Iraq Foundation

Background & Projects’ History

30 years of Excellence

Brief history of the Iraq Foundation

The mission of the Iraq Foundation (IF) is to promote democracy and human rights, and to facilitate the recovery of Iraq, its people, and its civic institutions.

IF is a non-profit, non-governmental organization established by Iraqi expatriates in 1991. IF is an independent, nonpartisan, nonsectarian, and non-ethnic organization.

IF operates from its headquarter office in Washington DC and its office in Baghdad. It was founded by Iraqis and continues to have a strong women representation in its leadership team.

Promoting our mission’s guiding values of freedom, democracy, human rights, equality and justice, Iraq Foundation aims at strengthening civil society as a fourth pillar of the state, with a particular focus on promoting gender equality. We pursue this goal by

- promoting the equal participation of Iraqi women and minorities in the public and private spheres in Iraq;
- Promoting human rights education and protection, including strategies to prevent violence and extremism and GBV;
- Fostering the development of institutions of civil society in Iraq through training, education and empowerment programs;
- Developing strategies for Iraq’s transition to a pluralist democracy;
- Working with Iraqi state institutions to promote responsiveness and transparency in the public sector;

Valuing the pluralism within Iraqi society, our work all across the country is guided by our strategy of inclusion: Our programming relies on longstanding networks of and forging new partnerships with NGOs and the broad spectrum of groups in civil society and local communities, as well as within Iraq’s many political parties and the government sectors.

Seeking buy-in from our stakeholders, we design our programs in response to their evolving needs, and conduct our work guided by our commitment to transparency, integrity and ethical conduct.

Sample projects

UNAMI - Phase 3 “Election Watch”:
Assisting women candidates to counter gender-based violence and hate speech during the election campaign. April 2021 - January 2022
Funded by UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

In the period leading up to the parliamentary elections in October 2021, IF carried out a 10-month project aiming to help women candidates for elected office and civil society groups counter hate speech and gender-based violence (GBV) during the election campaign. The project built upon the results of IF’s project UNAMI project, Phases 1-2, on Strengthening Women’s Political Participation (2019-2020), and especially on the Needs Assessment Report of Phase One, ‘Women Running for Elected Office in Iraq: Needs and Challenges’, submitted to UNAMI in March 2020. UNAMI-3 contributed to the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (2019) at country level with a focus on gender-based violence (GBV) and hate speech against women candidates for elected office in Iraq during the campaign period in 2021.
Aiming to publicize GBV and hate speech occurrences against women candidates during the election campaign, and analyzing patterns and trends to formulate recommendations on how to prevent and mitigate gender-based harassment against women candidates, the project is also aligned with two key UN Policy Directives, Promoting Women’s Electoral and Political Participation (2013), and Preventing and Mitigating Election-Related Violence (2016).

**BRYC, 2020-22**
**Building Resilience of Youth and Communities against Violent Extremism and Radicalization**
**Funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Building on the success of our Women Against Violence and Extremism Project (WAVE, 2018-19), IF is embarking on a project to enable youth and community-members to build resilience against violent extremism and radicalization as a prerequisite to peaceful and stable communities. The Iraq Foundation along with its three local partners are implementing the project in four Iraqi governorates: Baghdad, Al-Anbar, Salahuddin, and Ninawa. The targeted beneficiaries in each location include (1) professionals (school teachers, Community Police members, social workers); (2) community leaders (religious clerics, mukhtars, local officials) who have influence; (3) local communities and families (4) school-aged youth; and (5) college-aged youth. The project will also train PVE Youth Leaders (age 18 to 25) who then conduct a mentoring program with school-aged children and help them build PVE-themed projects. The total number of anticipated beneficiaries in all project locations is anticipated to be more than 2000 people.

**Improving Policy, Service Delivery, Gender Equality and Responsiveness to Iraqi Citizens: 2018 - 2022**
**Funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)**

Developed jointly by the Iraq Foundation and Global Partners Governance (GPG), this project was a direct response to requests for support from senior politicians, officials, parliamentary staff and civil society organizations after the May 2018 elections in Iraq. The project aimed to contribute to a stable environment in Iraq by facilitating the development of good governance, improving policy and effective service delivery, and increasing the responsiveness of parliament to citizens’ concerns. It aimed to do this by fostering the link between citizens and the Iraqi Parliament through different mechanisms of engagement, which were jointly developed by stakeholders in inclusive processes. The project also had a cross-cutting focus on strengthening women’s politicians to advance greater gender equality in policies, legislation and political representation.

The project’s objectives were addressed through four areas of intervention, namely to support, i) Strategic and reform-focused political leadership within parliament, ii) Parliamentary committees to adopt more inclusive and evidence-based policy mechanism, iii) Linking parliament with the provinces and constituencies on service delivery, and iv) Cross-cutting support to women politicians to address persistent gender inequalities in both policies and political representation.

Main achievements facilitated by IF in this project include, but are not limited to:

- Mechanisms for improved engagement between parliament and civil society on service delivery, co-developed with parliamentary committees, with regional offices of parliament and CSOs,
- Strengthened regional offices of parliament (COROs) as effective liaisons to citizens, and built capacities of CSOs for their effective interaction with COROs
- Enhanced knowledge and skills for women MPs to help implement and monitor UNSCR 1325 in Iraq
- Greater awareness and capacity of women MPs in legislative affairs and to advance gender equality in policies and legislation.

**UNAMI Phases 1-2, 2019 - 2020**
**Strengthening Women’s Political Participation**
**Funded by UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)**

The Iraq Foundation (IF), through its local affiliate Iraq Foundation for Democracy and Human Rights (IFDHR), carried out a two-phase project aiming to strengthen women’s participation in political life at the national and sub-national levels, and enhance the capabilities of
women in seeking public office. The elections to the provincial councils (PC) in spring 2020 presented an opportunity to understand the needs of women candidates and some of the skills they must hone, and to provide them with targeted support to enhance their credibility with the electorate.

The "Summer Enrichment Program for Disadvantaged Children", 2018
Funded by the NUMI Foundation

The Foundation received a grant from NUMI in June 2018 to implement a "Summer Enrichment Program for Disadvantaged Children". The program was implemented by the Iraq Foundation local affiliate, the Iraq Foundation for Human Rights and Democracy Support. IFHRD provided eight weeks of remedial education and enrichment to 11 and 12-year old children in a poor neighborhood of Baghdad. Classes were provided from early July to early September 2018. The curriculum covered math, science, and Arabic, as well as art classes and out of class experiences in art and history. Parents, school principals, teachers, and local jurisdictions were engaged in support of the program.

WAVE, 2018 - 2019
Women Against Violence and Extremism
funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Iraq Foundation implemented a 13-month, ground-breaking pilot project in Ninawa, Anbar, and Salaheddin governorates with the goal of equipping women to build family and community resilience against violence and extremism and contribute to social peace in their communities. It successfully built the capacities of women leaders to identify markers and indicators of radicalization and violence, to teach skills to counter violent extremism within communities, and raise awareness and advocacy for women’s role as the first line of defense against extremism. The goal was to enable women, particularly those who had lost loved ones, to become agents for peace and moderation, to bolster resilience to radicalization among family members, and to develop women-led, community-based solutions to the problem of violence and extremism. The project was funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Empowering Returnee Women (ERW), 2017
Funded by GIZ

ERW promoted stabilization in liberated areas from Daesh (ISIS) by strengthening the capacity of Female Head of Households (FHH) and other women in those areas to become effective leaders and advocate for the needs of women and families, and empower them to act as ambassadors for their communities. ERW operated in the provinces of Nenawa, Anbar, and Salaheddin. Through funding from the German government and cooperation with IOM, ERW provided a pathway for women to act as advocates for themselves and their communities in the public arena and to effectively engage with authorities and with their communities to overcome challenges to stability and security.
Internally Displaced Persons, 2017

The Iraq Foundation worked closely with local humanitarian organizations with which we have established long-term relations to provide for the essential needs of IDPs through a fundraising campaign.

Donations allowed for the immediate distribution of aid by our partner NGOs, as well as financing needs assessments for IDPs.

In Ninawa, IF and its partners have provided food and supplies to hundreds of IDPs. Diverse communities have benefited from our aid, including Christians, Muslims, Yazidis, and Shabak, who have been deprived of aid due to their proximity to ISIS-controlled territories.

Donations also allowed IF and its Ninawa and Kirkuk-based affiliates to conduct needs assessments. IF has identified thousands of families that are still in need of food and basic supplies.

Al-Rasid, 2014 – 2017
Funded by the United States Department of State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Al-Rasid (meaning "the monitor" in Arabic) had the goal of supporting the National Strategy and National Action Plan (NAP) of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace, and Security) and aimed to holistically address GBV in Iraq. The project was funded by the United States Department of State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

It targeted national and provincial stakeholders, female victims of violence, including women displaced as the result of conflict, community members, and Iraqi society at large, in order to build national and local capacity for the implementation of the NAP and raise awareness for increased protections for victims of GBV, including boys and men.

HEWAR, 2013 – 2015
Funded by the US Department of State’s Division of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

The Hewar Initiative to Enhance Judicial Outreach and Transparency was funded by the US Department of State’s Division of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. The project developed the capacity of Iraq’s High Judicial Council to work with media outlets, provide open access to information, communicate their missions to the public and educate the public about their rights under the criminal justice system.
**TABEIR, 2013 – 2015**  
**Technological Advance to Bolster Freedom of Expression in Iraq**  
**Funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)**

TABEIR was a 24-month initiative aiming to promote democracy and protect freedom of expression (FOE) by empowering civic actors to become agents for change. This project was funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

TABEIR aimed to promote democracy and protect freedom of expression by empowering civic actors to become agents for change. The project enabled journalists and activists to use advanced communication technologies to identify, document, and report on freedom of expression through targeted training based on needs assessments.

TABEIR has established a network of NGOs working on these issues which operates a data retrieval system compiling information on freedom of expression violations. Finally, TABEIR empowers freedom of expression activists through supporting advocacy initiatives and awareness-raising efforts.

**IYLEP, 2013 – 2014**  
**Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program**  
**Funded by Meridian International Center**

The Iraq Foundation (IF), in partnership with Meridian International Center, implemented IYLEP. IF provided networking opportunities for Iraqi youth to engage with one another. The program gave young Iraqis the chance to build their leadership skills and provided them the tools needed to develop their own youth-led projects for community change upon their return home.

All activities focused on providing income-generating opportunities, economic self-reliance, and growth for the

**PEACE, 2012 – 2014**  
**Peaceful Empowerment, Advocacy and Cooperation to End Violence**  
**Funded by the US Department of State Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues**

PEACE aimed to promote peace and end violence through supporting a women-led advocacy and action coalition. It established a National Task Force on the Elimination of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and provided a national platform for individuals and community-based organizations to advance successful efforts to eliminate GBV. In addition, it offered legal protection and representation for women who had been affected by gender violence. This project was funded by the US Department of State Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues.

**WIES, 2012 – 2014**  
**The Widows’ Initiative for Economic Sustainability**  
**Funded by the US Department of State Secretary’s Office of Global Women’s Issues**

The Iraq Foundation was awarded a grant from the US Department of State Secretary’s Office of Global Women’s Issues to implement a 24 month project for Iraq aimed at economically empowering over 500 female heads of household in Iraq by building skills, promoting entrepreneurship, and connecting them with employment opportunities.

The project was implemented in five provinces. It created jobs for female heads of household (FHH) and developed business opportunities so that FHH could attain economic independence.
targeted beneficiaries, and allowed them to tap into all resources available at the local and national level.

Interfaith Cooperation Project (ICP), 2011 – 2012  
Funded by the United States Department of State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The goal of this project was to expand religious freedom for all Iraqi faith communities and promote mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. Teams of young Iraqi men and women from different religious backgrounds and provinces came together to produce 15 documentaries on significant religious historic sites across Iraq. The documentaries, which were produced with the assistance and support of Al-Sumaria TV, sought to highlight the rich heritage of religious diversity that lives on in modern Iraq and build understanding among Iraq’s religious and ethnic communities. Project participants held 63 screenings of the documentaries in 15 provinces, reaching an audience of over 8,000 people.

Documentaries were broadcasted on five national Iraqi TV stations including, Al-Sumaria, Al-Iraqiya, Al-Fayhaa, Biladi, and Al-Baghdadiya. It is estimated that one in four Iraqis have seen at least one of the documentaries. In October of 2012, IF held a screening in Washington, DC of a film produced in cooperation with Al-Sumaria, which is based on the 15 documentaries produced by the project participants.

PEDP, 2009 – 2012  
Post Elections Democracy Promotion Project  
Funded by the United States Department of State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The Iraq Foundation worked with a consortium of US and Iraqi organizations towards bolstering national reconciliation, good governance, and robust civic engagement as a part of the Post Elections Democracy Promotion (PEDP) Project.

The project sought to implement greater democratization and civic organizing through increased youth civic leadership, civic education and women’s leadership, while at the same time monitoring the state of civil and political liberties externally. Through a partnership with the American University in Iraq, Freedom House, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center, IF helped to maximize the inclusion of women and students in Iraqi civic discourse. The project also increased government accountability by enhancing the ability of Iraqi civil society to monitor on the government’s protection of civil and political liberties.