Iraq Foundation

المعهد العراقي

Global Partners Governance

Iraq Foundation-Global Partners Governance
Project Report

**Improving Policy, Service Delivery, Gender Equality and
Responsiveness to Iraqi Citizens**

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Executive Summary

This progress report covers the initial six-month period (between October 2018 and March 2019) of the Iraq Foundation/Global Partners Governance (IF/GPG) project providing support to the Council of Representatives (CoR) and civil society organisations (CSOs) in Iraq. Despite the early reporting timeframe, this report sets out some of the initial activities, where traction for the project objectives is already evident amongst Iraqi stakeholders and highlights where we believe indications of longer-term progress are starting to emerge.

The initial six-month period of the project has coincided with protracted attempts to form a government in Iraq. In October Adil Abdul-Mahdi was appointed as Prime Minister, Mohamed Al-Halbousi as Speaker of the CoR, and Barham Salih as President. Since then the major political blocs have been engaged in negotiations with the Prime Minister, and each other, to form a Cabinet of Ministers. The majority of the Ministerial posts were filled by early 2019, however, at the time of writing, four remain vacant: Interior, Defence, Justice and Education. Although coverage has focused on disagreements between the *Bina* bloc (led by Hadi Al-Amery) and *Islah* bloc (led by Moqtada Al-Sadr), the failure to appoint a cabinet reflects both inter-bloc and intra-bloc manoeuvring. It is not clear when all the appointments will be made, but given that the formation of all Iraq's political institutions is a complex process of negotiation and balancing different interests, it means that at the end of the first six months, the chairs of the parliamentary committees had not yet been formally appointed. In addition, the wrangling within government means that there have been only two bills sent to parliament, and the committees are only just starting to develop work programmes for the next few years.

It is against this backdrop that the project has sought progress in the four project strands, namely; i) strategic political leadership, ii) effective parliamentary committees, iii) linking parliament with provinces and constituencies and iv) cross-cutting support to women MPs.

We are pleased progress is in line with the outcomes matrix (Annex) and we are confident we will make progress on the longer-term strategic objectives of this project.

i)   Strategic political leadership

Because of GPG/IF's previous work in Iraq, we were able to access senior stakeholders in the CoR from the very start of the project. We have had productive meetings with the Speaker and his staff around key reform areas. The Speaker has asked us to concentrate on four areas of support: a) building the capacity of MPs, b) developing the parliamentary code of ethics and conduct, c) targeted support to the Finance, Reconstruction, Legal and Regions committees, and d) strategic communications for parliament as a whole. These requests have formed the basis for an MoU between IF/GPG and the CoR, which is currently with the Speaker for signing. We are now designing and implementing assistance with the Speaker's office in these four areas.

We have also held numerous meetings with senior parliamentary staff who are all fully supportive of this project and its objectives. We have the approval of the Secretary General and his staff, and we are developing implementation plans with Haider Muthana (Head of the Parliamentary Directorate) around support to committees, Dr Mayada Hachemi (Head of the Research Directorate) around establishing performance indicators for parliament, committees and monitoring of government delivery, and Salam Ali (Head of Protocol/International Affairs Directorate) around international exchange of expertise between parliaments.

ii)   Effective parliamentary committees

The recommendations from the Speaker and the Head of the Parliamentary Directorate are that we should seek to work with the following committees: Reconstruction and Services Committee, Women's Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee, Finance Committee, Legal Committee, and the Committee for the Oversight of the Implementation of the Government Programme and Strategic Planning. We have also been approached to work with the Human Rights Committee and the Media Committee who are keen to work with us.

This strand of work has, obviously, been hampered by the failure to appoint committee chairs. In the absence of formal committee leaders, we have had productive meetings with senior MPs on several of these committees. The Reconstruction and Services Committee, Women's Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee, Finance Committee and Government Strategy committee seem to be the most likely starting points for our work, and we have already started the strategic planning process with them. As explained in the report below, we expect progress to speed up in the next six months as parliament settles down, and our bigger problem may be in managing expectations as we will not be able to support all the committees who would like to work with us.

iii)   Linking Parliament with the Provinces and Constituencies

The third strand aims to create more productive links between the concerns of citizens locally with the policy and legislative concerns in the CoR. Because politicians in Baghdad have been mostly concerned with the formation of government, and because there have been few substantive policy discussions in the parliament, it has been difficult to engage MPs in this strand so far. However, the parliament's network of regional offices, one in each governorate, offers an additional entry point and we have been able to engage with staff of these office and those who oversee the network in Baghdad.

We have secured the backing of the Head of the Parliamentary Directorate, who is responsible for the co-ordination of all the CoR regional offices around Iraq, for this strand of work. We held a very productive meeting in Baghdad with staff from the Basra and Nineveh CoR offices. The meeting identified some of the principal challenges faced locally, and we have since conducted a survey engaging with 20 regional CoR offices, which will provide the basis for the project strategy over the next two and a half years. In addition, the political context over the summer may increase political attention on local issues if, as some are predicting, hot weather and a lack of reliable electricity mean that there are protests in many of the Provinces. Results from the survey are clearly demonstrating that electricity, water, health and education are the main policy areas of public concern.

iv)   Cross-cutting support to women MPs

Over the first six months we delivered three seminars to newly-elected women MPs around legislation, parliamentary oversight, leadership skills and gender-sensitive policy-making. IF and GPG were involved in the parliamentary conference to mark international women's day, and we will be seeking to build on those initial seminars and contacts over the coming months.

The project's support to women MPs is a feature of the other three strands as well as a strand in its own right. For example, Huda Sajjad and Ala Talabani are in the running for being elected as Committee Chairs (Services and Reconstruction Committee and Foreign Affairs Committee respectively). As prominent and experienced politicians we would be seeking to support them in that role, and both are eager for us to provide that support. That support will also involve work with the Women's Caucus, and although again the leadership of the caucus is uncertain until other positions have been formalised, we have already developed a productive working relationship with the caucus. Haifa Al-Amine has already been appointed as the chair of the Women's Committee, as

has Samia Al-Ghallab as chair of the Media Committee, both who are newly elected MPs, and have engaged with IF and GPG in the seminars, requesting specific strategic support for them and their committees.

In summary, the first six months marked a solid start, albeit in difficult political circumstances. The politics of Iraq continue to be uncertain, but we are buoyed by the level of traction that the project's objectives have already achieved with the key political stakeholders in Iraq. It appears that the targeted, politically agile and expert form of support being offered by IF/GPG is distinct from all other implementers currently operating in the CoR. We will aim to build on these foundations during the next months.

Appendix: Given the political complexity and uncertainty in Iraq, we fully expect that over the lifetime of the project we will see significant changes in context, which will in turn shape the prospects for reform in specific areas. The project will therefore need to be highly adaptive, based on an ongoing political analysis. The appendix sets out a framework for operationalising a form of political economy analysis/adaptive programming, which may provide a basis for future reporting based on the political context. It is included here as a draft outline, and we will discuss the framework with SIDA in order to refine it as a reporting tool.

Introduction and overview

Following the May 2018 elections in Iraq, both GPG and IF received numerous requests from parliamentary committees in the CoR including the Legal Committee, the Human Rights Committee and the Religious Endowments Committee, to provide them with support on developing mechanisms for public engagement in the decision-making process in line with international best practice. The election results revealed a public weary with the direction of Iraqi politics and seeking visible signs of a new approach and a more inclusive and responsive form of policy-making. The project was designed to target four main areas of deficiency, namely:

a) The quality and timeliness of **policy and legislation** emerging from government and parliament, which reflects problems of leadership, organisation and co-ordination within and between government and parliament. It also reflects a failure by parliamentary committees – which are internationally the main route for evidence gathering on public policy issues – to engage and involve the public effectively in the policy process.

b) The quality of **service delivery** at the local level. There is little, if any, follow-up once legislation is passed by parliament, and the links between Baghdad and provincial governments remain both tense and fragmentary, often revolving around finance and administration more than service delivery.

c) The **responsiveness** of politicians and the CoR as a whole to emerging public concerns.

d) The need to improve **gender equality** within Iraq's political processes and to ensure that issues of relevance to women and men, boys and girls, receive equal treatment.

1. Strategic and Reform-Focused Political Leadership within Parliament
A series of internal procedural reforms within the CoR to improve its efficiency and effectiveness, with practical measures to improve external co-ordination with government, and seek to create a greater engagement with civil society and the wider public during the policy-making process:

- Enhanced co-ordination and collaboration between Speakership and Government around the planning, scrutiny and follow-up of legislation - leading to better management by the Speakership of the legislative process.
- Improved internal processes for co-ordination, communication and strategy within the Speakership.
- Improved systems for engaging the public and civil society as a routine part of committee work and parliament-wide standards for monitoring committee performance.
- More efficient parliament through the identification and implementation of reforms to the legislative process in conjunction with the Speakership and parliamentary administration.
- Focused mentoring for women in senior positions, both politicians and staff.

2. Parliamentary Committees adopt more inclusive and evidence-based policy mechanisms
Supporting the effectiveness of the CoR's committees as a driver of more inclusive policy processes, and committees' role in post-legislative scrutiny:

- The new committees develop improved representative function and capacity, through the development and implementation of techniques and standard practices for consultation and

engagement with citizens and representative groups to evaluate the delivery of existing laws as well as proposals for new ones.

- NGOs and think tanks develop better measurement tools for the impact of legislation and apply them constructively to the public policy process.
- There is improved cross-party dialogue, coordination and collaboration within and between CoR committees, reducing the duplication of effort and conflicting recommendations which have been a feature of previous parliaments.
- The quality of legislation and policy proposals issued by Committees is improved, by working with committee MPs and staff on key skills, understanding of policy areas, development of new systems and establishment of standard committee practices.

3. Linking Parliament with the Provinces and Constituencies on Service Delivery

Create routes by which politicians and civil society are able to apply that local experience and expertise to inform the development of policy and legislation at the centre:

This objective aims to improve:
- Coordination of service provision at the local level, by linking local representative groups and citizens into the national policy process, via the network of CoR regional offices.
- Greater responsiveness to public needs through more robust systems for monitoring delivery and quality assurance mechanisms at local level including through MPs.
- Improved policy process through the development of systems to feedback evidence and examples from the locality to Provincial Government, Council of Representatives and Government.

4. Cross-cutting Support to Women Politicians

Supporting women politicians in Iraq and improving representation of women in political institutions at both the federal and provincial level:

- Regular and routine cross-party dialogue between female Members of Parliament, through the establishment of trusted mechanisms for discussion and development of policy and service delivery issues.
- More prominent role played by women MPs within parliament, by providing support and mentoring to women MPs in committees and parliamentary leadership positions.
- Gender analysis as standard within the policy and legislative process, through the production of gender-disaggregated data by Research Directorate and routine use of such material by committees.

Theory of Change
If more responsive and inclusive routes to policy-making can be created between civil society and Iraq's key political institution, the CoR,
Then the quality and gender equality of service delivery will improve in Iraq,
Because public concerns will be more systematically fed into the policy and legislation process and there will be better scrutiny and accountability of policy delivery by the government.

Political Context

After the elections, the government is still not fully formed, and the Prime Minister, Adil Abdul-Mahdi has not been able to gain enough support to appoint all of his Cabinet Ministers. It is not clear all the current Ministers will stay in their posts. Political protests and citizens' unrest have continued to broil due to poor service provision and the challenges of reconstruction of Iraqi societies post-Daesh.

The current political context has three significant implications for international assistance to Iraq's political institutions and the policy process. First, the new parliament and government faces high public expectations and increased pressure to deliver results on the ground. Second, the composition of the parliament has changed with around 200 of its 329 members entirely new to parliament. Third, although political negotiations continue about the formation of the new government, there will be new figures in positions of political leadership in parliament and ministries responsible for developing and delivering on policy.

The first six months of this project, up to March 2019, have laid the foundations for implementation of activities by securing high-level senior support for the project's objectives. We are pleased with the level of traction and buy-in we have achieved in this short space of time, particularly given the competing political priorities affecting the institution. We have also used this time to identify alternative entry points not envisaged in the original proposal, for example, work with the Research Directorate on setting parliamentary indicators and monitoring government performance, and with the CoR Regional Offices on local-national routes of communication. These are explained in more detail below.

1) Strategic and Reform-Focused Political Leadership within Parliament

The first strand of the project seeks to strengthen the strategic leadership within the CoR. As we set out in the original proposal, the purpose is to support parliamentary leaders in developing the internal mechanisms of the CoR, implementing procedural reforms, and co-ordinating dialogue around policy priorities between different trends to improve both the legislative and accountability functions of parliament.

The proposal identified the Speaker and Deputy Speakers and senior staff, including the Secretary General and the Heads of Directorates, as the principal interlocutors for this strand of work. It is their leadership that will set the tone for parliamentary dialogue and determine whether reforms will be fully implemented. Over the first six months we have established agreement with all these key interlocutors around the project's objectives, and are pleased with the level of traction that our project has achieved over this period. The Speaker, in particular is eager for the project to work with committees, on a parliamentary code of conduct, and on strategic communications, all of which forms the basis of an MoU between the project and the CoR, which we expect to be signed off imminently, and is described in more detail below.

Support to the Speaker of Parliament

We met with the Speaker in February and March this year to discuss ways in which we might support his strategic leadership of the parliament and are in regular contact with the senior staff he deputed to work with us on the project's objectives. The Speaker is aware of both IF and GPG's work with previous parliaments and was enthusiastic about the prospect of further support. We have developed a Memorandum of Understanding which is currently with the Speaker for signing and covers four main areas of support:

i)   Building the capacity of MPs

The Speaker was enthusiastic for GPG and IF to build the capacity of Iraqi MPs to be effective in their roles, especially given that the majority are newly elected MPs. This will best be achieved through training and peer-to-peer mentoring through the other project strands (such as committee work). The Speaker clearly explained that MPs need better tools and techniques, drawn from international best practice, on how to effectively manage and scrutinise legislation.

ii)   Developing and amending the parliamentary code of ethics and conduct.

The conduct of MPs has been a repeated issue in Iraq and was again called into question in December 2018, when the Prime Minister, Abdul-Mahdi put forward his cabinet nominations for the CoR to vote on. With a majority of new MPs taking up their places in the CoR, the Speaker faces some challenges in engaging and educating MPs on the parliamentary code of ethics and conduct. GPG was instrumental in the design and implementation of the code of ethics and conduct from the previous parliamentary term, under the previous Speaker Salim Jabouri and Deputy Speaker Shaikh Humam. Several prominent MPs close to the Speaker expressed to GPG and IF that the code of ethics and conduct is an area of concern and requires a continuation of our previous engagements.

iii)   Support to key committees

The Speaker was eager for us to provide targeted support to several committees. GPG previously worked closely with one of the Speaker's senior advisers, Mohammed Jawad, when he was the senior staff member on the Finance Committee, and both the Speaker and Mohammed Jawad were keen for us to continue to work with the Finance Committee in this parliament, given its critical role in the budget oversight process as well as in oversight of economic, trade and investment policy, crucial to Iraq's future prosperity. The Speaker also asked that we consider working with the Services and Reconstruction Committee, the Regions Committee and the Legal Committee. The specific roles of each committee are explained at more length in the next section, but with current resources it is unlikely we will be able to provide support to all the committees with whom we have been asked to work, and will need to manage expectations within the CoR. The next step will be to meet individually with potential target committees to evaluate the level of interest and political will to participate in reforms.

iv)   Strategic Communications

We discussed the importance for the Speaker to highlight key aspects of his approach to parliamentary leadership and a strategic programme of reform. The Speaker also explained his priority to project the CoR's efforts and achievements to the Iraqi people, and to the international community. We will work with Speaker's senior staff to develop that strategy and a communications plan to run alongside it.

This will involve a) public communications strategy for the Speaker around his leadership (internal and external facing), b) strategic communications by parliament, e.g. work of the individual committees and policy areas tied to a central CoR strategy, c) communicating effectively with the international community.

Engagement with Deputy Speakers

We met with and secured support for our project from the Second Deputy Speaker, Dr Bashir Al-Haddad, and his Chief of Staff, with whom we worked previously. Dr Bashir is keen for us to work with committees as well as provide support to the Kurdistan region and parliament. We will continue to keep these lines of communications open. Dr. Haddad is supportive of women MPs

attaining more prominent roles. He has provided IF staff with permanent passes to the COR which has eased and facilitated IF's contact with MPs.

IF has a good relationship with the First Deputy Speaker, Hassan Al-Kaabi, who is responsible for internal affairs of the CoR and is supportive of our project objectives. GPG has no direct contact with the First Deputy Speaker, largely due to Sairun's official stance on having no contact or lines of communications with the UK and US. Through GPG's reputation and contacts in the CoR, the First Deputy Speaker is aware of GPG's previous work on reforms and is supportive of our project. As we have done in the past, we will continue to work around this. This ability to navigate political sensitivities is one of the strengths of the collaboration between IF and GPG.

Summary

We have built a strong foundation with the Speaker, Secretary General and key Director Generals in the CoR, all of whom have shown eagerness and strong support for our work, and value such assistance at a critically early stage of the CoR's formation. We will build on the four areas mentioned above through the planned activities over the coming months.

Support to Parliamentary Directorates

On our first visit to Baghdad, we were able to meet with the Secretary General, Salahuddin Zangana, and the Deputy Secretary General Dr Baadi, with the support of Haidar Muthana, Head of the Parliamentary Directorate. Dr Baadi arranged a meeting with all the Heads of the Directorates, to discuss our project proposals, and establish how best we can support the Director Generals and senior staff across the CoR as a whole. They were highly supportive of our work, and on the basis of their feedback, we have targeted three directorates as our key contacts and interlocuters, Haidar Muthana, Head of the Parliamentary Directorate, Dr Mayada Hachimi, Head of the Research Directorate, and Ali Salam, Head of the Protocol/ International Affairs Directorate. These three Directorates were indicated by the Speaker for us to support, and who have the most interaction with parliamentary committees and offer the greatest opportunities for impact in public engagement.

- Support to Haidar Muthana, Head of the **Parliamentary Directorate** will mainly consist of developing strategic plans for committees and regional CoR offices. He has highlighted the importance of working with the Services Committee, Finance Committee, Government Strategic Planning Committee, Women's Committee and Regions Committee. He also highlighted the importance of working with key regions such as Nineveh, Basra, Karbala and Anbar, where there has been public unrest, or which are emerging from occupation by Daesh.

- Support to Dr Mayada Hachimi, Head of the **Research Directorate** has focused so far on providing tools and techniques on how to measure the performance of committees and the CoR as a whole, using the data collated for the parliamentary term 2014-2018. This will serve as the basis for an annual parliamentary publication, and we have already delivered an intensive seminar[1] on how to write, structure and present findings, based on similar examples in parliaments internationally. The report will serve three purposes: (1) to help the Speaker/parliamentary leaders co-ordinate and evaluate the work of the individual

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[1] This seminar took place in April, a few weeks outside of the reporting period of this report; October 2018 – March 2019.

committees; (2) to provide an internal stimulus for better performance amongst committees; and (3) to provide public accountability on the performance of parliament.

We also worked with the Research Directorate on starting to measure the government's performance more systematically, which will help to provide a monitor of whether the government is delivering in key policy areas against its programme, and provide useful materials and mechanisms for committees on which to base their oversight approaches, thus improving parliament's overall ability to hold the government to account. We envisage linking this stream of work with the new Government Strategy Committee (which is explained in more detail below).

Summary

Again, within this strand, we have achieved a solid basis from which we can build over the coming months. We have attained a strong sense of buy-in and traction with key senior staff in both the Parliamentary and Research Directorates, who are eager for our help, and have requested further support, which we will be able to deliver. We have made excellent progress with the Research Directorate, which gives us a structure for our future work with both the Speakership (in monitoring/ co-ordinating committee activity) and with the Committees themselves (providing a performance template for all committees to follow).

Legislature-Executive Communication and Co-ordination

As noted above, GPG began work to improve liaison and coordination between the government and parliament in Iraq during a previous project, which has been a perennial issue for successive parliaments. One of the previous reforms that GPG suggested was appointing parliamentary liaison officers to liaise with each ministry. This was implemented in 2017, but in somewhat truncated form. We are returning to this with Speaker's office and Head of Parliamentary Directorate.

However, the absence of a complete government and lack of policy substance mean that we have not pushed the parliamentary authorities on their links with government at this stage. Political sensitivities abound in that relationship until all government appointments have been made. We plan to make connections with Council of Ministers informally in the next few months. But this element of strategic leadership will have to wait for the government to form.

2) More Effective Parliamentary Committees

We have held constructive meetings with several key committees, their members, interim chairs and committee staff, some of whom we have known for many years from GPG's and IF's previous projects in Baghdad. The impact achieved through this previous work was evident when meeting with committee members, who referenced and acknowledged our work with committees in the previous parliamentary term and requested a similar approach to build on past achievements for this new term.

The level of demand from committees is a positive challenge but means there are more committees than we can actually work with given the level of resources. We will need to make a decision on which committees to engage directly, based on policy area, capacity of personnel and members, as well as not duplicating with other support. However, the current lack of chairs and policy/legislative substance on which to work, means that we are focusing on planning and analysis, and will aim to make these decisions in the next few months.

The purpose of the strand is to increase the ability of parliamentary committees to deliver effective policy legislation and oversight. Although the plenary session of any parliament generates the most media coverage, the detailed scrutiny and amendment of policy and legislation is conducted in committees. The effectiveness of the CoR's committees as a driver of more inclusive policy processes depends on the extent to which their members can put aside partisan or religious differences and work collaboratively to develop common policy objectives that deliver for all citizens and engage effectively with those on the receiving end of legislation and service delivery. In particular, committees should be playing a regular and routine role in post-legislative scrutiny (PLS), testing whether laws have been implemented properly, whether they are having the desired effect and whether they could be improved.

IF and GPG have secured support from the highest levels of leadership in the CoR, through the Speaker, Second Deputy Speaker, the Secretary General and his Deputy, and the Head (Director General) of the Parliamentary Department.

We are now in the process of establishing plans and strategies with various committees, having agreed on specific areas of support by IF and GPG. The absence of chairs has meant that development of our work programme and decision-making has been difficult, however, we are finding ways of working around these with the staff and committee members (MPs), as it is evident that the politicians themselves are very action-focused and eager to respond to their electorates' needs.

Support to Individual Committees

The following list of committees explains who we plan to support and work closely with in the coming year, which is the result of several discussions since December 2018. Although it is unlikely that we will be able to provide full support to all the committees, we will maintain links and continue to explore where we can provide indirect support, as we have done in the past.

- **Services and Reconstruction Committee.**

Initially suggested by Haidar Muthana, the Head of the Parliamentary Department, we met with members from the Services and Reconstruction Committee. It is unclear who will chair this important committee, however we met with Huda Sajjad and Alaa Al-Rabi'e, who are both in the running as chairs. Both MPs were eager for support from IF and GPG.

The meetings with the committee have been productive, including the committee staff, with whom GPG has worked previously. The staff were able to explain to the MPs their first-hand experience of the positive work and potential impact our support could provide for the committee. It was evident that housing and electricity are key policy areas of concerns, which may offer entry points for any potential committee inquiry. The committee agreed that GPG and IF would support in setting their strategy and planning for the upcoming parliamentary term, which we have initiated.

- **Finance Committee.**

The Speaker was keen for us to support the Finance Committee, due its important role in the oversight of the federal budget and economic reforms for Iraq. This was bolstered by the longstanding relationship we have with the committee's senior advisor, Mohammed Jawad, who also acts as a senior advisor to the Speaker. Again, in the absence an appointed chair, our formal programme of development for this committee has been delayed, but is still progressing informally through Mohammed Jawad. Support to this committee will most likely focus on the policy issues in

developing Iraq's banking and reform laws. This is one of the focal areas of the committee, and a policy topic on which GPG supported the committee in the previous parliamentary term. Whilst selecting the best policy area will be of importance, the tools, techniques and methodologies which we will provide to the committee members and staff will form the basis for long-term impact and sustainability as they can be applied to further policy areas. We are at the stage of compiling plans and strategies for the upcoming year on how we will coach and mentor the committee in conducting fact-finding, evidence-based inquiries, and scrutinising legislation through PLS processes.

- **Women's Committee.**

This is obviously an important committee in relation to the fourth strand of this project on support for women MPs. Haidar Muthana, Head of the Parliamentary Directorate, also advised that the committee could act as a central focus for gender mainstreaming efforts and gender related issues. IF has an excellent relationship with the newly elected MP and chair for the Women's Committee, Haifa Al-Amine (one of few committee chairs who has been formally appointed so far). Following several meetings and discussions, Haifa has highlighted the huge challenges she is facing in trying to set the direction of her committee and set clear priorities for the upcoming term. She expressed being overwhelmed by the sheer amount of work and expectations upon the committee. We will be starting to help her devise a strategy and plan for her committee, focusing on (a) internal challenges the committee faces inside the CoR (and the CoR's leadership) in prioritising gender related issues in legislation, and (b) external challenges for the committee to represent, respond and improve the lives of disadvantaged women.

- **Government Programme and Strategic Planning Committee.**
The committee's full title is 'Committee for Oversight of the Implementation of the Government Programme and Strategic Planning'. Several senior figures have suggested that we provide support to this Committee, including the Head of the Parliamentary Directorate. This is a new committee, which does not seem to have a direct parallel in any other parliament as its remit is to consider the Government's strategic plan, assess the extent to which Ministers are delivering on the strategy set out by the government and call Ministers to account on that basis. The membership of the Committee highlights its significance including very senior politicians. However, the Committee appears to combine roles of Committees that exist in other parliaments including the Liaison Committee in the UK, the Futures Committee in the Finnish Parliament, the Government Commitments committees which exist in the Indian Lokh Sabah and various African parliaments and the more traditional audit roles of a Public Accounts Committee, which exist in many Westminster-style parliaments.

Given the seniority of the membership involved, the chair of this committee will be critical in determining how it will operate and the sorts of issues on which it will focus. We have made initial approaches to the committee, but the detail of the support will be almost entirely dependent on the chair.

- **Human Rights Committee**
In a context such as Iraq, the Human Rights Committee has played an important role. GPG has worked with the Human Rights Committee in previous projects, and has helped them produce ground-breaking reports on issues such as human trafficking, as well as internal guides for parliamentary inquiries. In a post-Daesh era, this committee will have an even more significant role in advocating, responding to and representing issues facing marginalised and minority groups in Iraq. One important policy area which the committee is looking at is freedom of expression, both online

and offline, and journalists' rights in Iraq. Support to this committee will be dependent the project's resources, which the committee understands. Therefore, we are managing their expectations, are closely monitoring the committee's developments, and are in regular contact with them. We will continue to explore ways of providing support through the limited resources we can deploy in this project and its other strands.

- **Regions Committee**

Speaker Halbousi suggested we work closely with this committee because of the importance of decentralisation, but also as a way of responding to the challenges and issues facing Iraqis in many regions, who are perceived as being side-lined by Baghdad. We believe this committee could become more important in the coming year due to renewed pressures facing corrupt governors in certain provinces, and high levels of disillusionment amongst citizens due to a lack of improvement in service provision. Working with this committee will reinforce the strands of work on constituencies and provinces, and the third strand of this project below.

- **Legal Committee**

This is an important committee for the CoR and particularly the Speaker, because it oversees every bill. However, any support to this committee is likely to be highly technical, and consume considerable time and resources, considering the large number of committee members and volumes of legislation it deals with. We will continue to engage with the committees' challenges and priorities, but it may be that the largely internal-facing role of this committee is not a good fit for the priorities of the project to support external engagement and public involvement in policy-making.

Summary

We are pleased with the high levels of interest from several committees, although it currently outstrips our capacities and ability to support them. We will nonetheless begin to formalise plans and strategies with the committees with which we have made progress, and will seek additional funding if we believe there is merit in supporting additional committees. We believe we have a clear approach for supporting these committees, and once the chairs are approved, we expect to be able to progress to activities relatively quickly.

3) Linking Parliament with the Provinces and Constituencies on Service Delivery

The objective of the third strand is to create more productive links between the concerns of citizens locally and the policy and legislative concerns in the CoR. The rationale is to engage with and improve coordination between MPs, civil society and provincial government around improving policy and service delivery at the local level

This strand was designed as an incremental part of the project, which would build on initial work in the other three strands, and as such it is highly dependent on achieving engagement on specific policy issues amongst MPs and regional CoR offices. Because politicians in Baghdad have been mostly concerned with the formation of government, and because there have been few substantive policy discussions in the parliament, it has been difficult to engage MPs in this strand so far. However, we have identified another entry point for this work in the form of the regional parliamentary offices (CoR offices) which exist in each governorate, and which are an under-utilised resource in creating routes of communication between Baghdad and the provinces. This has received backing from Haidar Muthana, the Head of the Parliamentary Directorate, who is responsible for the co-ordination of all the CoR regional offices around Iraq, as well as the Head of

the Regional CoR Offices. In preparation for our objective to link provincial governments with key committees in CoR to support better service delivery, IF met with the Deputy Chair of the Baghdad Provincial Council, Mr. Mohammed Al-Rubaei, who strongly supported IF's and GPG's objectives. He mentioned the establishment of a Baghdad MPs caucus in CoR and suggested working with the caucus as an efficient entry-point for creating linkages.

GPG has worked previously with the CoR offices and has seen them develop from basic meeting spaces, often under-utilised by MPs, towards a more strategic resource that can provide targeted support for policy work. However, their competencies remain fragmentary and inconsistently used. A meeting we held in Baghdad with senior staff and managers from the CoR offices in Basra and Nineveh provinces identified some of the principal challenges they face locally, and we have since conducted a survey of all 20 regional CoR offices[2]. The results will provide the basis for the project strategy over the next two and a half years. Results from the survey are indicating that electricity, water, health and education are the main policy areas of concern, and has helped to compile a list of skills and training required for staff to effectively operate in their regional offices.

We now have a good understanding of the challenges facing the staff and managers in the regional CoR offices, which will form the basis for future work. We are in the process of turning the survey results into both a strategy for project support and a set of detailed activities that we will undertake with the CoR offices to achieve this strategy. The results will also be shared with the relevant leadership levels in the CoR (such as the Speakership, the Head of the Parliamentary Department, the Head of the Research Department). This opens up positive prospects for development in the coming year, particularly with the relevant committees in helping them to focus on policy areas and specific regions.

4) Cross-cutting support to women MPs

The implementation of project activities has progressed very well over the past six months and has achieved the planned intermediate outcomes, with engagement with newly elected, influential MPs, as well as long-standing and established MPs. In the early stages, we identified key female MPs who were re-elected and with whom GPG and IF have longstanding relationships, such as Ala Talabani, Huda Sajjad, Intisar Jabouri and Dr Majida Tamimi. They have been important in building relationships with the newly elected MPs, endorsing our project, but also exemplifying GPG's and IF's approaches to using locally led expertise and knowledge. We have held three intensive seminars[3] with women MPs so far, and have a sound plan for implementation in the months to come.

The rationale of this fourth strand builds on, and informs all of the previous three objectives, as a cross-cutting theme of all our work in supporting women politicians in Iraq. Women politicians have played an important role in the Iraqi parliament and public life. Yet, they remain under-represented in senior political, party and public positions. The inadequate representation of women in political institutions at both the federal and provincial level distorts the way in which policy is formulated and implemented. This cross-cutting strand aims to support women politicians at every level, but particularly in leadership roles within the parliament, as well as improving skills and tools for women MPs to play a greater role within their blocs and parties at national and local level, shaping policy,

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[2] This activity took place in April, a few weeks outside of the reporting period of this report; October 2018 – March 2019.
[3] Two of these seminars took place in April, a few weeks outside of the reporting period of this report; October 2018 – March 2019.

gender sensitive policy-making, campaigns and dialogue and establishing support networks within parliament for women politicians nationally.

We arranged an initial seminar to explore the challenges facing women MPs. This first seminar also served as an opportunity for the Iraqi women MPs to shape the specific support they need from IF and GPG. As a result, the women MPs identified the following three areas of support:

1. Supporting women MPs to better understand and improve their roles as legislators. Understanding of the legislative process as well as the details of the legislation they were examining in their committees were areas of concern.
2. Supporting women MPs to better understand and improve their roles in parliamentary oversight. A greater understanding of the mechanisms for effective parliamentary oversight, including scrutinising the implementation of laws (post-legislative scrutiny - PLS).
3. Supporting women MPs to strengthen their leadership skills.

IF's expertise in this area meant we were able to mobilise and engage with a good number of women MPs, and continue to build on the positive relationships which IF have cultivated. GPG Associates Baroness Alison Suttie, who has extensive expertise in parliamentary committee work from her experience in the House of Lords, and European Parliament, and Meg Munn, former FCO Minister facilitates a series of seminars, which focused on supporting women MPs to better understand and improve their roles in parliamentary oversight. Meg used the recent *'Global Parliamentary Report 2017—Parliamentary oversight: Parliament's power to hold government to account'*, which she helped develop, with a particular focus on 'tips for MPs'. The publication is available in Arabic also and was deemed as a very useful resources for the newly elected MPs.

As noted above, the project will aim to support women in leadership roles, with a particular focus on women MPs as potential chairs of committees. Whilst two women have already been appointed as chairs (Haifa Al-Amine, Women's Committee, Samia Al-Ghallab, Culture and Media Committee), we could see the election of more women MPs as chairs. An increase in the number of women in positions of power is obviously positive, but needs to be translated into real changes in Iraqi politics rather than being merely tokenistic.
Notably, the electoral system is designed to ensure at least 25% of women MP are elected through a quota system. However, the way the system has been interpreted means that women who elected outside of the quota system were being included in the 25%. This means that this threshold is acting as a maximum level of representation rather than a minimum (counting those who won outright separately would mean that there should more than 33% of women elected in the CoR). The Women's Committee and other MPs are campaigning to have this changed for the next elections.

Conclusion

In summary progression on the first strand, **Strategic Political Leadership** will be our immediate focus for this project in the coming months. Thus far we have won crucial support and endorsement from the most senior levels of leadership in the Iraqi CoR, in a short amount of time. We have agreed on (and will prioritise on in the coming months) supporting the Speaker and his staff around key reform areas: a) building the capacity of MPs, b) developing the parliamentary code of ethics and conduct, c) targeted support to committees, and d) strategic communications for parliament as a whole.

We expect to see more momentum in the second strand on developing **Effective Parliamentary Committees.** We have highlighted the key committees with which we plan to work (Reconstruction and Services Committee, Women's Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee, Finance Committee,

Legal Committee, and the Committee for the Oversight of the Implementation of the Government Programme and Strategic Planning). Whilst this strand has been delayed by the failure to appoint committee chairs, we have started the strategic planning process with the committees informally. Our bigger challenge may be in managing expectations as we will not be able to support all the committees who would like to work with us.

Equally we expect more progress on the third strand, **Linking Parliament with the Provinces and Constituencies**, through linking Regional CoR Offices with committees and conducting policy inquiries.

Lastly, we will continue to deliver bespoke mentoring for women MPs around legislation, parliamentary oversight, leadership skills and gender-sensitive policy-making.

In summary, the first six months has marked a solid start, albeit in difficult political circumstances, we believe indications of longer-term progress are starting to emerge across the four strands/ objectives. The politics of Iraq continue to be uncertain, but we are reassured by the level of traction that the project's objectives has already achieved with the key political stakeholders in Iraq. It appears that the targeted, politically agile and expert form of support being offered by IF/GPG is distinct from all other implementers currently operating in the CoR. We will aim to build on these foundations during the next months.

Appendix

Operationalising Political Economy Analysis as a Project Tool

GPG's previous discussions with SIDA highlighted the common interest in developing new forms of reporting that capture some of the more political aspects of projects such as the one that IF and GPG are delivering in Iraq. In February, GPG Founder Greg Power spoke to staff in Stockholm about some of the challenges in designing, delivering and monitoring political and adaptive programmes, and explained GPG's KAPE and README methodologies. One of the issues that emerged was the fact that although almost all donor agencies now undertake some form of political economy analysis, it often exists as a separate, quasi-academic exercise at the start of the project. The rationale behind KAPE and README was to ensure that political analysis becomes a standard and ongoing feature of project delivery and adaptation.

Although this project is only at the very first stages we have tried to capture some of those political factors, especially the levels of traction and buy-in for the project objectives, in this report. However, as the project evolves that reporting is likely to become more complex. As such, we are experimenting with forms of reporting that attempt to integrate political economy analysis (PEA) into descriptions of progress.

The framework below is a deliberately simple outline of what this might look like. We include it here as a basis for future discussion with SIDA about reporting formats. We are keen to ensure that whatever form we report in meets the needs of SIDA, and thus hope we can jointly develop this framework further.

The framework is based around five key areas that inform GPG's approach to PEA as a political reform strategy, namely i) agreement around the problem, ii) an assessment of power dynamics and leadership, iii) the dominant interests and incentive structures, iv) testing levels of opposition and support, and v) the prospects for building coalitions and aligning incentives towards reform. A sixth section has been added which is a test of whether there is sufficient political will to implement reform.

Stages of a Political Reform Strategy	Project Indicators
1) Prioritise the key issues: "What's the problem?" The first phase of any political strategy must to be get common agreement a) that there is a problem that needs addressing and b) about what needs to be done in response. The starting point for any project must be to identify the main manifestations and the root causes of the problem, and to work with stakeholders in developing both diagnosis and solutions.	Agreed diagnosis of problems and broad agreement about strategy to address them amongst key stakeholders

2) Mapping institutional power: "Who's in charge here?" The second phase seeks to understand the power dynamics within and between political institutions. Any project seeking change will need to engage political leadership, but in environments like Iraq that leadership is complex and contested. The mapping of power should identify the key figures with formal authority (i.e. office-holders within an institution) and those with informal authority (i.e. deriving from social status) over the running of the institution, and influencing behaviour. The sources of power and authority, both formal and informal tend to fall into three categories: a) Control of resources, b) control of procedure and c) control of patronage/preferment.	Levels of contact, traction and buy-in with key political leaders and influencers
3) Identifying incentive structures: "What's in it for me?" The third phase builds on that analysis of power dynamics by understanding how they shape the behavioural norms and culture of the institution. There are at least four broad categories of incentives and interests that need to be understood in relation to behaviour and a programme of reform: Personal incentives, political incentives, institutional incentives and cultural/behavioural incentives. These interests and incentives will not stay static, but will move around in relation to the prospect of change and perceptions of losses/gains in relation to proposed reforms. The analysis will need to assess how these incentives both shape the prospects for reform and how they are themselves influenced by reforms.	Main contextual factors influencing existing current incentive structures and their impact on current performance.
4) Understanding attitudes to reform: "Who wins? Who loses?" The fourth stage builds from the analysis of power and incentives to understand – and test – attitudes to specific reform proposals, which will determine the likelihood of success. Any change will create winners and losers, and the analysis needs to assess how such change will affect the balance of power within the institution. This has three elements to it. First, who stands to gain, and who is likely to lose from the proposed reforms? Second, how much does opposition matter – can it be navigated? Third, how vital are key figures to success?	Levels of support and opposition to specific reforms
5) Aligning incentives: "Make sure everybody gets something." The approach of any political programme should be to maximise the number of winners and minimise the number of losers, by building a coalition for change around a package of reforms. How to find the necessary compromises and trade offs amongst stakeholders? Hold-ups and disruptions are inevitable in any political reform process, and multiple project streams make it easier to create the space to adapt to shifting interests, and maintain momentum, without the whole programme stalling.	Extent to which coalitions of interest forming around reforms.
6) Political will/impact Is there enough incentive for leaders to expend political capital in pushing these changes through?	Extent to which change is implemented.

The above framework provides the basis for assessing the progress of a political reform strategy. Within that strategy we would also seek to use the KAPE approach (knowledge, application, practice, effect) as a complement to that strategy, which would track more directly the impact of individual interventions over time.

As mentioned above, this is a deliberately simple framework at this stage, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss and refine the framework in the coming weeks.