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# **Iraq Civil Society Program/USAID Civil Society Conference II Expanding Cooperation for More Effective International Assistance**

## **Conference Report**



**20-21 November 2006**  
Amman – Jordan

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**ICSP/USAID Civil Society Conference II**  
**Expanding Cooperation for More Effective International Assistance**  
**November 20-21, 2006**  
**Amman, Jordan**

**Conference Report**

**OVERVIEW**

The Iraq Civil Society Conference II focused on expanding cooperation between international organizations, Iraqi civil society organizations (CSOs) and the Government of Iraq to more effectively strengthen Iraq's CSOs and their role in addressing key issues facing the country. Held on 20 and 21 November in Amman, Jordan, the conference was co-sponsored by America's Development Foundation (ADF), which implements the Iraq Civil Society and Independent Media Program (ICSP), and USAID. The goal of the conference was to bring together key institutions working with civil society to discuss, focus on and plan for upcoming work on critical issues facing Iraq and Iraqi CSOs. The conference gave participants the opportunity to examine how they can coordinate and link their efforts to reduce duplication, create synergy and maximize impact in future initiatives.

This was the second conference addressing this issue and the second opportunity for interested organizations working with civil society in Iraq to meet as a full group. This follows on the highly successful first conference on strategies for assisting civil society in Iraq, held in June 2006 by America's Development Foundation and USAID. This second conference was marked by the significant participation of senior members of the Government of Iraq, representing key Ministries and the Council of Representatives as well as Iraqi civil society organizations. The participation of Iraq's high-level officials allowed for highly productive discussions on how to increase cooperation between the Government of Iraq, Iraqi CSOs and the international community.

**Objectives of the Iraq Civil Society Conference II**

The original framework document for the conference is included in this report as Attachment I. Specific objectives of the conference were:

- To gain perspectives on the overall context for Iraq's development in the coming year, the role of civil society in contributing to this development and how international assistance efforts can best support civil society involvement;
- To share information on goals and priorities related to several current and future key issues that will shape the context in which international support to civil society must take place;
- To discuss participant plans and actions on key issues and to develop a well-defined plan for cooperation and coordination including the development of a clear rationale for cooperation, specific areas where cooperation will occur, mechanisms for cooperation to take place, and timelines for key stages in the cooperation; and

- To discuss and plan for other actions that increase the coordination, collaboration and synergy of international assistance to civil society.

## **Profile of Participants**



A wide variety of Iraq government, civil society and international participants involved in civil society development and related activities were invited to attend the conference. One hundred twenty-three people confirmed their participation. One hundred nine participants were present for the two days. A full list of participants is included as Attachment II. Participants included the following:

ICSP (20), including management, the sector directors for civic education, anti-corruption, women's advocacy and independent media, Regional Directors and Civil Society Resource Center Directors;

USAID (7), including the Washington-based Democracy and Governance Advisor, the Iraq-based USAID Deputy Mission Director, the Director of the Office of Governance and PRTs, and the Senior Civil Society and Political Processes Advisor;

Other Official USG Participants (8), including the U.S. Embassy Iraq Political Office, the U.S. Army, members of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, and the Department of State/INL;

Other US Implementing Partners (23), including NDI, IRI, IFES, ICAP implementing agencies (ACDI/VOCA, IRD, CHF, Counterpart International, and Mercy Corps), the U.S. Institute for Peace, MSI and the National Capacity Development Project, and the RTI Local Governance Program;

Members of the Government of Iraq (9), including the Ministers of Civil Society and Women's Affairs, three committee chairs from the Council of Representatives (COR), the chief advisor to the Speaker of the Council of Representatives and a member of the Baghdad Provincial Council;

Other Assistance Programs working with Civil Society (29), including representatives of the United Nations, British, Canadian, European Union, Italian, German, Czech and Japanese assistance programs;

Iraqi Civil Society Partners (7), including the Al-Munkith Association for Human Rights and Democracy, Al-Rafedeen Feminist Organization, Al-Thagalayn Strategic Center, Ronahy Organization, Iraq Center for Youth Development and a Journalists' Syndicate; and

America's Development Foundation (6) headquarters and regional staff.

Unfortunately, six of the senior Iraqi government officials who had confirmed their participation were unable to attend, including scheduled speakers such as the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, the Minister of Human Rights and the Chair of the Commission on Public Integrity. In addition, six of the 13 Iraqi civil society partners that registered were not able to attend.

## **Conference Structure**

The conference was structured to include time for the delivery of key information and time to discuss and plan for increased coordination and collaboration among partners working with civil society on common issues. Drawing from the results of ICSP/USAID's first civil society conference held in June, as well as consultations with practitioners in Iraq, seven critical issues for the upcoming year with the potential for overlap were identified:

1. Constitutional review and application, including the need for implementing legislation in critical areas;
2. Electoral processes, including upcoming electoral events and policy issues related to elections;
3. Federalism and decentralization, including legislative and regulatory issues as well as local processes of development, revitalization and governance;
4. Gender equality and mainstreaming;
5. Anti-corruption;
6. Conflict transformation and reconciliation; and
7. Civil society development.

The conference included short presentations on each of these issues, featuring Government of Iraq and non-governmental speakers, which were then followed by break-out working sessions

on specific issues. The break-out working sessions provided an opportunity for organizations and institutions engaged with specific issues to identify areas where their work overlaps and complements the activities of others, and to define specific areas and mechanisms for greater collaboration and cooperation.

An exhibit of Iraqi civil society work complemented the information provided in the conference and enabled participants to expand their knowledge on the breadth and importance of these actions.



The agenda for the conference is included in this report as Attachment III. The majority of the conference was recorded and these recordings are available through USAID, ICSP and ADF.

### **Overview of Achievements**

Participants at the conference were able to gain important information and insights about Government of Iraq goals and priorities, as well as the views of specific ministries and Council of Representative committees regarding civil society's role related to their work. Participants received updates on legislation, strategies and critical dates related to the key issues discussed. They were able to have time and access to sit with other key actors to discuss plans and strategies related to working with civil society on these issues. While detailed plans for collaboration were not achieved in most cases, the small group work enabled participants to identify areas where their organizations and institutions were undertaking similar or complementary actions, and to define mechanisms through which they commit to increasing collaboration. Responsibilities were then assigned for follow-up action.

The conference provided a unique opportunity for the actors working with civil society in Iraq to sit together, exchange views, get to know one another better and gain an understanding and appreciation for the role of each in working towards Iraq's future. In the day-to-day work and

pressures of Iraq this opportunity rarely, if ever, takes place in country. The Iraqi participants, in particular, felt that the conference far exceeded their expectations by providing an opportunity to focus on collaborative action and the role of civil society in the country's future. The conference also provided a rare opportunity for Iraqi civil society participants, as well as many of the international participants, to have access to senior Iraqi government officials whose work affects their own and whose decisions they seek to inform. One indicator of the success of the conference is the fact that over 90% of participants for Day One, including the very senior Government of Iraq officials, continued to be present for the second day.



## **CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE II**

### **DAY ONE**

#### **Objectives**

- Confirm goals and objectives for the conference and provide an overview of how it will take place;
- Gain perspectives on the overall context for Iraq's development in the upcoming year, the role of civil society in contributing to this development and how international assistance efforts can best support civil society involvement;
- Share information on goals and priorities related to several key issues anticipated for the upcoming year and beyond, which shape the context in which international support to civil society must take place;
- Discuss partner plans and actions on key issues and develop a well-defined plan for cooperation and coordination, including clear rationales for cooperation, specific areas where cooperation will occur, mechanisms for cooperation to take place, and timelines for key stages in the cooperation.

#### **Setting the Context for the Conference**

The first session of the conference was scheduled to include a welcome from the two sponsors of the conference, an introduction to conference objectives and agenda, a presentation by His Excellency Mahmood Mashadani, Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, and a short time for questions and answers. Unfortunately, at the last minute, the Speaker was unable to attend the conference due to events in Iraq.

Mr. Michael Miller, President of America's Development Foundation (ADF), and Mr. Michael Harvey, Deputy Mission Director of USAID/Iraq provided the official welcome and opening of the conference following an introduction by Dr. Issam Adawi, Chief of Party for ADF's Iraq Civil Society and Independent Media Program. Their comments provided a framework for the conference, highlighting the importance of this opportunity and expectations for its outcomes.

Ms. Carol Conragan (USAID) and Ms. Karen Diop (ADF), conference facilitators, further detailed the framework for the next two days, including logistics and norms for conduct, a reminder of the goal, objectives and expected results, and an overview of the process and agenda.

#### **Cross-Cutting Issues and Priorities in the Upcoming Year**

The status and evolution of civil society provides a cross-cutting framework for working with civil society in Iraq. This portion of the program provided an opportunity for the Minister of State for Civil Society and The Honorable Ala'a Talabani, Chair of the Civil Society Committee

of the Council of Representatives, to discuss their priorities, goals and vision for civil society participation, followed by questions and answers.

The presentation by the Minister of State for Civil Society, His Excellency A'adil Al Asady, covered a wide range of issues related to civil society in Iraq. He stressed the openness of his ministry to ideas for a CSO enabling law that will conform to international standards. In general, the Minister presented a very positive view of the role and potential importance of civil society organizations.

The presentation by The Honorable Ala'a Talabani likewise covered a range of civil society issues, from the Council of Representatives perspective, with a range of ideas on how to move forward. She noted that an active civil society sector is not a sign of weak government and that CSOs play a valuable role in monitoring and fighting corruption and in peace keeping. She also noted that Iraqi CSOs are faced with many challenges, including the deteriorating security situation, a shortage of funding and a scarcity of advanced training opportunities, but that in spite of the challenges CSOs are making significant contributions in areas such as raising awareness about elections and peace building. She expressed her hope that the new NGO law will help organizations grow and reach their full potential.



Presentations were followed by a question and answer period, which included the sharing of additional information by plenary speakers. There was a noticeable difference in how Iraqi and international participants approached the Q&A period. While international participants took the opportunity to ask questions on issues that had not been covered in the presentations or to seek clarification, Iraqi participants tended to use the opportunity to present their own views on the subject.

## **Electoral Processes, Constitutional Review, Federalism and Decentralization**

Three issues provided the framework for presentations and working groups on the first day of the conference: 1) electoral processes, 2) constitutional review and implementing legislation, and 3) constitutional review and the issues of federalism and decentralization. Each issue was covered by two presentations of ten minutes each (generally the first by an Iraqi government official to present their goals and priorities and the second by an international assistance agency focused on these issues).

Conference facilitators provided an introduction to the session, highlighting the purpose of the presentations, the challenging time constraints, and the issues being covered.

### Electoral Processes

The two presentations on electoral processes were made by The Honorable Baha'a Al A'araji, Chair of the Legal Committee of the Council of Representatives, and Richard John, Chief of Party of the IFES-IEAT program.

The Honorable Baha'a Al A'araji's presentation discussed the flawed process of previous election processes, which he noted were imposed by foreign powers under the leadership of the U.S.. He noted there were weakness in past electoral processes and highlighted those that need to be improved. Dr. Baha'a stressed that the new Independent Electoral Commission Law was developed in collaboration with all stakeholders and with the support of the U.N. and many NGOs, expressing his believe that the new law will ensure greater and more diverse geographic representation. The draft local election law is expected to be passed in the next week and, once enacted, will provide the framework for local elections. Dr. Baha'a also expressed his hope that the new NGO law would help organizations to work freely.

Richard John provided an overview of the structural framework for electoral assistance as well as a summary of recent legislation passed related to upcoming elections. Mr. John defined what other steps are needed before elections can take place, including specific laws related to political parties, provincial councils and upcoming referendums. He then outlined several areas where CSO involvement will be important in moving forward.

### Constitutional Review and Implementing Legislation, Federalism and Decentralization

The presentations on constitutional review and implementing legislation, federalism and decentralization were made by the Honorable Saleem Al Jebouri from the Constitutional Review Committee of the Council of Representatives, Martin Hanratty of the USAID/PRT program, Don Seufert of the RTI Local Governance Program and April Powell-Willingham of the Iraq Civil Society Program.

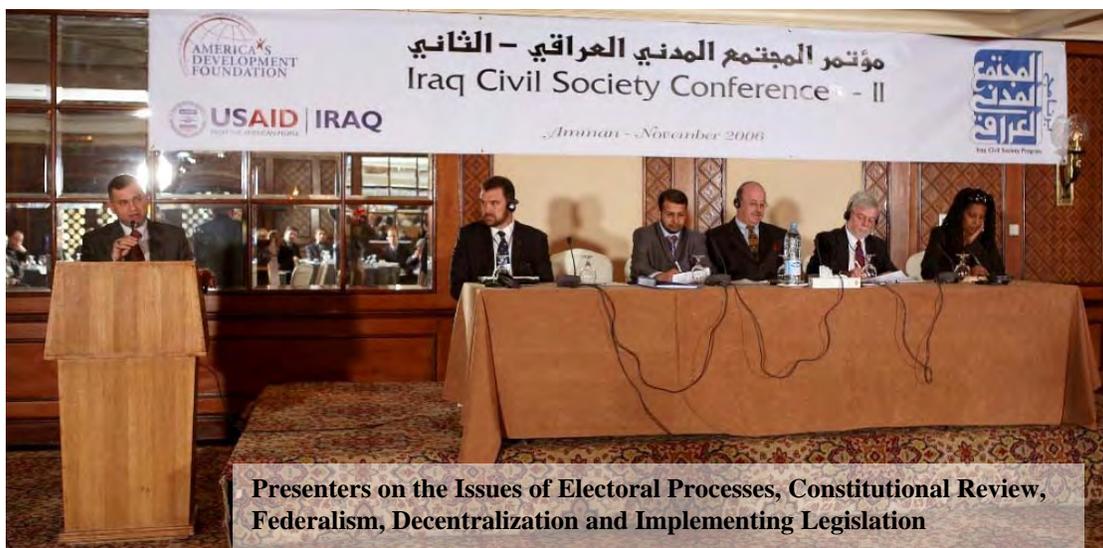
Dr. Saleem's presentation noted the swiftness with which the Constitution was developed and that many issues were put aside to be defined at a later date. He informed participants that the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) began work on November 15<sup>th</sup> and has four months to

complete the review process. Dr. Saleem outlined the role of civil society in making suggestions to the CRC (potentially including attending meetings) and in educating the public.

Martin Hanratty focused on the constitutional basis for a decentralized state and sound local government system that allows for greater citizen participation and a structure of government that meets citizen needs. He then outlined some of the focal points of the decentralization process and his program's support to the process.

Don Seufert discussed the murky legal framework for the sharing of power and noted that decentralization is occurring but that until the legal framework is clearer there will be limits to what extent this will evolve.

April Powell-Willingham outlined some of the priorities for the constitutional review process and that of developing the implementing legislation that will realize the principles outlined in the Constitution.



### **Break-out Working Groups**

There were four break-out working groups the first afternoon. The conference facilitators provided orientation and introduction to the working groups, clarifying intended results. Guidelines for the working groups were provided in each participant's handbook. Each working group had a designated chair (one of the speakers on that issue) and assistant (an ICSP staff member) to assist the groups in achieving desired results. Each of the assistants and some of the chairs had received an orientation from the conference facilitators to clarify the expected process and results from the working groups.

Despite this orientation, the first set of working groups was a learning process for participants. Many of them spent the bulk of their time on discussion rather than on developing a plan for cooperation. All participants were, however, able to brief one another on where they are working and in what areas. Next steps in the collaborative process were identified. Detailed notes from the working groups are included in this report as Attachments IV to XI. A summary of the plans that were developed is presented below.

### ***Working Group on Electoral Policy and Practices***

Nine institutions were represented in this working group. The group developed a follow-up work plan focused on public outreach, election observation and monitoring. Responsibilities were assigned and a timeline set. First steps in the follow-up plan include the formation of national and regional coordination groups to take place in the next month. IFES/IECI will take the lead on technical output for voter education messages and develop an electoral issues e-mail list, which will include Iraqi CSOs. ICSP will take the lead on voter education impact surveys. The British Council will help with donor group coordination. Lead organizations for targeting poor, marginalized and vulnerable groups for intensive voter education were identified for each region of the country. NDI will take the lead on coordinating national electoral observations, with the issue of international observers to be raised at the InterAgency Coordination Meeting in early December.

### ***Working Group on Constitutional Review and Implementing Legislation***

This working group (nine institutions were represented) identified a series of specific sub-issues as priority areas to be addressed in the constitutional review process. These included the concept of federalism, distribution of resources, judicial system, de-Ba'athification and the definition of nationality. A follow-up action plan was defined with specific responsibilities, including the formation of an NGO working group with a first meeting to be held before mid-December. This working group (which will include CSO partners) will make recommendations and undertake public education campaigns. In addition, it will make available relevant experts to the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) as well as offer technical assistance and support for the CRC's workplan.

### ***Working Group on Reconstruction and Local Development***

Ten institutions were represented in the Reconstruction and Local Development Working Group. This working group clarified the subject areas that they covered in their work and identified eight areas with the most overlap that would benefit from greater coordination: (1) Community-driven programs; (2) Grassroots/local links to government; (3) Training for government officials and agencies; (4) Addressing the needs of IDPs and refugees; (5) Women's advocacy and related issues; (6) Civic education; (7) Infrastructure rehabilitation; and (8) Working with local and national government. The follow-up work plan includes a series of specific steps tied to the U.S. Focused Stabilization program as well as the need for mapping activities. Partners will provide information about their activities to the Focused Stabilization Program planning process, and this program will ensure that information also flows out to the partners, who will be added to the distribution list. All interested parties are invited to attend the virtual meeting for this program, held each Tuesday from 10:00 – 11:30. The GPRT USAID team holds an internal coordination

meeting every 4 months. They will add on a 2<sup>nd</sup> day for a larger partner coordination meeting and ICSP will help with identifying agenda items for the second day's meeting. Finally, Marty Hanratty and David Robinson will determine to what extent the Strategic Cities program is interested and willing to include CSO/NGO inputs and then follow up with the others.



**Break-out working group discussing their activities and developing a plan for greater coordination**

### ***Working Group on Local Governance***

Thirteen institutions were represented in the Local Governance Working Group. Participants outlined the ways in which they work with civil society on related activities as well as specific ways in which organizations can work with one another to avoid duplication. The follow-up work plan includes regional planning among partners to identify priority areas, and greater coordination among CSO partners and lead agencies. In addition, a series of specific actions were defined for individual organizations and institutions, including ICSP working with ICAP partners to develop the capacity of community groups and PRT inviting members of civil society organizations to their planning meetings.

## **CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE II DAY TWO**

### **Objectives**

- To continue to share information on goals and priorities related to key issues anticipated for the upcoming year and beyond, which shape the context in which international support to civil society must take place;
- To review partner plans and actions on key issues and to develop well-defined plans for cooperation and coordination on gender, anti-corruption and conflict transformation issues (including a clear rationale for cooperation, specific areas where cooperation will occur, mechanisms and timelines);
- To discuss and plan for other actions that increase the coordination, collaboration and synergy of international assistance to civil society.

### **Gender, Anti-Corruption, Conflict Transformation**

Three areas were the focus of presentations in preparation for the second day's working sessions: 1) gender equality and mainstreaming, 2) anti-corruption, and 3) conflict transformation and reconciliation. Six presentations were scheduled on these issues, including three on gender, two on anti-corruption and one on conflict transformation. The question and answer period was reserved for the end of all six presentations.

#### Gender Equality and Mainstreaming

Her Excellency Fatin Abdul Rahman, The Honorable Sameera Al Mousawi and Aline Matta of the American Bar Association presented priorities/goals and other information related to gender issues.

The Minister of State for Women's and Family Affairs, Her Excellency Fatin Abdul Rahman, highlighted the process and challenges of integrating women into all aspects of government and society. She noted that the Ministry seeks to create an institutional environment that guarantees equal rights for men and women and that the Government of Iraq should take the necessary steps to ensure full participation of women in decision-making processes. One task is to conduct studies on current legislation to identify laws that might discriminate against women and then work on amending these laws. Another priority is to design and deliver awareness campaigns about gender issues to change misperceptions about the abilities of women and encourage women to participate more in political and economic spheres. The Minister noted that the support of civil society is needed in addressing these points.

The Honorable Sameera Al Mousawi, Chair of the Women, Family and Child Committee of the Council of Representatives (CoR), contrasted the marginalization of women in the past with the guarantees for female participation in the government of today's Iraq which resulted in 60%

participation of women in the last elections. This indicates that women are ready to play a more active role in the political arena. She noted some of the continuing challenges to full female participation, including poverty and illiteracy. She outlined five priorities for her Committee of the CoR and noted the importance of CSOs in helping to address these priorities of 1) a revised personal status law, 2) governorate-level research and studies for improving women's lives, 3) expanding the role of women in the CoR, 4) issuing a formal document on the rights and duties of Iraqi women, and 5) holding parliamentary, regional and international conferences on women's issues. The Representative also outlined six specific ways in which international organizations can best support the advancement of Iraqi women. Recommendations included direct communications with the Women's Committee in the parliament, providing academic scholarship opportunities for women, organize visit by Iraqi women parliamentarians to other countries, and influencing public budgets in favor of women's rights.

Arline Matta provided detailed insights into three critical areas related to achieving gender equality and mainstreaming: women's participation in government (which is improved but is still well behind where it should be), legal reform (there are still many laws that are not consistent with Article 14 of the Constitution, which guarantees equality before the law regardless of gender), and development of a women's movement (which has far greater potential than realized to date). Specific challenges and opportunities were highlighted as a framework for the small group work to follow.

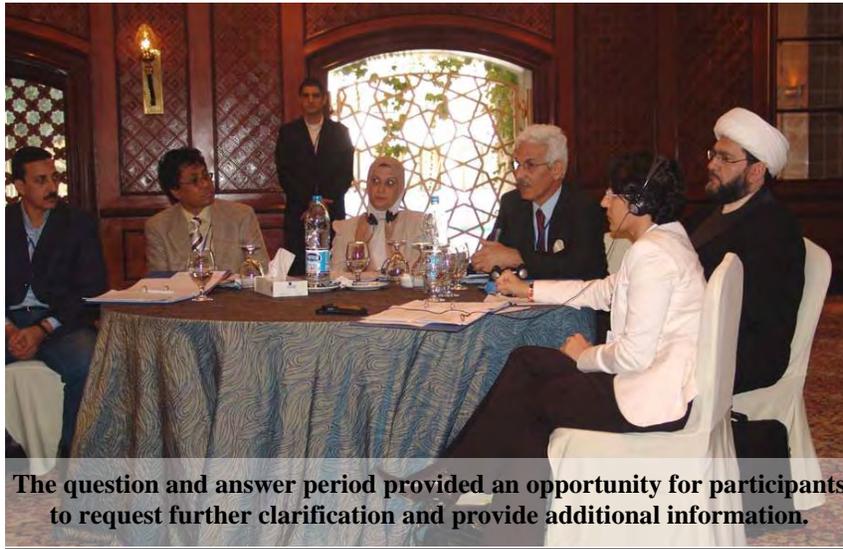
#### Anti-Corruption

Judge Radhi Al Radhi, the Chair of the Commission on Public Integrity, and Rahman Al-Jabouri of ICSP were scheduled to give presentations on the issue of anti-corruption, but Judge Radhi was unable to travel for the conference. Rahman Al-Jabouri's presentation noted that corruption and insecurity are the two largest threats to Iraq's future and that corruption has the potential to leave the largest scars. He described the need to fight corruption on three fronts: the legislative front (in the Council of Representatives), the management front (in government agencies), and through public monitoring of corruption with the assistance of civil society groups. Specific reasons for the importance of civil society in the fight against corruption include the number of organizations, their breadth of coverage and direct relationships with citizens, their motivation in safeguarding the public interest, and their existing skills, infrastructure and human resources. Challenges to using civil society as an effective ally against corruption include the lack of connection and communication between CSOs and the CPI, insufficient relationships with local and national legislators and security challenges.

#### Conflict Transformation and Reconciliation

Brenda Opermann, of the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), provided the informational framework related to conflict transformation and reconciliation. This presentation focused on reconciliation initiatives that are underway, including those by the Ministry of National Dialogue and Reconciliation (several conferences), USIP (conflict management training and curriculum development), IRI (grass roots reconciliation initiatives with civil society organizations), the Inter Religious Council of Iraq and the Mecca Agreement. Ms. Opermann also outlined how

CSOs can play a role in reducing sectarian violence through skills development and public education, as well as how greater coordination of efforts can help.



**The question and answer period provided an opportunity for participants to request further clarification and provide additional information.**

### **Break-Out Working Groups**

There were four break-out working groups on Day Two: one on each of three issues that were the focus of presentations earlier in the day and a fourth on civil society development and policy issues. The working groups for the second day had learned from their experience during the first day, and were able to come up with more specific and concrete recommendations.

Reports for these working groups are included in the appendices. Results are summarized below.

#### ***Working Group on Gender Issues***

Thirteen institutions were represented in the Gender Working Group. The group identified six core areas that were priorities for the upcoming year: Women's legal rights; Political participation; Services for women; Violence against women; Gender mainstreaming; and Economic empowerment. Subgroups were identified for each priority and responsibilities were assigned for follow-up with other members and organizations not represented in the working group. These subgroups will have responsibility for ensuring program development, cooperation among organizations and institutions, and coherence of advocacy efforts.

#### ***Working Group on Anti-Corruption***

The Anti-Corruption Working Group included ten participants from seven institutions. This working group focused on outlining an action plan with three phases: Coalition building; Project implementation; and Monitoring. A January meeting of anti-corruption partners has been scheduled, which will include international NGOs, Iraqi CSOs, government representatives,

legislators, citizens, the CPI and media. Before and during this phase there will be a comprehensive needs assessment and prioritization to identify the appropriate definition of corruption as well as specific ministries, government bodies or officials to be targeted.

### ***Working Group on Conflict Transformation***

Thirteen institutions were represented on the Conflict Transformation and Reconciliation Working Group. This working group had a difficult topic on which to plan coordination of efforts because, for many, this has not been a focus of ongoing activities. The group identified two major areas for activities: Awareness raising and conflict mitigation; and Advocacy and lobbying. The groups to work with were identified, as well as the organizations and institutions that are currently providing outreach to these groups. Other activities being undertaken by participating institutions were also identified, as well as actions that are needed to further collaboration and coordination.

### ***Working Group on Civil Society Development and Policy***

Seventeen institutions participated in the Civil Society Development Working Group. The group developed a table of the main activities, regions of work and target groups for each institution, as well as a list of current concerns, issues and challenges related to civil society development. From the latter, six main groupings of common issues and concerns were defined and the follow-up action plan defines next steps for cooperation, collaboration and coordination for each of these groupings. Responsibilities and timeframes for next steps were identified. Each of the four working groups reporting on the results they had achieved and their plans for better coordination and collaboration in the upcoming year. Other organizations were invited to contact the working groups if they would like to be involved in follow-up work plans.

### **Conference Summation and Closure**

A short time was spent reviewing the achievements of Day Two before the group turned to assessing the degree to which the intended goals and results for the conference were met. By the end of the second day of intense participatory work, participants were tired and the assessment of the conference was brief. The large number of participants precluded oral evaluation. Instead, each table was asked to consult and come up with a score on the extent to which each of the three main objectives and the overall goal of the conference were met. These scores were then collected and averaged by facilitators. As noted below, despite the challenging nature of the goals and objectives, participants felt that the goal was largely achieved. The lowest scoring objective (which was still generally felt to be halfway accomplished) was the degree to which detailed plans were developed.

### **Assessment of Degree to Which Expected Results of the Conference were Met**

Overall goal of the conference: To bring together key partners working with civil society to discuss, focus on and plan for their upcoming work related to key issues facing Iraq and Iraqi CSOs, so that they have an opportunity to examine how they can coordinate and link their efforts in ways that reduce duplication, create synergy and maximize impact. *On a scale from zero to*

*five, participants rated achievement of this goal at 3.6 (equivalent to 72%). Participants stated that the conference presented an important opportunity for the different partners to come together, learn about what each other is doing and how their actions complement one another. This opportunity was felt most keenly by the Iraqi participants and those working on more local levels. The senior Iraqi officials participated throughout the conference and showed a genuine interest in the issues and the interaction with others. The organization and facilitation of plenary groups was also favorably commented upon. What brings the overall score down, as reflected in the scores related to the objective of developing specific coordination plans, is the fact that participants would have liked to have made greater progress in planning for coordination on specific issues.*

- Gain perspectives on the overall context for Iraq's development in the upcoming year, the role of civil society in contributing to this development and how international assistance efforts can best support civil society involvement. *Average rating by participants for the achievement of this objective was 3.3 (equivalent to 66%).*
- Share information on goals and priorities related to several key issues anticipated for the upcoming year and beyond, which shape the context in which international support to civil society must take place. *Average rating by participants for the achievement of this objective was 3.1 (equivalent to 62%).*
- Discuss partner plans and actions on key issues and develop a well-defined plan for cooperation and coordination, including clear rationales for cooperation, specific areas where cooperation will occur, mechanisms for cooperation to take place, and timelines for key stages in the cooperation. *Average rating by participants for the achievement of this objective was 2.5 (equivalent to 50%). The size of the group and diversity of participants (in terms of experience, agenda, language and views) made achieving the goal of developing concrete plans a challenging exercise within the time period allocated. While the well-defined plans for cooperation and coordination were not achieved within most working groups, each group was able to define a plan for continuing work to improve communication and cooperation.*

The Conference ended with closing remarks from Nicole Tresch, USAID, Michael Miller, America's Development Foundation and His Excellency A'adil Al Asady, Minister of State for Civil Society Affairs. All speakers expressed the belief that the next civil society conference should take place in Iraq and include a greater role for Iraqi government and Iraqi civil society organizations in organizing and hosting the event.