

**PROVISION FOR POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
DEMOCRACY FUND
Contract NO.PD:C0110/10**

Acknowledgements

The evaluators wish to express their appreciation to the Um-Alyateem Foundation, its President, Dr Amira Albaldawi, the Project Manager, Mr Isam Abdul-Jabbar, and the staff of the Foundation, for their assistance and support in arranging meetings for the n

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(i) Project data

The project entitled *Civil Society Monitoring of Governorate Councils in Iraq* was implemented over a two-year period, with a total grant of \$225,000. There was an over-expenditure of \$16,500, which was covered by the grantee. The project was implemented by the Um-Alyateem Foundation, along with 20 implementing agencies, all civil society organizations, drawn from six participating governorates (provinces). Of the 20, six were selected as

The project's strategy was well planned, with two opinion polls and two Annual Monitoring Reports utilized to integrate the activities conducted at six separate project sites. The project also devoted consistent attention to media coverage and maintaining links with central government. This ensured that the character and value of the innovations championed by the project were widely known. Drawing on the solid experience of the organization and its leadership, and its knowledge of how to organize and maintain project activities in a challenging environment, UMF, the grantee, did an impressive job of both anticipating risk and making plans to mitigate it.

Effectiveness: The project strategy was built around a sound core logical framework, with a carefully-integrated sequence of outputs directed to the achievement of project objectives. Considerable care was taken in selecting the participating CSOs (three in each governorate) and the CSO monitors (one selected from each CSO), as well as the coordinating organizations. These selection decisions were crucial, since the project's ability to achieve its objectives depended on the strong performance of CSO project partners and participants.

Training provided to those selected was highly relevant and conducted professionally. Although perhaps too intensive in character, and implemented over too short a time, the training program

the GC sessions. The arrangement worked well. For the most part, the work of the CSOs was undertaken on a voluntary basis. This represented a substantial in-kind contribution to the project.

As will readily be appreciated, under current conditions in Iraq (as of July 2014), it is difficult to assess the **impact** of any democratic governance project. However, it is apparent that the project has the potential to provide a model for introducing mechanisms to enhance the public accountability of governance institutions, while also improving the credibility of civil society in the eyes of the political class. By the conclusion of the project, senior government officials had indicated an interest in working with the grantee to replicate the project elsewhere, extending the CSO monitoring process to all of Iraq's governorates.

The Annual Monitoring Reports were circulated widely and publicized in the national and regional media. They brought to the attention of government leaders at national and provincial levels, as well as the broader public, the gap between public expectations and the actual

important to the credibility of the project that both the opinion polls and the Annual Monitoring Reports were managed and produced by top-level national experts.

In the context of the conditions in Iraq at the time of the project, its objectives, along with the strategy to accomplish them, were both practical and relevant to the larger goal of furthering the agenda of democratic development in the country.

The project managed risk effectively. The two major projects performed well.

The project budget was planned and managed efficiently and effectively. The allocation of resources to specific areas of activity was well-

15- Kirkuk “Our Home” Forum for Human Rights; 16-Iraqi Institute for Human Rights;
17- Al-Noor Universal Foundation; 18- Lelaf Center;
19- Cultural & Humanity Iraq Tomorrow Organization; 20- Sun Independent Foundation.

Despite much international assistance since 2003, Iraq is in the early stages of both state-building and democracy-building. The project sought to strengthen democratic practice by enhancing the role of civil society at governorate (provincial) level in monitoring of the work of Governorate Councils (GCs) in the service of greater transparency of decision-making and enhanced accountability to citizens. At the same time, efforts were made to provide information and training to elected members of the GCs (GCMs), to encourage greater attention to accountability, a

The initial phase of the evaluation took place in March and April of 2014, with field work planned to take place in the first half of April 2014. Unfortunately, the work in Iraq did not proceed as planned, despite the full cooperation of the grantee. Although some initial interviews were completed, not all proved to be satisfactory. In other cases, the unclear English of the reporting of interviews has resulted in the loss of valuable material.² Further, a number of those interviews and meetings which were planned did not take place. In reviewing the report, the reader is asked to bear in mind that, due to unforeseen developments and the deteriorating security situation in Iraq, the outbreak of violence in the country and in particular in the North, as well as the related deterioration of the national consultant's personal and family circumstances, it was not possible to complete the planned program of data collection through interviews and discussions.

In order to fill in some gaps in data collected, the international consultant had arranged to conduct a long Skype interview with the Head of the Um Al Yateem Foundation in July, 2014. However, the blocking of all social media in Iraq from early in the month resulted in the adoption of a contingency plan, involving an "e-mail interview", through which the UMF Director responded in writing to a set of detailed questions prepared by the international consultant. This proved to be very helpful, but, under the circumstances, more reliance than is usual has been placed on documentary data. For this reason, and because of the extraordinary work environment, the international evaluator advises that there remain some gaps, and this has limited the prospects for arriving at firm conclusions on some aspects of the evaluation of the project.

The UNDEF Rounds 2, 3 and 4 evaluations follow a standard set of evaluation questions that focus on six critical issues: the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and any value added through UNDEF funding (see Annex1). This report follows that structure, with a chapter on each evaluation issue.

More specifically, given the objectives and character of this project, among the issues to be

exagatA4(o)13(f)-14()-14(t)tc 0 1 70.824 342.53 e exagatA BT 1 0 0 1 128.3 405.775 Tm [(ex)13(agatAt.Tm]

The relevance of the overall design and approaches to implementation to project objectives. The evaluation gave careful attention to the links across activities and the way in which these were employed to reinforce efforts to achieve overall objectives.

active role in holding decision-makers to account, or in finding opportunities for dialogue with public officials and elected representatives on policies and programmes.¹⁵

In many countries in transition, where legislatures and other institutions to ensure accountability are weak or compromised, civil society plays a vital role in filling the gaps in accountability and transparency by monitoring government performance. However, in post-conflict societies, it is often hazardous for CSOs to take on a public role in criticizing the weak commitment of governments and political parties to democracy. In Iraq, following a civil war which resulted in the fragmentation of civil society, the low toleran

support the signing of MOUs with the two governorates now joining the project, as well as with the other four.¹⁷

The project team then provided support to monitoring activities in the six governorates and also commissioned two opinion polls to measure progress in governance practice, along with two comprehensive annual monitoring reports. The participating CSOs in each province played an important role in the opi

(ii) Logical framework

The chart is based on detailed information included in the project's results framework, included in the Project Document, as well as the Final Report.

Initial consultation meetings are held between the UMF (grantee) team and 20 CSOs in 6 GOVs;

Trainers recruited to train the CSOs on monitoring skills; CSO representatives selected; Training curriculum & training plan developed;

Implementation of a 4-day training workshop on monitoring skills & performance evaluation, followed by a 3-day workshop on access to information & building relationships with GC members (GCMs) for the same trainee group;

Organization and holding of 2 public awareness symposia in each of the 6 GOVs, with intended participation of 70 citizens per symposium;

Five project management meetings between UMF project team and coordinating organizations for CSOs (1 Lead CSO selected for each GOV);

Initial meetings held between CSO groups and GCs; formal request to attend GC meetings and to sign MOU is put forward in each GOV;

CSO groups and GCs meet to

polling expert;

Under supervision of contracted survey design expert, design of survey instruments and drafting of questions to be included in questionnaire; determination of sampling frame for 6 governorates

**Survey Implementation:
distribution of questionnaires;
collection of survey data; inputting of data by qualified technical personnel; data analysis by 2 professionals, and preparation of summary reports on the polling results;**

CSO groups plan and organize 2 symposia

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The evaluation is based on a framework reflecting a core set of evaluation questions formulated to meet the evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The questions and sub-questions are listed in Annex 1 of this document.

(i) Relevance

Development of the practice of democracy is at a very early stage in Iraq. Whether the focus is on senior government ministers and officials, elected representatives at all levels, or civil society organizations, none have the experience or knowledge that they need to build the communications and connections between government and citizens to energize public life and support responsive decision-making.

As noted above, the strengthening of the role of the Governorate Councils is a recent

Drawing on the solid experience of the organization and its leadership, and its knowledge of how to organize and maintain project activities in a challenging environment, UMF did an effective job of both anticipating risk and making plans to mitigate it. Among the possible risks identified was the non-cooperation of some of the groups of Governing Council (GC) Members. As noted above, this risk was realized in the case of two governorates, and the grantee took rapid action to replace them.

One unanticipated risk was the enforced interruption of activities as a result of GC elections in 2013. The elections took place in April 2013, followed by the formation of new councils, with the turnover in membership which followed on from the elections. This resulted in a 4-month hiatus in project implementation, beginning with the initiation of campaigning and including a suspension of council activities for 2 months. However, the project proved able to adapt; it established working relations with the newly-elected councils and was able to complete its overall program as planned.

(ii)

characterized by top-down decision-making, in most cases, there had been little if any prior experience of taking part in meetings where senior elected representatives made themselves available for discussion and dialogue with members of local communities and civil society groups.

UMF and its CSO partners were successful in their effort to involve a cross-section of the local community in the public awareness symposia (two held in each governorate). On average, 70 members of the local community took part in each symposium. Thirty per cent of seats were reserved for women and another 30 per cent for representatives of marginalized groups, including those with low incomes and Internally-Displaced Persons (IDPs). The other attendees were local leaders. Project staff maintained a detailed record of participants in all meetings and events held by the project. Some examples are provided in the box accompanying the text, labeled

One limitation of the project was the focus on training only three CSO monitors (one representative of each of the three participating CSOs) for each governorate. Such a strategy increases the risk of the CSO team failing to maintain its commitment, since the group is too small to support the monitoring and reporting process on a regular basis over time. More importantly, it is likely to limit the level of interest, as well as the capacity, of the participating CSOs. A broader base of participation would do much to strengthen the prospects for entrenching the monitoring process and for enhancing the quality of the work.

The reports prepared by the six CSO teams were forwarded to UMF on a regular basis. They were later made available to a three-person expert team selected by UMF, with responsibility for preparing the two Annual Monitoring Reports for 2012 and 2013. In addition to drawing on the primary research conducted by the CSO teams, the experts drafting the Annual Reports also were able to work with the summary reports on the two annual opinion polls, where data was analyzed on a broad, cross-governorate basis, as well as by the individual governorates. The documents are of high quality, prepared by a knowledgeable, high-level academic/professional team. The findings set out in the report reflect willingness by the expert team (and UMF) “to speak truth to power”. They provide a careful appraisal of the performance of the GCs, highlighting many deficiencies in procedure, while also assessing the capacity or willingness of the Councils to use the powers granted to them under law to formulate legislation and hold the executive accountable, and their ability to make decisions. In addition, the reports focused on public satisfaction (or the lack of it) with GC performance, while also appraising efforts made by the GCs at transparency and communicating with the public.

A stratified sampling methodology was adopted to ensure representativeness by gender, age, education and urban/rural residence.

The first survey took place early in the project, with plans finalized before the decision was made to replace two governorates. Consequently, the polling went ahead in the initial six locations, and plans were also made to include as well the two additional governorates. For the first survey (2012), 12,000 questionnaire forms were distributed across eight governorates (1,500 in each governorate). In the second poll, 9,000 forms were distributed in six provinces. Rates of return were very high for both surveys, with 10,191 completed in 2012 (85 per cent) and 7,933 (88 per cent) in 2013. Though the percentage of completed questionnaires varied across provinces, the rate of return in each province was sufficient to provide a basis for comparing findings on levels of satisfaction with the performance of the GC.

The findings of the two surveys were invaluable in reminding the GCMs and members of Iraq's political class of the extent of the governance problem and democracy deficit in the country, and of the gap between citizens' expectations and current realities. Overall, in 2013, 57 per cent of respondents indicated their dissatisfaction with the performance of the Councils. In Wasit, where the Council failed to function, 83 per cent indicated their dissatisfaction. Fifty per cent expressed concern at deficiencies in service provision, while 47 per cent commented on the prevalence of corruption and bribery in daily transactions with public officials. The findings concerning service provision were striking when set alongside the findings of the CSO monitoring reports, highlighted in the Annual Reports, of the failure of the GCs to devote attention to the need to D U •Í4Dt•m,¾t~=Á2 dt•m

\$24,000, or 11 per cent of operational costs.¹⁹ The staff budget covered the salaries over a 24-month period of the Project Manager, Executive Assistant and Accountant. Given the project profile, this pattern of expenditures would seem to be entirely reasonable. In the experience of the international consultant, the expense associated with the recruitment of experts was unusually high for an UNDEF project. However, top-level professionals were recruited and the quality of the services they provided made a very direct contribution to the project's achievements, as well as the credibility of its reports and public presentations.

The additional funds provided by UMF were used in the following way: \$5,500 was contributed to cover the cost of recruitment of the expert teams to prepare and review the two Annual Monitoring Reports; \$6,000 was utilized to provide a monthly allocation to the 6 coordinating CSOs to cover out-of-pocket expense (\$50/month x 6 x 20 months); and, \$5,000 was added to the budget line for Meeting and Training Costs to fund the holding of meetings in five governorates to launch the first Annual Monitoring Report.²⁰ The costs associated with the replacement of two of the six governorates and selecting new CSOs to form the monitoring groups in those locations, as well as those required to support extension of the scope of the public opinion poll to include the two additional territories, were covered by funds freed up by cancellation of the third public awareness symposium to be held in each governorate.

Overall, the budget was planned and managed efficiently and effectively. The selection of activities and their relative financial weighting was realistic, given project objectives. The investment in high-quality reports, public presentations and dissemination of materials produced represented a good use of project funds in bringing innovations supported to a broader audience and increasing the prospects for replication elsewhere.

Institutional arrangements for organization of project activities worked well and proved to be cost-effective. UMF retained responsibility for setting directions and providing detailed guidelines for implementing all activities; it also monitored developments at the project sites closely, and provided additional support as needed. Responsibilities for coordination, administration and reporting at governorate level rested with the six coordinating CSOs. This division of labour seems to have been most effective. Much of the cost of the ongoing project work at governorate level was absorbed by the participating CSOs, which volunteered their time. This in-kind contribution enabled the project to accomplish far more than might have been expected, given the limitations of the budget.

(iv) Impact

Under current conditions in Iraq, with the state and its survival in its present form in question, it is particularly difficult to judge the impact of any project in the democratic governance sphere. Despite this, it may certainly be said that, the project has the potential to be influential in nurturing advances in the accountability of governance institutions, as well as in the strengthening of the role of civil society in public life.

UMF made a solid and apparently effective effort to ensure that the project and the innovations it supported were brought to the attention of the political class, as well as a broader public. The

¹⁹ The percentages cited here are calculated with reference to the complete operational budget, including the additional funds provided by UMF.

²⁰ Source: Details on the utilization of the UMF contribution based on email correspondence between international consultant and the president of UMF, 21-22 July, 2014.

major project events, both in Baghdad and in the other governorates, attracted considerable media attention.²¹ For example, according to the Milestone Verification Report prepared by a representative of UN Women, the Conference held in Baghdad on 1 and 2, June, 2013 to launch the First Monitoring Report (2012)

(v) Sustainability

The project succeeded in demonstrating the effectiveness of a what might prove to be a sustainable model of civil society monitoring of provincial legislatures (Governorate Councils), with most of the work at local level being conducted by volunteers. However, like most initiatives of value, continuing funding will be required to facilitate a continuation of the work. There is a clear need for continuing leadership and technical advice, as well as trouble-shooting, at the centre. Further, it is unlikely that the project's reliance on the provision of monitoring and reporting services by CSOs on a voluntary basis would provide a sound foundation for sustainability.

What really added value to the important work of the CSO monitors was the compilation of the Annual Monitoring Reports, which seem to have had impact at both national and provincial level, and which served to demonstrate the kinds of contribution such work could make in advancing the case for strengthening accountability of government institutions to citizens in Iraq's fledgling democracy. With continuing financial support, the civil society monitoring initiative, termed the "Governorates Council Observatory" by UMF, could make a real difference, assuming Iraq comes through the present crisis satisfactorily.

As matters stand, both UMF and some of the CSO teams, including that in Najaf, are continuing the work as best they can beyond the project. In some other locations, the GCs are no longer willing to cooperate, since, in their view the agreements and MOUs were no longer relevant in the absence of international involvement. As the head of the coordinating organization in Baghdad explained, "the GCMs believe that, without the support of an international organization, it will not be necessary for the CSO team to continue its role, because they do not have confidence in local organizations."

(vi) UNDEF Added Value

As is made clear by the observations of the CSO representative in Baghdad, quoted above, there was considerable benefit to UMF and its partners in obtaining not only financial support from UNDEF, but also the availability of the UN label, to add legitimacy to the project in the eyes of the leadership of the Governance Councils.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

(i) In the context of the political conditions and the insecurity prevalent in Iraq at the time of the project, its objectives, as well as the strategy to accomplish them, were both practical and relevant to the larger goal of furthering the agenda of democratic development in the country.

(ii) The project design was relatively complex, but it was also logical and well-

CSOs) for each governorate. Although the project managed to complete its program at the governorate level adequately, such an approach narrows the base of participation of CSO activists in the process, limits the opportunity to build CSO capacity and is likely to limit the depth of commitment of the participating organizations to the monitoring process. It also increases the likelihood of a CSO team being unable to meet its commitments to regular monitoring and reporting and to meeting the required standards in both.

(vii) The effectiveness of the project at provincial (governorate) level varied, depending mainly on the political and security circumstances in each location, as well as the level of commitment of the CSO team. In those cases where the project was less effective than hoped for, the main explanatory factors were beyond the control of the project.

(viii) The project attracted considerable interest from the mass media and senior government officials. As a result of the findings reported in the Annual Monitoring Reports, several of the participating GCs devoted greater efforts to transparency and providing information to the public. In a few cases, governments acted on stalled initiatives following the highlighting of the issues in the reports. Overall, the project succeeded in demonstrating the value of a civil society monitoring mechanism in strengthening the accountability of government institutions to citizens and stimulating greater attention to transparency in decision-making by government and elected representatives.

(ix) The project budget was planned and managed efficiently and effectively. The allocation of resources to specific areas of activity was well-judged in ensuring that the project focused its work on achieving its objectives. There was an over-expenditure of \$16,500, which was covered by the grantee from other funds. Most of the work of participating CSOs was carried out on a voluntary basis, representing a significant in-kind contribution to the project. Institutional arrangements worked well and were cost-effective.

(x) The project made a strong and successful

project impact is less clear, although it does appear to have made a difference in the thinking of the GCs on the need to devote greater attention to accountability and transparency. It is probably the case that the project would have been well-advised to budget for training of larger numbers of GCMs in order to enhance GC understanding of the monitoring initiative.

(xiii) As noted above, the project benefited greatly from the voluntary contribution of participating CSOs. For the future, much more can be achieved, but not on the basis of voluntary efforts alone. Sustainability for future efforts will depend on continuing financial support to continuing leadership and technical support at the centre to provincial- or local-level initiatives, while also providing a national forum for dissemination of results and lessons learned. It will also depend on the provision of some financial support to participating CSOs.

(xiv) There was value in the UN label provided by UNDEF in strengthening the ability of the grantee to convince government TJ 1t11(i)9 70e to c T /F2 15(i)5(l)5(l)5 1t1113(r)-3(t)-4 ET BT 1p

VI. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
------------------	---------------------	-----------------------

ANNEX 2: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Project documents:

Project Document, UDF-IRQ-10-372

Mid-term Progress Report

Final Report

Memoranda of Understanding between Project and CSO Partners and Project and Governorate Councils

Milestone Verification Mission Reports, 25 June 2012 and 01-02 June 2013

Project Documents on Training Workshops and Curricula

Reports on the 1st and 2nd opinion Poll Results on the Performance of the Governorate Councils, 2012 & 2013

Reports on Governance Council Performance Monitoring: (I), 15/1-15/12/2013, and (II), 1/1-1/11/2013

Other Documents and Reference Materials:

“A Look behind Surging Violence in Iraq”, *Christian Science Monitor*, September 27, 2013

“How Did it Come to That?” *Economist*, 21 June, 2014.

International Crisis Group (ICG), “Failing Oversight: Iraq’s Unchecked Government”: *Middle East Report*, 26 September, 2011.

International Crisis Group (ICG), “Iraq”, *Crisis Watch 125*, 2 January, 2014.

International Crisis Group (ICG): “Iraq’s Jihadi Jack-in-a-box”, *Middle East Report*, 20 June 2014.

International Crisis Group (ICG): “Make or Break? Iraq’s Sunnis and the State”: *Middle East Report 144*, September 14, 2013.

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES): “Iraq’s Political Climate Examined before the Governorate Elections”, 13 April, 2013. <http://www.ifes.org/Content/Publications/Articles/2013/Iraqs-Political-Climate-Examined-Prior-to-Governorate-Council-Elections.aspx>

“Iraq”, *Freedom in the World 2013* Washington D.C., Freedom House.

“Iraq: Ten Years Later is Less Threatening but Riven by Turmoil”, Editorial Board, *Washington Post*, March 22, 2013;

Kenneth Katzman, “Iraq: Politics, Governance and Human Rights”, *Congressional Research Service* CRS Report 7.5700, 5 February, 2014,

NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq (NCCI): “Iraq’s Civil Society in Perspective”, April 2011.

Salah Nasrawi, “Can Iraq be Saved?” *Al Jazeera* C1 0.85.36005904C5004F500034000300B1>BDC BT14F5004C5005024

ANNEX 3: SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS

Please Note, for the reasons stated in II (ii) Evaluation Methodology, above, it is not possible to provide information on the Interview Schedule using the standard format. Field research took place in Iraq during April 2014 at a time of tension and increasing violence, during the run-

ANNEX 4: LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSO