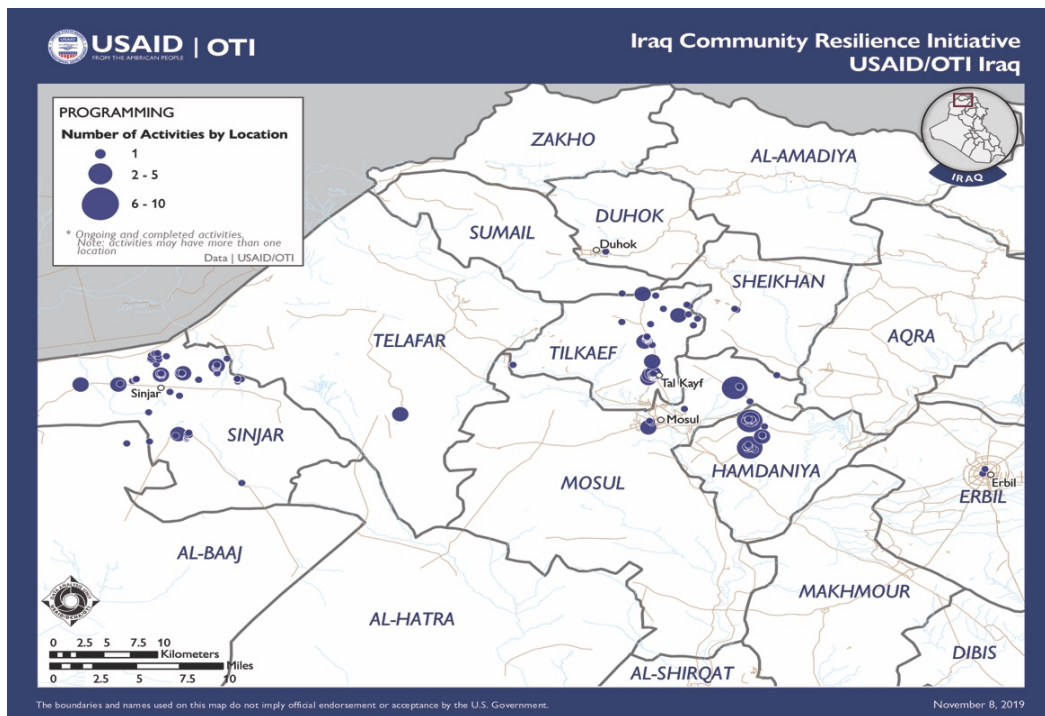


# ANNEX B. IRAQ COMMUNITY RESILIENCE INITIATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Northern Iraq is home to the largest concentration of the country’s minorities, including Yazidis, Christians, Shabak, Turkmen, Kaka’i, and Sabeen-Mandean populations, who were among the thousands captured, tortured, and killed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) when the group took control of large swathes of the country in 2014. In the wake of an eventual military defeat in December 2017, ISIS left behind a legacy of physical destruction— to critical community infrastructure, homes, businesses, and academic institutions—and the erosion of diverse communities. As a result, communities in the region continue to be affected by a lack of security; inter- and intra-communal tensions resulting from mistrust and a scarcity of resources and economic opportunities; and slow progress in rebuilding critical infrastructure and restoring services to areas that had suffered neglect even prior to the ISIS invasion. These conditions continue to deter internally displaced persons (IDPs) from returning to their homes. The goal of the USAID/OTI Iraq Community Resilience Initiative (ICRI) was to support the safe and voluntary return of displaced populations, including minorities, in areas liberated from ISIS, by improving stability and social cohesion in these areas.



## STRATEGIC APPROACH

ICRI’s activities were designed to support the safe and voluntary return of IDPs and refugees in areas liberated from ISIS through the following two objectives:

- 1) stability in conflict-affected areas is improved; and

2) social cohesion in conflict-affected areas is improved.

Through visible, quick-impact projects in partnership with civil society organizations, faith-based groups, and local governance bodies, ICRI aimed to accelerate recovery efforts and a return to normalcy in conflict-affected areas. Activities focused on restoring service delivery, rebuilding livelihoods, and supporting efforts to reduce community tension and increase positive social interactions between diverse groups.

## **ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED**

As of September 30, 2019, ICRI cleared a total of 65 activities for implementation with an approximate value of 5,888,987.69 USD, all of which are completed and/or closed. ICRI worked with 38 local partners across Ninewa, including Sinjar, Sinuni, Bandiwaya, Bartella, Bashiqa, Hatara, Wana, Tal Afar, Tal Kayf, Shikan, Mosul, Karamles, Teleskof, and Hamdaniya.

## **OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS**

ICRI was established in June 2018 as a Ramp-up Option under the Syria Regional Program II (SRP II) task order. The project was led by a regional program manager (RPM) overseeing both operations and programmatic staff. The programmatic staff consisted of a grants management unit (GMU) comprised of program development officers (PDOs), a grants officer, a procurement specialist, and a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officer. The GMU was also supported by a senior PDO and a project engineer. Outside Erbil, ICRI engaged six field program assistants in target communities to support concept development, activity monitoring, and engagement with partners and beneficiaries. The operations staff included procurement officers, an operations assistant, a finance team, and a security advisor. All staff members either returned to the Chemonics home office following the end of their assignment or transferred to the Iraq Regional Program (IRP).

In October 2018, ICRI absorbed an additional 6 million USD in funding and ultimately continued implementation through July 2019, programming concurrently with the Iraq Regional Program (IRP) from February through July, at which point all remaining staff and programming had transitioned to the Iraq Regional Program.

# **PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

## **IMPROVING STABILITY IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS**

ICRI contributed to improving stability in the Ninewa Plains, Mosul, and Western Ninewa by supporting civil society, faith-based organizations, and local governance actors to meet priority early recovery needs. The decision of displaced populations to return to their homes or remain displaced can be influenced by several factors, including but not limited to: perceptions of safety; access to basic services including water, electricity, education, and shelter; and economic opportunities. As part of its efforts to accelerate recovery and reduce the impact of the conflict in communities liberated by ISIS, ICRI activities focused on the restoration of basic services and livelihoods.

### *Hamdaniya Rubble Removal Support.*

ICRI supported the Humanitarian Nineveh Relief Organization (HNRO) to coordinate rubble removal from 66 houses in Hamdaniya, with the goal of reducing the financial burden on families working to rehabilitate their homes. ICRI supported HNRO with the rental of equipment in Karamles, Qaraqosh, and Bartella, including a bulldozer, dump truck, and other machinery. Additionally, ICRI and HNRO arranged for labor support and coordinated with municipalities, reconstruction committees, and compensation committees to facilitate effective implementation of

this complex activity. By removing rubble from the selected houses, ICRI was able to help create space for families and support networks to begin the work of rebuilding their communities.



*Rubble is cleared from houses that were damaged during the ISIS occupation and subsequent battle for liberation. (Credit: ICRI Field Program Assistant)*



*Community leaders plant olive trees at the Einw Alq olive grove in Bashiqa. (Credit: ICRI Field Program Assistant)*

*Olive Farms in Bashiqa.* In order to restore the livelihoods of farmers in Bashiqa following the destruction of over 100,000 olive trees and agricultural equipment by ISIS, ICRI partnered with the Iraqi NGO Ghasin Al-Zaiton to rehabilitate the Einw Alq olive grove, planting approximately 700 olive trees and providing farmers with the proper equipment for planting. Olive groves are traditionally a major source of income and livelihoods in region, and also resonate as an important cultural and historical symbol. Due to ICRI and Ghasin Al-Zaiton's efforts, livelihood opportunities for over 70 Bashiqa residents were created.

*Improving Access to Water in Tal Kayf.* To improve water provision in the Tal Kayf district, ICRI provided excavation vehicles and equipment, water pipe materials, welding equipment, and outreach support to the Tal Kayf District Office following the destruction of the district water infrastructure by ISIS. The provision of this equipment allowed for the repair of water pipes at 65 separate leakage locations over the course of five months in addition to the resumption of the hotline system for water network issue reporting. This assistance will allow for timely repairs and routine maintenance of the water network to improve water quality and quantity. Remarking on the activity, the local mukhtar, or village leader said, "The workers used to work manually before the project, and this caused delays. Now, the issues with the water system will reduce. When the directorate fixed the system, we received larger [water] quantity and cleaner water."

*Small Business Support in Sinuni.* ICRI supported the Sahara Economic Development Organization (SEDO) to bolster small businesses in the periphery of the Sinuni sub-district following the destruction of local businesses and the local economy at the hands of ISIS. In addition to providing equipment and materials to both restore and expand a wide variety of small businesses in the area ranging from music shops to food markets, ICRI also coordinated with SEDO to launch an outreach campaign and promotion event to provide businesses with the opportunity to promote their re-opening or expansion. Seventy-four family-owned small businesses received equipment and management training that allowed them to re-open and conduct business, just as had been done before the invasion of ISIS. An owner of an ice cream and sweets shop remarked, "In projects similar to mine, the success of it depends on the good quality of materials. The material[s] that I have received are in a very good quality that eases my job and facilitates customer[s]' work."

## IMPROVING SOCIAL COHESION IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS

In addition to accelerating recovery through the rehabilitation of community infrastructure, livelihoods, and services delivery in minority communities, ICRI aimed to improve social cohesion in Ninewa Province and surrounding communities by fostering positive interactions between diverse political, ethnic, and sectarian groups. By providing meaningful opportunities to strengthen the resilience of communities, ICRI sought to accelerate the reconciliation process and encourage displaced families to return to their homes.



*Musicians perform in West Mosul as part of the Peace Through Arts concert series. The building in the background was previously used as an execution site by ISIS. (Credit: Twitter User)*

*Making Music in Mosul.* With ICRI's support, the Peace Through Arts Foundation held two concerts, in both East and West Mosul, to promote positive interaction between the diverse communities in the city in addition to promoting solidarity for a message of peaceful coexistence. The event was well-attended by Moslawis and enjoyed significant media coverage from both Iraqi and international news outlets. The orchestra was composed of young Iraqi musicians from a wide variety of communities, and rehearsal time provided them with the opportunity to develop friendships and connections. Speaking about the concert, one West Mosul resident commented, "It helps the people to view the things differently after {the}

*ISIS attack, and to [relieve] the psychological pressures resulted from ISIS and remove their ideologies. We hope to have more of it."*

*Sinuni Cultural Center.* Following the destruction of cultural, artistic, and religious sites by ISIS in the Sinuni sub-district, ICRI supported the Youth Bridge Organization to repair and equip the Sinuni Cultural Center in order to help restore the cultural identity of Sinuni. Prior to ISIS occupation, the center served as a hub for local artists and a critical avenue for cultural preservation. By providing furniture, music and art supplies, and IT equipment, the Sinuni Cultural Center was able to resume activities that foster the artistic expression of a unique community. The center's opening ceremony included musical performances, recitation of traditional poetry, and the display



*Yezidi youth in Sinuni perform at the newly re-opened Sinuni Cultural Center. (Credit: ICRI Field Program Assistant)*

of local art. In attendance were 120 individuals from the Yazidi community, which included NGO representatives, youth groups, poets, artists, and musicians. One attendee remarked, *“Learning music is different from the other learnings since it stays with us. The center has a significant role in keeping our culture which is our identity to be recognized by the world.”*

*Supporting Documentation and Advocacy Efforts.* ICRI supported the global Yazidi advocacy NGO, Yazda, to expand and improve its efforts to collect and preserve legal documentation and evidence of atrocities executed by ISIS. These efforts included gathering testimonies of individual victims and documenting mass grave and captivity sites. Under this activity, Yazda strengthened its documentation approach with full adherence to international standards by providing training to documentation team members, creating a secure archiving platform, and strengthening coordination with other actors conducting similar efforts. ICRI also supported travel logistics for Yazda representatives who offered eyewitness testimony and prosecutorial support to ongoing criminal investigations in Europe against alleged ISIS perpetrators of crimes against humanity.



*Participants in the Kick it for Peace Tournament.  
(Credit: USAID ICRI Ta’afi Facebook Page)*

*Kick It for Peace Tournament.* In response to increased tensions between the Shabak and Assyrian communities in the town of Bartella, ICRI supported the creation and promotion of a soccer tournament that brought together youth from diverse backgrounds to encourage positive interaction. The Shabak and Assyrian committees of Bartella organized 29 games for teams containing a mix of 120 youth from both communities, which afforded Shabak and Assyrian youth the opportunity to develop new friendships. Many participants were seen socializing with their new friends before and after the games, and one participant said, *“Our friendship continued after the activity. We still talk to each other through the Viber group (social application) and talk about the nice moments we spent together.”*

## LOOKING FORWARD

After absorbing an additional 6 million USD in funding, ICRI continued to implement through July 2019, sequentially transitioning programming by geographic area—beginning with Mosul, then Sinjar, and finally Ninewa Plain—to the Iraq Regional Program (IRP), until the eventual and complete transition to IRP in April 2019. This approach enabled ICRI to close-down responsibly and preserve the two respective programs’ autonomy while meeting high-expectations from the U.S. Embassy and Consulate. As a functional pilot mechanism with twelve months of operational and programmatic success, ICRI deepened OTI’s understanding of the political and social context in Northern Iraq, established relationships with local partners, and tested approaches for promoting recovery and rehabilitation in communities impacted by ISIS. ICRI also responded to high-level U.S. Government political imperatives to address the recovery needs of minority communities in Ninewa Province specifically targeted by ISIS – many of whom remain displaced and feel marginalized by their own government and the international community.

ICRI fulfilled this mandate through a range of entry, pilot, and information-gathering activities, identifying through the course of the project key challenges and lessons learned to edify and apply to both future

pilot programs and larger OTI task orders, specifically IRP. These challenges and lessons include the need to engage experienced leaders and staff with both institutional knowledge and knowledge of the country context, knowing when and how to refine the program's strategy and partnerships, recognizing gaps in staff capacity and bandwidth and adjusting roles and assignments accordingly, and equipping both the operations and programmatic teams with the right tools and guidance at the outset to position the project for success.

Geographically, after conducting a significant amount of activities in Sinjar, Hamdaniya, and Tal Kayf, ICRI is able to pass on key lessons learned and potential opportunities for future programming under IRP. These challenges, including recognizing the types of activities that succeed and are well-received, how to effectively engage with the right partners, and how to balance assistance among and between different constituencies, have been collated in order to ensure that future programming efforts, particularly IRP, are able to maintain the positive efforts of ICRI.

To date, all programming within ICRI's former operating areas will continue under IRP, which has expanded the focus and spirit of ICRI to other geographic areas in Iraq. IRP has already begun to utilize the programmatic and operational lessons learned from ICRI.