

SALAM AL-RAFIDAYN

سلام الرافدين

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY BUILDING IN IRAQ

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Today, we have reached the end of our four year project in Iraq; four years of hard work, great learning and discoveries, but most importantly, of beautiful friendships. A first word of thank you goes from the Iraqi people to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) which has generously funded this initiative. Another "thank you" goes to

Development and Peace our Canadian partners in this project and whose constant effort and coaching not only helped us tremendously in our work with the Iraqi civil society, but also helped us grow and develop internally as the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue (FDCD).

Dr. Riyad Jarjour, FDCD president

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IRAQI NGOS ADVOCACY TRAINING IN LEBANON

The Lebanese Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue, in partnership with Partners-Jordan, an NGO committed to promoting the advancement of civil society and a culture of conflict management, organized a workshop for the representatives of 20 Iraqi organizations under the title of "Advocacy and Cooperative Planning." The workshop was held from 24th-31st of May, 2009, and aimed at raising the standards of the participating Iraqi NGOs in terms of effective cooperative planning by endowing them with both the knowledge and skills to plan and implement advocacy campaigns.



The participants during an icebreaking activity

The first three days of the workshop introduced the participants to methods of conflict management in a society where conflicts abound; whereas the five remaining days focused on advocacy through a practical training approach and on-the-ground activities.

Project Coordinator, Jean-Paul Chami, noted that most of the participating organizations have been working with FDCD since 2006 on topics related to conflict management, proposal writing and fundraising. The NGOs which joined this program in 2009 are involved in the fields of advocacy, human rights, women's rights, and democracy. This diversity in the group led to an exchange of experiences and the creation of a space for different entities to connect, work together on one project and, hence, create a network for future advocacy campaigns in Iraq. Chami further stressed on the significance of bringing together such diverse participants from different parts of Iraq, which was in itself a great accomplishment, helping Iraqis reconnect and overcome their own prejudices and stereotypes.

Concerning the training techniques, Mr. Mohammad Qotaishat, Trainings Director at Partners-Jordan, made clear that the main objective was to link the tools and models learned by the participants with their own experiences and their field work in Iraq in order to help them build coalitions and give support to each other. "Most importantly", he added, "is that they get to use different advocacy strategies such as networking, using the media and building and mobilizing the people at the grassroots level." Mr. Qotaishat asserted that 25% of this training was theoretical and the remaining part was more practice-oriented which, according to him, was the main factor behind its success.

One of the participants, Shireen Wahab from the Kurdistan Relief Association (**KRA**) realized that the main skill she has acquired was how to map and analyze the different stakeholders and parties concerned by any advocacy campaign in addition to how to build the adequate strategies aiming at approaching the right



The South Iraq group collectively drafting their initial scheme for the campaign which they have implemented by the end of 2009

decision makers and the people who can influence things and

cause change to happen. Shireen added that “before, we used to have rather a needs-based kind of thinking, but now we are aware of the importance of having a rights-based approach in advocacy” Another participant, Falah Al Aloussi, from Salam Al Rafidayn, stressed that the workshop helped in putting an overall framework which will be used in planning for coalition building, a necessary step in the current transitional phase towards a

much longed for democratic state in Iraq.

Finally, the participants held group meetings and submitted their draft proposals for the advocacy campaigns they would like to implement when back in Iraq. These campaigns will be funded by **CIDA** and coordinated by the Kurdistan Relief Association in North Iraq, Salam Al Rafidayn in the center and Dhiqar Forum in the South.

IRAQI-LEBANESE YOUTH EXCHANGE IN LEBANON

“Reaching any objective requires making baby steps”. This was the conclusion given by the participants in the 4th Lebanese-Iraqi youth exchange program on advocacy for conflict resolution” organized by the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue (FDCD). The workshop hosted 27 participants, 15 Lebanese and 12 Iraqis at the Mediterranean Forestry Center in Al Ramliyyeh, from 14 till 19 August 2009 in collaboration with the Association for Forests, Development and Conservation)

According to the project assistant, Sara Sibai, it was expected that the participants implement what they have learned upon their return to their associations by using the acquired skills and knowledge in the ongoing advocacy campaigns or by simply replicating them among their peers at schools, clubs, universities, etc.

During the 6-day workshop, activities varied between theory and practice. In the first day and in order to break the ice, the organizers held many group games to reinforce communication between the participants through cooperation, to build their confidence toward each other and to develop

their personalities and help them overcome their fears.

The second and third days were centered on Advocacy with a special focus on conflict resolution and peace building. Participants were divided into groups, and each group had to choose a cause and learned about the different ways to advocate for it.

The fourth day was reserved to the Iraqis to introduce them to the touristic sites in Lebanon. The trip included Jeita, Hamra, Rawzeh which they insisted to visit.

The use of Internet for advocacy had a part in the fifth day, where the participants have learned



FDCD's own devils, Adel (top Left), Thamer (top Right), Omar (center) and Mushreq.



Group photo right after the graduation ceremony at Ramliyyeh

how to use internet in order to spread information. In the sixth day, participants were trained on the use of video, filming and voice recording in advocacy in addition to how to write articles and how to upload them on the internet.

Participants said that this workshop allowed them to better know the other whether Lebanese or Iraqi both during the sessions informally during evenings of music performance, poetry and conversations.

Advocacy was a new topic for Maysaa Blaybel (21 years) from Lebanon and who works at ALEF (Association Libanaise pour l'Education et la Formation). Maysaa gives seminars on Human Rights for school students.

She believes that this workshop increased her self-confidence, and gave her an opportunity to communicate with others and to accept the different "other".

Tamer Assi (27 years) works for "Al Horra" Organization in Karbala in Iraq. When he first came to Lebanon, he was afraid of [cultural] differences however, he quickly got used to his new Lebanese friends. He says that this workshop was very interactive which helped him capture information easily and that the most important thing he has learned was how to plan in order to reach certain objectives.

The same goes for Sara el Assady (23 years) who works at Al Ferdaws Association in Basra in Iraq and who was attending her very

first workshop in Lebanon. "I had a fruitful experience" she said. She noted that she gained a lot of experience as she noticed that both Iraqi and Lebanese societies have a lot in common. Sarah also mentioned that she will try to spread the knowledge she gained through organizing different workshops in Iraq.

Mohammad Annan (19 years), Lebanese, praised the experience of the trainers and their ability to send out the message in the best way possible.

In conclusion, youth are the pillars of a society, and such workshops are a good opportunity to open up the space for them to meet and learn about each others' backgrounds.

"TOGETHER LIVING IN PEACE" ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN IN IRAQ

After having attended the capacity building on advocacy in Beirut, our partner NGOs in Iraq met and consulted during the month of June and put together one proposal per region to advocate for peace in Iraq. The agreed upon umbrella title for the overall campaign was "together Living in Peace".

The advocacy campaigns were led by one NGO in each region in Iraq. This has created a new dynamic in our project since it was for the first time that an Iraqi NGO would lead such a movement. Our partners benefited immensely from this interaction which has made them put into good use the many skills which the Iraq Project has endowed them with, such as communication and good listening, proper documentation, and even conflict resolution and dialogue whenever misunderstandings would occur.

All in all, the campaigns were a success and led not only to raising awareness on the hot topics tackled by our partners but also to involving decision makers in addressing these issues. Hereafter is a recap of how things looked in each of the three main regions in Iraq: the North, the Center and the South.

The North organizations worked on the impact of forced internal displacement on youth in Kirkuk, Mosul, and Dohuk. The Kurdistan Relief Association (**KRA**), **Pana** Center, **Darya** Center for Women and Social Development, and **Bunyan** for Human Development implemented together many activities, out of which, a survey focusing on the problems faced by young women and men, camps and training sessions for affected youth, dialogue and awareness raising sessions, visits by the youth to religious leaders to involve them in their action, televised interviews with decision makers and opinion leaders and a televised ad by youth in Mosul.



Billboard posted in Baghdad and in the surrounding cities addressing the issue of child soldiers in Iraq



Poster used in the campaign in the North of Iraq and aiming at sensitizing people on the issue of rehabilitation and education of youth affected by compulsory internal displacement

In the center of Iraq, Salam Al Rafidayn, Al Mortaqa Organization, Woman and Child Association, Women for Peace and the Baghdad Humanitarian Organization joined efforts in a campaign aiming at addressing the issue of Child Soldiers in the Baghdad region. The main focus was to activate the optional protocol on



Poster used in the South of Iraq during the campaign on the right of children for education

the participation of children in armed conflicts.

Some of what they have achieved was five dialogue sessions with opinion leaders and elites, a website for the campaign (www.childsoldiers-iq.org), meetings at the grassroots level, meetings with parliamentarians and

international organizations, Radio and TV programs, and dialogue groups at youth clubs.

Finally, and in the South of Iraq, the campaign tackled the issue of children dropout often leading to their joining militarized groups. Our Southern Iraqi partners aimed at increasing the public awareness in order to decrease the percentage of children dropout from schools by 80% and to end up activating the law of compulsory education for children.

The Dhiqar Forum, the Affected Woman League, Al Firdaws and Al Hurra organization worked relentlessly in Dhiqar, Basra, Karbala and Missan and ended up carrying out the following: Conferences in the different southern provinces attended by opinion leaders, a painting exhibition for children under the topic of compulsory education, distributing flyers and posters to schools and posting billboards with many governmental officials attending the final conferences in the aforementioned four provinces.

FDCD MONITORING TRIP TO SULAYMANIYA

Between the 10th and the 14th of October 2009, our Iraq Project Coordinator, Mr. Jean-Paul Chami, carried out a monitoring trip to Iraq in order to meet with our partner NGOs and help them monitor the progress of their respective campaigns. The discussions and presentations revolved around the progress of the advocacy project, what has been achieved and some of the difficulties that they have been facing. They shared some of the fears and concerns they

were having along with suggestions in order to have a better involvement of their volunteers and youth in their advocacy-related activities.

One of the main objectives of this trip was to have our partners share their experience, which made them realize that some of the difficulties they were facing were common to the other regions as well. Towards the end of the meeting one main recommendation was to have our NGOs receive one extra training on communication and reporting to be conducted in the Sulaymaniya region in Iraq and intending to ensure high quality reporting of

the advocacy campaigns. This visit helped us connect on a much deeper level with our partners as we were able to understand the Iraqi context even further. There are regional differences in Iraq even within the same zones. Each region and each province has its own specificities which makes it hard to create a common vision for the NGOs coming from these different regions since each NGO has its own priorities.

We have learned that NGOs in Iraq still do not have sufficient experience and knowledge in carrying out advocacy campaigns and that most campaigns end up being awareness

raising ones rather than ones involving decision makers in order to aim at having change in laws and/or attitudes.

One of the meeting sessions which included representatives of the coordination centers and our FDCD staff in Iraq



Participants' group picture with Paul Cliche (back row, second from left) and Sonia Lebegue (back row, fifth from left) from Development and Peace, our Canadian partner in the Iraq project.

INSAN AND FDCD WORKSHOP IN SULAYMANIA

Between the 20 and the 25 of November 2009, two workshops were organized.

1- TRAINING ON COMMUNICATION, REPORTING AND NETWORKING

This workshop was a joint activity between FDCD and INSAN whose efforts and resources were combined in order to enhance the capacities of the representatives of their partner NGOs on:

- 1-** Reporting skills through a methodological approach in writing reports, .
- 2-** Networking and carrying out advocacy campaigns providing the participants with useful means and tools.

3- Communication skills.

The overall level of the participants' engagement in the workshop was quite high. They showed great interest in the topics covered and took the assignments and exercises very seriously and spent considerable time in preparing their presentations, even some stayed late at night to finish them.

The general atmosphere prevailing during the workshop was positive though it started formally due to the fact that the trainees from the two networks did not know each other before. The workshop was evaluated in writing by each of the participants through filling an evaluation form and verbally by open discussion at

the end of each of the two modules of the workshop.

The participants found the workshop to be useful and relevant and the topics relevant to their context and useful to improve their work within the networks. The level of participation in the discussions, preparations of reports and assignments and quality of field work showed genuine interest to improve and learn. The participatory training methodology followed was found interesting and a good model to follow in their future trainings with the need for more exercises. Finally, the training methodology was seen as efficient in conveying the concepts easily and interactively and at the same time allowed them to share their ideas and

expertise. The workshop achieved its specific learning objectives. This workshop was facilitated by Mr. Ali Chahine who has shared his rich experience and provided tools and solutions to the participants in order for them to better develop their skills and processes within their respective NGOs.

2. TRAINING ON "MODERATION SKILLS"

"Moderation skills" was the title of the workshop which was organized in Sulaymaniyah by FDCD on the 22nd and 23rd of November for a group of Iraqi youth who have in previous years participated in the exchange forum in Lebanon.

This workshop focused on the



The participants discussing facilitation techniques with the trainer Roaa Al Medeni

art of public speaking and the components of good communication (words, sound, body language and different ways in conveying messages).

Both trainers, Ms. Roaa Al Medeni and Mr. Jean-Paul Chami used different training techniques which boosted the participants energy and got them to be immersed in the discussions and to share their experience and ideas. One of the exercises was “save the earth” which aimed at focusing on art of asking questions and moderating dialogues. Another exercise

was on facilitation skills. Here the trainers grouped the participants in 3 small groups with each group developing its list of:

- 1) what should a moderator do?
- 2) what should he/she not do?
- 3) what should be prepared before a moderation session?

After that, each group presented in the plenary its notes and a group discussion followed. By the end, an evaluation of the training took place. According

to the participants, there was an overall increase in their self confidence, and in their ability to face an audience as they have got passed the barrier of shyness when facing a group. They have learned to pay attention to the different components of communication and to be aware of their importance. They also had few remarks and suggestions to the organizers such as trying to host additional activities in the future and to host them closer to the center and to the south region.

PROFILES: PANA AND AL MORTAQA

The Iraqi Al-Mortaqa Foundation for Human Development (**IM-FHD**) is an independent development and non-governmental foundation established in 2005 in Iraq. The foundation has its headquarters in Baghdad and branches in Erbil, Kirkuk, Salahdin, Diyala, Anbar, Karbala and Basra, in addition to two offices in Jordan and Syria which opened recently to help Iraqi refugees. The Foundation aims at spreading the concepts of civil society and the role of its organizations in sustainable development, providing the youth with media skills to work in various media institutions, contributing

to the eradication of unemployment in Iraq.

The **IMFHD** is specialized in development in such fields as human, economic, and social development, leadership & management, youth and media and information.

PANA CENTER FOR COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Pana Center for Combating Violence against Women was founded in 2004 by a group of intellectual elites and women nationalists in Kirkuk. Pana Center aims at raising women’s awareness and improving their living standards in Iraq, both in urban and suburban areas, by providing them with the skills and job opportunities, and protecting them

from all forms of violence and discrimination

Since its foundation, Pana Center worked on several activities and succeeded in achieving its goals of promoting the role of women in society.

In 2006, Pana center created a shelter to protect women and resolve social problems; it worked on raising awareness in society through lectures, workshops and conferences on women’s rights, the various forms of violence, gender equality, and human rights.

The center is currently working on an advocacy campaign, with the support of FDCD, regarding the phenomenon of compulsive immigration and its impact on youth in the North of Iraq.

INTERVIEW WITH MR. JEAN-PAUL CHAMI, THE IRAQ PROJECT COORDINATOR

Tell us about your background

I am by profession a trainer on peace and conflict topics in Leba-

non and the Arab region. I have done my initial studies in the field of business and at a later stage I have obtained a masters degree in International Relations from the Lebanese American University and another one in Peace and Conflict studies from the European Peace University (EPU) in Austria. I have taken the position of Iraq project coordina-

tor with FDCD since December 2008. I am a firm believer that by creating spaces for dialogue and mutual understanding, conflicts can be transcended peacefully and can then become the nucleus of positive and nonviolent social change.

What have you gained on the personal level by working on this

project?

Working on the Iraq Project at FDCD has endowed me with many skills and a great experience. For instance, I have learned more about the conflict in Iraq and discovered how similar it is to what we as Lebanese have witnessed in our own country. My trips to Iraq have helped me deepen my connection with the people I work with and for. Now I understand better the context of the conflicts in Iraq and I can share people's disappointments and dreams. As a young Lebanese, I have experienced a big chunk of the Lebanese wars and internal violent struggles and through this project, I was given the chance to share and also to be heard. This project not only gave me the chance to contribute, but also the chance to receive.

What was this project's main impact?

The Iraq project has inspired other NGOs in Lebanon and the region to look for ways to help in Iraq. It also created a network of partners and friends in Iraq. During the past 4 years, this project has helped FDCD gain the trust of our Iraqi partners and be accepted as a friend and a resource organization to which they resort to for advice, coaching and support. The change that this project brought was great, especially on the individual and community levels. We have witnessed many radical changes in people's attitudes which translated at a later stage into actions through their involvement in the implementation of different projects related to peace, dialogue and conflict resolution. Three main benefits came out of this project: a healing experience for the ones who have lost loved ones or were still under shock because of all the violence they have been through,



Mr. Jean-Paul Chami, the Iraq project coordinator

a momentum for reconciliation for those who have been holding grudges against "the other" and were waiting for a chance to get their vengeance only to come across nonviolent approaches like mediation, dialogue and reconciliation and finally a chance for changing perspectives and a window of hope for those of us who have lost hope for any real and durable peace to take place.

What are your aspirations and hopes for the future concerning this project?

Some of my hopes are to see our work in Iraq continue for many years because we believe that peacebuilding is a long term process. FDCD could play a major role in sharing its expertise and experience working in the field in Iraq. We could help in drafting joint project proposals with our partners and help them network and raise funds by connecting them to our network of partners and friends. Finally, why not, maybe at some point to have an office for us in Iraq to get us closer to the field and to hearing the needs and help in addressing them.

OUR PARTNERS:**NORTH OF IRAQ**

*Kurdistan Relief Association (KRA)
Bunyan for Human Development*

*Darya Center for Women and
Social Development*

*Pana Center for Combating
Violence Against Women*

INSAN**CENTER OF IRAQ**

Salam Al Rafidayn

*Al Mortaqa Foundation for
Human Development*

*Woman and Child Association
Women for peace*

*Baghdad humanitarian
Organization*

SOUTH OF IRAQ

Dhiqar Forum

The Affected Woman League

Al Hurra Organization

Al Firdaws

Contributors to this Newsletter:

- Nisrine Ajab
- Jean Paul Chami
- Sara Sibai

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