and as a repository for the materials produced. A number of interviewees said that they used the website “but rarely”. One interviewee noted that, “it needs to be developed; it lacks funding”. This is common; large numbers of organizations and/or projects develop websites with project funding but are unable to maintain them once funding ends.

ICAN also produced a brochure outlining the project and its aims. All the materials produced during the project were made available to participants on a CD-Rom.

### ▪ **National committee**

One of the outcomes of the project was to be the reinvigoration of a National NGO Committee for the Political Participation of Iraqi Women. ICAN consequently observed women during the training and internships and identified women they believed would be able to play a role in the committee. ICAN acts as a secretariat for the established committee, securing and preparing the venue, convening the meetings and consulting with members. A number of the respondents had been appointed to the committee. One said that she had been selected because of her active participation in the training, her attendance at all the workshops and meetings, and her readiness to share her point of view. She has attended all the meetings and remains active some two and a half years since the project ended.

### **ii. Effectiveness**

The project was completed well within the planned time-frame. Although the Project Document stated quite clearly that it was a 12-month project, the start and end dates given were November 2009 and October 2011 – a period of 24 months in accordance with UNDEF standard practice. The project actually ran for 12 months, from 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010. However given that the contract stipulated an end date of 31 October 2011, reporting was not completed until after that date.

There were no noted delays or complications during project implementation. Some workshops were delayed because of security considerations, however everything generally ran smoothly. Several interviewees commented on the good performance of ICAN and on the high level of support they got from the organization. Interviewees also commented on the consultative nature of the project, with ICAN seeking input during the planning stage and during implementation.

The project achieved all its intended outcomes and the combination of training, internships, follow-up and materials support seems well designed to further the short-term objectives. There is, however, something of an identity crisis within the project between the long-term aim of promoting women's participation in Iraq and the intermediate aim of strengthening ICAN member organizations who may be involved in this. Although in theory this seems to be an effective means of building the ranks of advocates, trainers and activists, it is of some concern that the project did not include some means of following this up to ensure that the trainees, interns and other participants did in fact continue to work in this area. It may be that ICAN does this as a matter of course because of the very nature of the organization, however it is surprising that ICAN did not take the opportunity of being given a 24-month timeframe in which to work to perhaps spread out the project and stay engaged with the individual participants beyond their training. This is a consideration not only for effectiveness but for sustainability, as well.

### **Training modules**

Two training programmes were run and reached 85 women:

- 50 women from five governorates took part in five-day Training of Trainers (ToT) course held in Hilla.
- 35 women from four southern governorates participated in the same course when it was run in Basra.

This exceeded the project's target of 50 women trained in leadership skills.

The training was very well received and several participants commented on the quality of the materials, although several noted that it was "entry-to mid-level" and wished that there had been a more advanced stage. A number of



**Training session in Basra**

respondents, including the trainers, believed that ideally the training should have included a practical component, either with visits to women parliamentarians overseas (for a small number of trainees, not all) or placements with parliamentarians and/or political parties in Iraq. This was unrealizable in a 12-month project however it might have been possible in a 24-month project and should be considered in future.

### **Knowledge-sharing workshops**

These two-day workshops were intended to provide an opportunity for the trainees to put their training into practice and share information with other women. The workshops reached 150 women in different regions of Iraq.

- The first two-day workshop took place in Babil Province on 27/28 June 2010, with 50 university professors, secondary school teachers and students, and representatives of local women’s groups and associations from Basra, Nassiriyia and Mayassan .
- The second workshop took place in Diwaniya Province between 3 and 7 July 2010, with 50 participants from Hilla, Najif and Karbala.
- The third workshop was held on 9/10 July 2010 in Thi Qar province, with 50 participants from Nasseriya.

This is in accordance with the project’s targets.

### **Civic forums**

ICAN and partner organizations came together in civic forums, one in each governorate. They were attended also by representatives from the Iraqi Council of Representatives, provincial Council members, and senior government officials. The aim of the forums was to identify interest in and candidates for the establishment of a National Committee for the Political Participation of Iraqi Women in addition to disseminating information about women’s rights and encouraging women to vote.

- 9 civic forums were organized bringing together 450 women activists and leaders.
- 5 women were elected at each forum to meet to establish the National Committee.

The civic forums were mentioned by a large number of interviewees as the place where the trainees and interns primarily came into contact with the people they hoped to influence: political parties, local authorities, media, decision makers and, not least, women they wanted to encourage to vote and men who might support that.

“Some of the male staff in my organization participated in the knowledge-sharing and open civic forums. They are important because we need to change the idea of men dominating, beginning with our own staff.”

**NGO Partner interviewed**

### **National Committee and advocacy meetings**

The 45 elected women plus nine student leaders worked for three months to draft the mission, vision and by-laws of the committee with the help of ICAN staff. The aim was to move towards registration of the committee.

- 54 committee members began the process of establishing the committee and consolidating its governance.
- Following establishment of the committee, members held five advocacy meetings with decision makers.

Establishment of the committee and the role of members in advocating with decision-makers coincide with the projected plans. Additionally, however, the Project Document lists some of the outputs of the committee as the monitoring of draft laws and the development of advocacy campaigns. It is not clear whether this was accomplished during the 12-month life of the project.

## **Internships**

Female candidates were sought through a competitive process for placement as interns with partner NGOs for four months. They subsequently participated in the training and other project events.

- 14 young women completed internships with partner NGOs.

Some of the interns seem to have been more active than others. One trainer noted that the interns did not participate as actively in the training as he thought they should. Some of the interns, on the other hand, seem to have taken on very active roles as trainers after the ToT and some have become activists for women's rights. One intern, a lawyer, was appreciative of the fact that ICAN took the effort to provide legal publications and tailor her internship to her specialism, but said that in hindsight she would have preferred an internship in a political office rather than in an NGO.

Less than half the interns were taken on by the NGOs after their internships and in general these women were already volunteers or staff in the organizations and moved into more permanent or higher-level positions. Some of the NGOs advised that they did not intend to employ the interns from the outset. One intern actually went on to establish her own NGO with ICAN's support.

## **Materials**

To support the training, provide a forum for women engaging in the subject and to support the establishment of the Committee, ICAN produced a newsletter, brochure and website.

- 13 editions of the newsletter were produced, and 2,000 copies of each were distributed.
- 3,000 copies of the brochure were distributed.
- The website was developed. It was hacked into twice during the project period and had to be rebuilt.

Opinions on the materials output varied, except in regard to the training materials, which all respondents considered to be of high quality and useful. Some of the interns and trainees believed that the newsletter/newspaper was too theoretical to be of value to them. Some of the trainers and national committee members, on the other hand, found it useful and informative. Clearly this is a question of 'pitching' the content and more clearly identifying the target audience and therefore appropriate content.

"I receive [the newspaper]. I find it is good but it deals with studies, assessments, investigations and surveys more than talking about the Iraqi context."

"It deals with studies...I do not like this type of newspaper."

"I find it useful with independent points of view. Most of its subjects are studies and surveys and for this reason Most of the NGOs and government get benefit from it."

There were no particularly favourable comments on the website. All the interviewees said they looked at it "but rarely".

### **iii. Efficiency**

#### **▪ Budget**

The budget was fully acquitted. It was appropriately allocated, although the materials production was high, costing approximately USD 11 per item. The grantee explained that this resulted from the costs of writing, editing, designing and distributing the materials.

#### **▪ Activities**

The activities were well planned and strategically designed to complement each other and maximize the likelihood that the project would achieve its objectives.

Many of the interviewees commented that the project needs follow-up, particularly higher-level training and opportunities for practical application of the knowledge acquired.

**iv. Impact**

▪ **On the participation of women in democracy in Iraq**

This level of impact is generally almost impossible to measure, since it is usually long-term and, even where there is an increase in women’s participation in democratic processes, it is difficult to say for certain how much this is the result of a particular action, project or event. Rather than speaking of impact per se, it is usually better to look for contribution to eventual impact.

However, in this case many of the interviewees said that they believed the project had indeed had an impact on many women and that it had certainly contributed to a significant increase in the number of women standing for public office in the 2013 elections. ICAN advised that between 40 and 50 women who had participated in the project had decided to run for the provincial council elections in 2013 and a number of the women interviewed confirmed that they had declared their candidacy. One interviewee noted, however, that impact remained at this time at the provincial, not federal level, and that actions covering the whole country would be needed for that to occur.

One woman had moved on to an important role in one of the political parties and another had become a campaign manager for a major party. One woman organized an advocacy campaign for unemployed graduates in the teaching profession. Another had become such an effective women’s rights advocate that an international NGO sent her as a delegate to the United States. It seems clear, therefore, that the project had a direct impact on the participation of women in democracy in Iraq.

▪ **On NGO partners**

One of the main intermediate objectives of the project was to improve the capacity of ICAN member NGOs to work towards the long-term objective of achieving full participation of women in democracy in Iraq. All the NGO representatives interviewed cited specific examples of how their organizations had benefited from the project, at a number of levels.

Some of the NGOs had taken on interns and been able to promote them to higher-level staff positions as a result of the training, additionally giving some of them specific roles in training or advocacy in the area of women’s democratic participation and women’s rights more generally. Several mentioned that the high quality of the training materials had allowed them to offer training courses themselves.

One NGO representative said that the project had had a noticeable impact on the quality of thinking of her staff who participated. It had not only improved their programme skills in relation to women and democracy, but had also enhanced “the relations built and sustained with decision makers, participants, provincial councils and other NGOs; the organization has become well known in the community”.

“This project had an impact on me by developing my ideas about democracy and women’s participation. It changed my mind positively to be a candidate for the Iraqi Parliament in the next elections.”  
**NGO partner representative**

I am personally managing an election campaign for one of the big political parties in Iraq – this came about because of the information I learned from this project... In addition, others have become activists in their provinces in politics, advocacy and human rights.”  
**National Committee member**

“Some political parties invited me personally, and some of my colleagues, to be their representatives in the next election. This is an obvious change.”  
**National Committee member**



- ***On individual participants***

The generally positive comments the vast majority of interviewees made about the project extended in many cases to comments on how they had benefited personally from their participation. One National Committee member explained she had been promoted within her organization to be Vice-President for Programmes; moreover she said that, as a result of the project, she “tackles life’s challenges with stability, and studies the situation before making judgements”.

Another woman, also a member of the National Committee, commented on how her improved knowledge allowed her to influence people “to change their minds towards democracy”.

One of the interns had decided to stand for election but also said she wanted to use the knowledge of democracy and women’s rights that she had gained to encourage other women to nominate at local, provincial and federal levels. Her hope was that, if elected, she would be able to “restore our rights in participating in political decisions”.

“Because of the project, I became a manager, respected by my community. Men and women are coming to me asking for support and advocating their cases. And at the same time I am a successful mother and wife.”

**Intern standing for election**

An NGO participant explained that, in addition to gaining knowledge through the training, the concrete evidence she had been given of religious and legal texts that uphold women’s right to participate had persuaded her to change her point of view on the role of women. This is extremely important in a context where religious teaching, in particular, is too often used to hold women back.

## **v. Sustainability**

- ***Embedding project outcomes in the participants***

The most positive signs of potential sustainability of outcomes are in the impact it had on individual participants and what appears to be significant longer-term engagement on their part.

For some, this takes the form of membership of the National Committee. One member said that, “The National Committee is an important step in promoting women’s participation...the Committee continues to find solutions [to problems]”. Another said that she continues to attend meetings and am “active at introducing matters and laws that do badly on women’s rights”. The Committee is being funded through the members of the ICAN network, as are follow-up forums and knowledge-sharing meetings.

For other women, follow-up has been at a more individual level, as they have integrated what they learned during the project into their daily activities, whether that is by training people within their circle, organizing other women in campaigns or taking steps to enter politics at provincial or national levels. One woman has plans to run ToT projects in her own province, replicating the methodology but on a smaller scale.

- ***Continuing impact on NGO partners***

The sustainability of the outcomes of the NGO partners’ participation in the project is less clear. Inevitably, over time the turnover of staff is likely to see the departure of at least some of the women who were trained and/or who had internships, however it is possible that these women may move into other organizations where they may transfer the training to others, multiplying the outcomes.

The continuing links among the NGO partners as part of the ICAN network also ensure that the momentum continues, with ICAN continuing to support the members. Several of the NGO representatives interviewed, for example, said that they are offering training to others using

the materials provided by ICAN and with continuing support. One woman is integrating the training into existing training programmes on workforce participation, extending it to democratic participation.

- ***Women in Iraq***

The sustainability of the project's outcomes on the broader situation of Iraqi women's participation in democratic processes is of course subject to the course of the volatile security situation in Iraq. Episodes of violence linked to elections, instances of women being targeted when they claim their right to vote or stand for office – these are not unlikely and may have a negative impact on the willingness of women to participate. This is the great unknown.

- ***Materials***

The training materials will continue to be used now that the project has ended, with a number of NGOs and individual participants saying that they are using them for a variety of training courses.

The website is less likely to have a continuing impact, since it is not well received among participants, although ICAN is funding its maintenance. One participant explained her reluctance to use the website as a problem of under-development of the contents due to a lack of funds. This is not uncommon.

#### ***vi. UNDEF value-added***

One NGO representative appreciated UNDEF's support because, she said, the organization was viewed by authorities as a neutral player and, above all, not "another American NGO". ICAN believed that the link to UNDEF encouraged participants and facilitated their work. However they noted that, depending on the security situation, it was not always possible to show the UN emblem.

Participants told of a number of local NGOs, as well as UNWOMEN and International Relief and Development (IRD), that were also running training courses on women's rights, "but with fewer objective and only for six months". In particular, they noted that other courses did not extend discussion of women's rights to the right to participate in democratic processes.

## IV. Conclusions

*i.* From comments made in relation to Relevance: It is clear from the comments of all those interviewed that the project was **relevant, well planned and implemented and in particular that it came at an important time to prepare women for elections to be held in 2013.**

*ii.* From comments made in relation to Relevance: The project had an ambitious development objective: to ensure the full, free and equal participation of women in Iraq in democratic processes. At a lower level of objective, **the project might have more appropriately been presented as a capacity building project for members of the ICAN network (first phase) and outreach to other stakeholders (second phase).** Presented this way, the project might have justifiably been submitted as a 24-month project, allowing better follow-up and support to participants.

*iii.* From comments made in relation to Relevance: **It is a pity that ICAN was reluctant to extend the training and internships to men,** since most of the NGOs would accept that and it would provide more opportunities for “spreading the message” to men’s networks.

*iv.* From comments made in relation to Relevance: **The internships needed to be thought through in more detail.** While some were successful, others did not lead to longer-term engagement. A more sophisticated intern programme, with some interns placed with political offices, for example, might have led to improved outcomes from this component of the project.

*v.* From comments made in relation to Effectiveness and Efficiency: **Training is almost always more effective if it is linked to practical application that allows trainees to put their knowledge to work.** This was the case for some of the interns and some other trainees, however it was not consistent. ICAN might consider in future including site visits to local or overseas political offices, or placements with political parties or parliamentarians.

*vi.* From comments made in relation to Effectiveness: **The outreach components of the project – the knowledge-sharing workshops and the civic forums – were seen as particularly successful** because they linked the trainees to their constituents: decision makers, media and community members.

*vii.* From comments made in relation to Effectiveness: **the training materials were well received however the communications materials (newspaper, website) met with mixed reactions.** It is important to develop content for such materials based on clear identification of the target audience(s). In this case the newspaper, in particular, hit the mark for some readers but not for others.

*viii.* From comments made in relation to Impact: **The project had a positive impact at a number of levels: on individual participants, NGO partners and importantly, on the level of democratic participation of a significant number of those who participated.** The impact on NGO partners will to some extent be diluted over time by staff turnover and inevitably

the overall impact of the project on women's democratic participation will be subject to the volatile security and political environment.

## V. Recommendations

### **For ICAN**

*i.* (Based on Conclusion ii): **Do not be afraid to present projects for funding support that focus on reinforcement of the network and partners**, since this is a relevant step in achieving longer-term development objectives. Above all, it can be linked directly to Impact at a number of levels.

*ii.* (Based on Conclusion iii): **Include men in project activities wherever possible, even when the project's focus is women's rights**. Men are crucial to building a supportive environment in which women can claim those rights.

*iii.* (Based on Conclusions iv and v): **When designing training or ToT programmes and processes such as internships, try and link them to practical application of the issues learned**. Although in this project participants did have the opportunity to participate in the workshops and forums, they would have benefited from individual experience in political institutions such as a female parliamentarian's office.

*iv.* (Based on Conclusion vii): **Consider taking on communications expertise** in a project to help target the communications output (newsletters, website, media materials, brochures) and advise on content as well as format.

### **For UNDEF**

*v.* There is a valuable lesson to be learned in the idea that, even where there are organizations active in training and promoting women's rights, **UNDEF support provides the opportunity to extend this beyond the 'normal' range of topics covered** and introduces the important right to participate in democracy and leadership.

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1: Evaluation questions

#### General evaluation question categories

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context?</li> <li>▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why?</li> <li>▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?</li> </ul>
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached?</li> <li>▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not?</li> <li>▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives?</li> <li>▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?</li> </ul>
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs?</li> <li>▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability?</li> <li>▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?</li> </ul>
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address?</li> <li>▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative?</li> <li>▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization?</li> <li>▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?</li> </ul>
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact?</li> <li>▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?</li> </ul>
UNDEF value added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc).</li> <li>▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?</li> </ul>

## Annex 2: Documents reviewed

### Background documents

*CIA World Factbook* – Iraq, 16 April 2013. [www.cia.gov/library](http://www.cia.gov/library)

*Failed States Index* 2012. [www.foreignpolicy.com/failed\\_states\\_index\\_2012](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/failed_states_index_2012)

Rapporteur's note on session: 'Women in post-conflict situations: Iraq' at 54<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Committee on the Status of Women, 2010. [www.csw2010.blogspot](http://www.csw2010.blogspot)

Gender equality in Iraq, OECD/DEV Social Institutions and Gender Index, 20 April 2013.

[www.genderindex.org/country/iraq](http://www.genderindex.org/country/iraq)

Global Gender Gap Index 2012, World Economic Forum. [www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2012](http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2012)

### Project outputs

Training module PowerPoint presentations (in Arabic)

### Project documentation

Project Document, UDF-IRQ-08-242

Mid-term Progress Report, UDF- IRQ-08-242

Final Project Narrative Report, UDF- IRQ-08-242

Mid-term progress report, UDF- IRQ-08-242

Milestone verification mission report, 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2010

Note on Basra ToT training, 25 Feb – 1 March 2010

## Annex 3: People Interviewed

Name	Organization
Waii Hamzai	ICAN Board member; Project Coordinator
<b>Meeting with trainers</b>	
Ahmad Jasam	Trainer
Ali Hussain	Trainer
<b>Meeting with interns</b>	
Sheerin Abd Al Atheim	Intern and NGO participant (Hilla)
Suaad Mohamad Faleih	Intern
Zahra Niemah	Intern
Abrar Abed Ali	Intern and NGO participant (Basra)
Nawal Al Qarai	Intern
Zainab Mohamad	Intern
Mona Abd Hanoun	Intern
<b>Meeting NGO participants</b>	
Ahlam Mohamad	NGO participant (Mary for Children Care Organization, Karbala)
Razaq Jabir	NGO participant (Peace Ambassadors Organization, Basra)
Lamia Mohamad	NGO participant (South Youth Centre Organization, Najaf)
Bushrah Abd Al Kareem	NGO participant (South Youth Centre, Diwaniya)
Nawal Mashi	NGO participant (Mary for Children Care Organization)
Aieed Hameed	NGO participant (South Youth Centre Organization)
Jihan Nazar	NGO participant (Women's Development and Protection Organization)
<b>Meeting with national committee member</b>	
Suaad Mohamad	National committee member
Anwar Mohamad Ali	National committee member
Nidal Fadil Al Obaidy	National committee member
Rawa Reiad	National committee member

## Annex 4: Acronyms

DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EQ	Evaluation Questions
ICAN	Iraq Civic Action Network
IRD	International Relief and Development Inc.
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UN	United Nations
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNWOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USD	United States dollar