

**USAID Iraq Civil Society and Independent Media Program (ICSP)**



**Final Report  
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Executive Summary**

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# **Iraq Civil Society and Independent Media Program Final Report**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

America's Development Foundation (ADF) implemented the USAID-funded Iraq Civil Society and Independent Media Program (ICSP) from August 16, 2004 through June 30, 2007 under Contract number GEW-C-00-04-00001-00. The USAID contract was for a base period of 17 months (August 2004 through December 2005) and included options for extending the program for two subsequent 18 month periods. One option for an 18 month extension was exercised, extending the contract through June 2007. In August 2006, a modification to the contract was made to include an additional \$2 million in funding from the U.S. State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) to expand ICSP's anti-corruption work. The total value of the USAID contract was \$60,880,157.

The objective of the ICSP was to promote an informed, sustainable and active indigenous Iraqi civil society that effectively and responsibly participates within a democratic system of governance. This objective was to be achieved through establishing civil society resource centers to provide capacity building services to Iraqi civil society organizations (CSOs) throughout the country. Special attention and resources were to be provided to three types of CSOs that were judged particularly important at the early stage of Iraq's development as a nascent democracy: those undertaking civic education, women's advocacy and anti-corruption work, with human rights as a cross-cutting element.

ADF established four regional Civil Society Resource Centers (CSRCs) that provided training, technical assistance and access to grant support for over 1,900 Iraqi CSOs throughout the country. Under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, ADF's Iraq Civil Society and Independent Media Program achieved and exceeded contract deliverables, as detailed in this final report. Over the three years, ADF made significant contributions to the development of civil society and democracy in Iraq that were critical to the transition period and laid the foundation for the future of a democratic and stable Iraq, resulting in the following impact.

### **A STRONGER, MORE VISIBLE ROLE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN IRAQ**

An external evaluation conducted of ICSP noted that over the three years of the program there was a marked expansion of civil society in Iraq, the concept of civil society's role was more broadly understood, and civil society effectively engaged government as a partner in working for the country's future. ADF supported participatory and democratic governance in Iraq by strengthening civil society's role in the country's economic, political and social development. ICSP worked directly with Iraqi civil society organizations to bolster their capacity to be effective citizen-based interest groups and assume a leading role in national policy-making processes and local governance. There was significant media coverage of civil society activities during ICSP. The more activities CSOs undertook, the more visible they became and the more people understood the CSO role in Iraq's present and future.

### **INCREASED CAPACITY OF IRAQI CSOS**

ICSP developed the organizational capacities of Iraqi CSOs working for social, economic and political reform. ICSP staff diagnosed the strengths and weaknesses of individual CSO partners

through use of ADF's Organizational Assessment Tool (OAT), which was applied to over 1,000 Iraqi organizations. Retesting of a representative group of approximately 25% of CSOs that participated in operational capacity building activities revealed an average 41% improvement in overall score, with CSOs increasing from an average 104 points to 148 points of the total possible maximum score of 300. Increased capacity in program areas was demonstrated by the rapid growth of CSO actions in the four priority program areas.

### **FORMATION OF CSO NETWORKS, COALITIONS AND OTHER FORMS OF COOPERATION**

Through its emphasis on working together to achieve common goals, ICSP interventions resulted in the formation of numerous networks, coalitions and partnerships. Examples include *Women's Net* (a network of 17 CSOs dedicated to promoting women's rights), the *MAF Network* (a grouping of 28 CSOs seeking to influence NGO law in Kurdistan), and public-private partnerships between civil society and government institutions such as the *Defending Child Rights Network*, which brings together five CSOs and the Directorate of Human Rights of Sulaymaniya governorate.

### **CRITICAL CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT IN CORE NATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

ICSP training and technical assistance facilitated civil society involvement in timely national decision-making processes important for fostering the growth of democracy in Iraq during the period of implementation. Areas of critical involvement include revisions to the draft Constitution (over two dozen changes suggested by coalitions of CSOs through ICSP-facilitated forums were adopted) and revisions to the draft NGO Law for Iraq (the Ministry of Civil Society revised its draft significantly to make it 90% consistent with the recommendations of ICSP's CSO coalitions). Changes were also adopted in key Kurdistan and national Iraq pieces of legislation related to women, human rights and anti-corruption

### **EXPANDED CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL DECISION-MAKING**

Working in tandem with the USAID-supported Local Government Program and the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, ICSP provided encouragement, training and technical support to establish Citizen Advisory Committees at the provincial level that provide mechanisms for citizen inputs into key decisions and for monitoring the use of public resources. In Hillah, Najaf, Al-Kut and Tikrit, CSOs have become permanent observers at Council meetings. ICSP's anti-corruption activities resulted in the establishment of joint working groups in 16 provinces, consisting of civil society, local government and Commission for Public Integrity representatives. More than a third of the CSOs that ICSP trained in advocacy turned theory into practice by implementing advocacy campaigns on their issues. Impact at the local level included changes in policies and practices at multiple government institutions such as hospitals, social welfare agencies, prisons and schools.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA**

ICSP training increased the knowledge and skills of more than 8,000 media professionals (journalists, technicians, editors and managers), over 20% of whom were women. The program supported reform through advocacy for sound Public Broadcasting and Freedom of Speech Laws, as well as the adoption of ethical standards by media. Institutions for reform, such as Iraqis for Public Broadcasting and the Iraqi Association for Defending Journalist Rights were strengthened. ICSP provided technical assistance to the Iraqi Media Network (IMN) in its

development to become a public broadcasting network and also supported establishment of the National Iraqi News Agency (NINA), an independent news agency with a national network of correspondents producing daily stories on politics, security, transparency and other information for news clients including radio, television and newspapers.

#### **EXPANDED CIVIL SOCIETY ACTION FOR CONFLICT MITIGATION AND RECONCILIATION**

As part of its support for civic education programs, ICSP supported the expansion of civil society action responding to the increase in sectarian fighting by advocating for the rejection of extremism and sectarianism throughout society. CSOs working with ICSP held forums and conferences, organized exhibitions, held a peace march, produced printed materials, conducted signature campaigns and produced television programs that advocate for peace and reconciliation. Many of these forums and seminars were conducted in the high conflict areas of Iraq at the time, including Baghdad, Diyala, Salah Al-Din and Al-Anbar provinces.

#### **INCREASED CAPACITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY TO ADVOCATE FOR CITIZEN INTERESTS**

CSOs trained in advocacy under ICSP increased their scores on the Organizational Assessment Tool by an average increase of 50%. These new skills were translated into action through a wide range of successful advocacy campaigns conducted by CSOs. More than 200 CSOs associated with ICSP undertook advocacy actions to advance women's rights and expand their participation in democratic processes, including advocacy related to gender equality under law and campaigns against violence against women and female genital mutilation. CSOs engaged in advocacy against corruption participated in a wide range of activities including: educating the public and government officials on recognizing and rejecting corruption; conducting provincial surveys on public perceptions of corruption in their local government; holding town hall meetings to discuss the results of these surveys with Provincial Councils and establishing follow-up anti-corruption working groups to take action. Human rights CSOs conducted general advocacy for human rights as well as specialized advocacy for the rights of children and detainees. Many CSOs undertook public education campaigns to advocate for human rights, including workshops, mobile theater, posters, banners, art shows and festivals. Other advocacy focused on the Iraqi security sector, including police and prison officials and Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense employees, to raise police awareness of human rights. CSOs developed partnerships with police departments in Basra, Mosul, Kirkuk, Hilla, Karbala, Diwaniyah, and elsewhere. ICSP also established a strong working relationship with the Ministry of State for Human Rights and the Parliament's Committee on Human Rights.

#### **EXPANDED TECHNICAL RESOURCES FOR ONGOING DEVELOPMENT OF IRAQI CIVIL SOCIETY**

ICSP significantly expanded Iraqi resources for the development of civil society. In addition to ICSP's Resource Centers, scores of civil society organizations and trainers were trained to deliver training and technical assistance services throughout Iraq. These CSOs and trainers, located across the country, are able to deliver training and technical assistance in such targeted technical areas as civic education, women's advocacy, anti-corruption, and human rights. Training and resource materials in Arabic and applicable to the Iraq situation were developed and widely distributed to Iraqi CSOs.