

United Nations Development Group UNDAF Trust Fund
Project #82895: P1-04
Date and Quarter: 1 January to 31 March 2014
1st Quarter 2014

Participating UN Organisation: UNDP Sector: Governance and Human Rights
Government of Iraq – Responsible Line Ministry: The Iraqi Commission of Integrity

Title	Enhancing Transparent Participatory Governance and Human Rights				
Geographic Location	Nationwide				
Project Cost	USD 3,091,526 ¹ received in two tranches.				
Duration	24 months				
Approval Date (SC)	5 April 2012	Starting Date	15 May 2012	Completion Date	Anticipated 31 December 2014
Project Description	UNDP, in close consultation with national counterparts will undertake a series of interlinked and complementary interventions within a programmatic framework that aims to promote transparent participatory governance and strengthen human rights in Iraq. The framework has four outputs focusing on strengthening human rights and transparency through participatory governance mechanisms. First, to support the mandate and organizational structure of the Human Rights Commission, including the establishment of sub-national commissions. Second, to provide long term institutional development of the Human Rights Commission and its outreach capabilities through participatory governance mechanisms. Third, combat corruption through the promotion of accountability, integrity and transparency at all levels of government and civil society. This involves support to the roll-out of the Government of Iraq’s National Anti-Corruption Strategy, to strengthen the capacities of key parliamentary committees, to address corruption issues, to enhance engagement of civil society organisations and media in addressing corruption and to provide technical support for the establishment of a new KRG Commission of Integrity and KRG Board of Supreme Audit. Fourth, to utilise civil society organisations to promote participatory and transparent governance which includes financial and technical support to civil society organisations to enhance their engagement with parliament.				

¹ Funding for the project will be through two tranche. The total amount committed to this project by the UNDAF Trust Fund is USD 3,091,526.

The first tranche has been released in the amount of USD 1,574,585 which is reflecting in the table above until the remaining second tranche is received by UNDP. The second tranche request is under preparation.

At the time of receipt of the second tranche for the amount of USD 1,516,941 this section will be adapted to reflect full project funds.

Development Goal and Immediate Objectives

<p>UNDAF: Priority 1 Improved Governance, including the protection of human rights. Priority Outcome 1.4 The Iraqi State has more efficient, accountable and participatory governance at national and sub-national levels.</p> <p>UNDP CPAP: Outcome 3 Strengthened regulatory frameworks, institutions and processes in place for accountable, transparent and participatory governance at national and local levels.</p>
<p>Output 1: The Iraq Human Rights Commission has enhanced capacity to execute its mandate. Output 2: Iraq has a national platform for an expanded human rights dialogue. Output 3: The Iraqi state is able to promote and undertake governance process in an accountable and transparent manner. Output 4: Civil society organisations have enhanced capacity to engage with parliament and relevant parliamentary committees on policy issues.</p>

Outputs, Key Activities and Procurement

Note: Activities are in relation to section 4 page 10 of the project document

Output 1	1. The Iraq Human Rights Commission has enhanced capacity to execute its mandate.
Activities	<p>1.1 The Iraq High Commission for Human Rights has the organisational structure to function effectively. 1.2 The Iraq High Commission for Human Rights has technically competent staff. 1.3 Subnational Iraq High Commission for Human Rights entities established.</p>
Output 2	2. Iraq has a national platform for an expanded human rights dialogue.
Activities	<p>2.6 A national dialogue on human rights supported. 2.7 Awareness raised on human rights issues and ways to protect these rights 2.8 The Iraq High Commission for Human Rights capacity to reach out and clarify work and mandate enhanced.</p>
Output 3	3. The Iraqi state is able to promote and undertake governance process in an accountable and transparent manner.
Activities	<p>3.1 The CoR capacity in undertaking accountability oversight functions increased. 3.2 The KRG plans for a Commission of Integrity in place. 3.3 The KRG's Board of Supreme Audit capacity enhanced. 3.4 An investigative journalism curriculum developed and in place.</p>
Output 4	4. Civil society organisations have enhanced capacity to engage with parliament and relevant parliamentary committees on policy issues.
Activities	<p>4.1 Iraqi CSOs and independent media capacity to hold the government to account in the areas of human rights, corruption and service delivery strengthened. 4.2 Interface between relevant parliamentary committees and CSOs on issues of human rights, corruption and service delivery enhanced.</p>

	4.3a Advocacy and awareness-raising on corruption issues enhanced. 4.3b Implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy through partnership with CSOs and independent media implemented. 4.4 Donor coordination on civil society issues in Iraq enhanced.
Procurement (major items)	

Funds Committed	TOTAL: 2,977,781 USD Human Rights: 1,212,882 Anti-corruption: 1,448,747 CSO: 316,152	% of total funds from both 1st tranche and 2nd tranche (USD) 3,091,526	96%
Funds Disbursed	TOTAL: 1,581,589 USD Human Rights: 596,690 Anti-corruption: 819,131 CSO: 165,768	% of funds from both 1st tranche and second tranche (USD) 3,091,526	51%
Forecast final date	December 2014	Delay (months)	7

A request was submitted in March to the Iraq UNDAF Trust Fund Steering Committee for an extension until 31 December 2014. The overall implementation of the project is progressing well with good achievements; however the timeline of the project has been affected by the escalation of violence within Iraq since 2013. The proposed extension takes into consideration the fact that the upcoming elections of late April are putting certain activities on hold due to the sensitivities and there is a shift of priorities related to some of the sensitive issues addressed by this project. In addition, the uncertainty as to what the post-election political and security scenario will be justifies a conservative estimate for a completion of the project by 31 December 2014.

Quantitative achievements against objectives and results

<p>Output 1 The Iraq Human Rights Commission has enhanced capacity to execute its mandate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of outreach strategy commenced including lessons learned and documentation report on the work of the COR Human Rights Committee. Training on receiving complaints, investigations of human and reporting human rights violations initiated. 	<p>% of planned</p>	<p>82%</p>
<p>Output 2 Iraq has a national platform for an expanded human rights dialogue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ToRs developed to provide direct support to the Independent Board of Human Rights, in the Kurdistan Region (IBHR). - Establishment of a project office in the IBHR. - Continuous support to the establishment of the Human Rights Civil Society Advisory Board. - Mechanism to launch the Gender Coordination Board defined and meetings planned. 	<p>% of planned</p>	<p>85%</p>
<p>Output 3 The Iraqi state is able to promote and undertake governance process in an accountable and transparent manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The CoR capacity in undertaking accountability oversight functions has increased. - The Kurdistan Region plans for a Commission of Integrity are in place. - The Kurdistan Region Board of Supreme Audit capacity has been enhanced. - An investigative journalism curriculum has been developed and is in place. 	<p>% of planned</p>	<p>75%</p>
<p>Output 4 Civil society organisations have enhanced capacity to engage with parliament and relevant parliamentary committees on policy issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Iraqi CSOs' ability to hold the government accountable in the areas of human rights, corruption and service delivery has been strengthened. (31+6 CSOs engaged so far) 	<p>% of planned</p>	<p>70%</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interface between relevant parliamentary committees and CSOs on issues of human rights, corruption and service delivery has been enhanced. (CSO Committee and Human Rights Committee engaged so far) 		70%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy and awareness-raising on corruption issues enhanced. 		100%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy through partnership with CSOs and independent media implemented. 		30%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Donor coordination on civil society issues in Iraq has been enhanced. (Four informal CSO coordination meetings for development partners held so far in Baghdad and one in Erbil; two donor coordination meetings held so far) 		60%

Qualitative achievements against objectives and results

Output 1: The Iraq Human Rights Commission has enhanced capacity to execute its mandate.

UNDP continued to provide direct support to the independent Iraq Higher Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) and the Council of Representatives (COR) Human Rights Committee to enhance their institutional capacities.

To this end, UNDP held a meeting with the COR Human Rights Commission where UNDP and the Chairperson of the Iraq Higher Commission for Human Rights agreed to document the work of the Commission during the last four years. This documentation will serve three purposes:

- 1- Highlight results that have been achieved, identify capacity gaps and shortcomings;
- 2- Outline and define interventions for effective and efficient support to the future Human Rights Committee;
- 3- Identify lessons learned.

This report will also assist UNDP to continue to provide focused support, prepare for upcoming elections of Commissioners and support the newly elected Human Rights Commission. It is anticipated that the report will be drafted by the end of Second Quarter 2014.

UNDP added expertise during the quarter to assist the COR Human Rights Committee, support the IHCHR in developing an outreach and communication strategy and train the Commissioners and the core staff on investigation, documentation and case management.

The Iraqi Human Rights Commission has moved offices to the Red Zone to facilitate receipt of complaints and interactions with citizens, CSOs and relevant institutions.

Output 2: Iraq has a national platform for an expanded human rights dialogue.

Federal Level:

In the first quarter of 2014, as on-going support to expand the national dialogue for human rights, UNDP held a series of meetings with CSOs and the Iraq Higher Commission for Human Rights. The meetings resulted in a consensus regarding the mechanism upon which the Human Rights Civil Society Advisory Board will be established, which has adopted transparency and inclusiveness processes. The Human Rights Civil Society Advisory Board will consist of 18 representatives from CSOs. Elections will open with a call for proposal and allow CSOs to nominate and vote for members of this Board.

A similar mechanism for the Human Rights Civil Society Advisory Board is under development to promote Gender Equality. This mechanism has been discussed with Human Rights Commissioner and Manager of the Women's Rights thematic area. The terms of reference of this Advisory Board have also been shared. The purpose is to establish a gender coordination task force to support the work of the Commission to promote gender equality and ensure coordination between CSOs and the IHCHR. At the end of the quarter gains had been made including planning for a first meeting during April 2014, with representatives from multiple CSOs working on gender related issues. There is more on this Human Rights Advisory Board explained under Output 4 below.

At Kurdistan Regional level:

This project has served as seed funding to support the establishment of the Independent Board for Human Rights (IBHR) in the Kurdistan Region. Good gains have been made over the lifecycle of this project and additional UNDP interventions this quarter have helped ensure the sustainability and independence of the IBHR. During the quarter these efforts have resulted in the approval of a cost-sharing agreement with the Kurdistan Regional Government. The Ministry of Planning has approved USD 1.3 Million to the Independent Board for Human Rights (IBHR) and UNDP has been requested to continue to provide technical support to human rights over the coming two years.

UNDP worked very closely throughout the quarter with the Independent Board for Human Rights (IBHR) in the Kurdistan Region. During routine meetings with the Head of the Board and the Director General, UNDP discussed conducting a needs assessment to assist the IBHR and UNDP evaluate the current capacity and identify priority areas for support. This resulted in the development of terms of reference which include the delivery of a report identifying structure, capacity and interventions for 2014-2015.

The Independent Board for Human Rights in partnership with UNDP has initiated plans to organise an international conference in Kurdistan with the key objective to advise the Regional Government on a mechanism to abolish capital punishment.

Output 3: The Iraqi state is able to promote and undertake governance process in an accountable and transparent manner

The Kurdistan Region plans in place for its forthcoming Commission of Integrity

- During the quarter UNDP continued support to the Kurdistan Region Commission of Integrity.
- During 4th Quarter 2013 fourteen staff members were recruited by the Kurdistan Commission of Integrity Office. The Kurdistan Commission of Integrity Office was established based on the plans developed within this project.
- The Kurdistan Commission of Integrity Office initiated work/implementation planning during 4th Quarter 2013.
- The Kurdistan Commission of Integrity sent a letter to UNDP requesting technical support from the Accountability, Transparency and Anti-Corruption Programme during 4th Quarter 2013.
- Surpassed deliverable identified in project agreement 3rd Quarter 2013.
- During 3rd Quarter 2013 the establishment of the Kurdistan Commission of Integrity was under development.
- At the end of 2nd Quarter 2013 an agreement on the structure, legal and operational framework of the Kurdistan Commission of Integrity reached and endorsed by the Commissioner of Integrity, completing this component.
- In June 2013 UNDP facilitated a meeting of key officials in the Kurdistan Region, including the new Commissioner of Integrity to review the proposed amendments to the present law. The review related to organizational independence, and instructions on prevention and investigation work. The workshop addressed additional areas such as: rights, access, work structure and framework for investigators.
- The findings of the study facilitated the Kurdistan Parliament to appoint the new Kurdistan

Commissioner of Integrity in mid-May 2013.

- The comparative analytical study assisted in the drafting of amendments to address gaps in the current law and the development of a draft by-law. The draft by-law on the establishment of the KR-COI, included roles and responsibilities, organogram and provided instructions on work related illicit enrichment and regulation of investigative work during 2nd Quarter 2013.
- A comparative analytical study identifying gaps in laws and in the legal and operational framework of the Kurdistan Region Commission of Integrity was produced 1st Quarter 2013.

The capacity of the KRG's Board of Supreme Audit enhanced with the Needs Assessment completed and a Medium to Long Term Strategy for development presented

- Both the Needs Assessment and a Medium to Long Term Strategy were handed over to the KRG Prime Minister's Office before the end of 2013.
- The Board of Supreme Audit Needs Assessment and the Strategy were formally presented to the Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister's Office, Kurdistan Regional Government Parliament and Kurdistan Regional Ministry of Finance in June 2013.
- Based on the findings of the Needs Assessment a medium to long term strategy for the development of the Kurdistan Region Board of Supreme Audit was developed during the 2nd Quarter 2013. This strategy is a roadmap to transform the Kurdistan Region Board of Supreme Audit into a modern effective state audit institution that ensures public sector transparency and accountability.
- The Board of Supreme Audit Needs Assessment was completed in the six areas of: a) legal framework and independence; b) governance structure and organisation; c) human resources; d) physical resources; e) audit methods; and f) external relations. The recommendations and needs assessment are available in both English and Arabic.
- In March 2013 UNDP in collaboration with the Kurdistan Region Board of Supreme Audit initiated a Needs Assessment to determine the capacity and institutional development needs. The Needs Assessment utilized the founding principles, prerequisites and fundamental principles of public sector audit set by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) as the baseline.

The partners for Investigative Journalism defined and curriculum development initiating)

- The issue of Baghdad training with the consultant agency could not be resolved and resulted in re-advertisement in 1st Quarter 2014. The re-advertisement will close during 2nd Quarter 2014.
- The consultant agency award for the investigative journalism curriculum went at risk during 4th Quarter 2013 as the Consultant Agency Board decided that their staff cannot provide training in Baghdad due to the deterioration in the security situation. Therefore, this activity could not move ahead until the security situation improved or their Board offered an alternate suggestion on how they would work for the University of Baghdad.
- UNDP held a consultative meeting March 2013 to identify immediate needs in improving skills of journalists in investigating and reporting corruption. This meeting resulted in a decision on the next steps for developing a technical and academic curriculum and that additional universities may become involved.
- The Baghdad University-Media College and the Iraq Anti-Corruption Academy expressed great interest and requested assistance and expertise to develop investigative journalism 1st Quarter 2013.

Output 4: Civil society organisations have enhanced capacity to engage with parliament and relevant parliamentary committees on policy issues.

8 CSO Consortia grant implementation and networking with Council of Representatives

Eight grantee CSO Consortia (comprised of 31 CSOs) have continued the implementation of their projects along side dedicated capacity development support. The projects have been under implementation for 11 months and mostly aim at holding the government to account in the areas of human rights, corruption and advocacy for service delivery. CSOs will complete their projects by the end of April 2014. This experience under the project “Empowering CSOs in Iraq” (funded by the Danish Government) has served to build a model for engaging with CSOs and the CSO parliamentary committee under the “Enhancing Transparent Participatory Governance and Human Rights” project as part of Nordic donor coordination. The technical capacity development support has so far included trainings on project management, financial management, monitoring and evaluation and fundraising. As a result of these trainings, the CSOs have refined their implementation plans and results frameworks. CSOs have also received technical support for quarterly report writing (three quarterly report rounds so far). All training support has been complemented by follow up field visits and online support meetings.

The third quarter reports for the eight CSO projects under the “Empowering CSOs in Iraq” project (funded by the Danish Government), including progress implementation details were due in March 2014. Overall, implementation is progressing well although some Consortia are being followed up closely to address some implementation delays. At the time of writing this report the third quarter progress reports from the CSOs are being reviewed together with the CSOs to help improve their reporting skills, an update on the CSO project implementation will be included in the next report.

UNDP continued promoting networking and linkages between CSOs and the Parliament. Notably a second CSO Peer Knowledge Exchange Workshop took place in Erbil in February allowing for networking between CSOs and these institutions, as well as some representatives of Local Governments. The Parliament committee on CSOs and the NGO Directorate have expressed their interest in UNDP’s NGO grant mechanism, as a good practice model on which to base the potential federal budget level NGO grant mechanism. UNDP has initiated discussions with the NGO Directorate to provide institutional development technical support in the second half of 2014. The support will be two fold: First, assistance in capturing the CSO granting model experience and lessons learned as a final step of the “Empowering CSOs project” in order to ensure a sustainable handover to the NGO Directorate. This initiative goes in pair with the fact that the NGO Directorate is supporting a draft law proposal for government funded CSO Grants that is currently with the Shura Council. Given the short term remaining for the current Parliament term it is unlikely to be approved but equipping the NGO Directorate with CSO granting tools will allow them to quick start the grants as soon as the law passes probably early 2015. The second facet of the technical support to the NGO Directorate is envisaged with SIDA funding to support their recent initiative to create a CSO Capacity Development Unit. The UNDP CSO capacity development experience of recent years with DANIDA and SIDA support will then be capitalized on by supporting the activation and reinforcement of this Unit over the second half of 2014 and 2015.

Reinforcing linkages between CSOs, the Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights

Parliamentary Committee.

The implementation of 6 NGO projects has successfully been completed on 15 March 2014 after 6 months of implementation. NGOs had received USD15,000 grants for Human Rights projects with the support of UNDP and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNAMI). Some delays have been identified and UNDP is following up closely on those projects. Final reports from 5 NGOs have been received so far and are being reviewed. The achievements of the projects will therefore be reported on in the next quarterly report. Follow up to received the report from the 6th NGO is taking place. This concerns the Public Aid Organization (PAO), a Kurdish NGO who has been suffering challenges with some one of its members being temporarily held by justice because of public declarations he had made and also because of their high profile involvement in elections monitoring. The NGO member has now been released and it is expected the NGO will be able to submit the final report for the project soon. A final payment corresponding to 20% of the total grant will be paid to the 6 NGOs once their final reports are approved.

The establishment of an NGO Human Rights Advisory Board is progressing well. The recommendations from the consultations carried out later 2013 have being incorporated in a draft General Framework (or Terms of Reference) that will guide the establishment of the Advisory Board. Inputs have also been received from the Human Rights Commission, the Human Rights parliamentary Committee, the CSO parliamentary Committee and the NGO Directorate. These four institutions, alongside 3 observer NGOs, will be part of an Observer Committee that will observe the election process of the Advisory Board representatives. UNDP will administer a call for Expression of Interest for NGOs working on Human Rights issues in Iraq to become members of the Advisory Board platform and to nominate and vote for representatives for each governorate of Iraq. The Human Rights Commission particularly advised to proceed through a vote by NGOs instead of any kind of nomination process to ensure the independence and ownership of NGOs of the initiatives of the Advisory Board. The voting process will take place over the second quarter of 2014. UNDP will then support the initial meetings of the Advisory Board, in particular to ensure consolidating a relation with the Human Rights Commission.

Advocacy and awareness-raising on corruption issues through the National Anti-Corruption Campaign completed

- Activity Complete: 96 workshops held with 3,240 attendees (987 female / 2,253 male).
- The interactive workshops enabled participants to come forward with recommendations to intensify the anti-corruption campaign and build coalitions and networks 3rd Quarter 2013.
- The Master Trainers conducted 96 workshops introducing different types of corruption, and means and ways to report suspected corruption to 3,240 attendees (987 female / 2,253 male) with attendance larger than anticipated. This completed 3rd Quarter 2013.
- The National Anti-Corruption Campaign completed in July 2013 within the 15 governorates, outside of the Kurdistan Region. Full breakdown of dates and attendance available. This is ahead of the Work Plan schedule.
- UNDP launched the National Anti-Corruption Campaign on 16 February 2013 in order to engage local citizens and civil society organisations in efforts against corruption. This Campaign was within 15 governorates, outside of the Kurdistan Region and completed July 2013.

Enhancing CSO Anti-corruption intervention capacities

The first Anti-Corruption workshop for local NGOs took place in Erbil for 4 days with the participation of 16 NGOs in January 2014. 21 NGOs had been invited but unfortunately security and other logistical challenges prevented some participants from reaching Erbil on time. Despite this, representatives of the Commission of Integrity and of the parliamentary Committees for Integrity and for CSOs attended the workshop and contributed with presentations. The focus of the workshop was to give local NGOs active in the anti-corruption field with new skills related to anti-corruption interventions. Most NGOs are active through awareness raising activities, but have little involvement with reporting on corruption and monitoring government budgets, laws, programmes and institutions from an anti-corruption perspective. The workshop also ensured that NGOs have adequate technical understanding of the roles, functions and entry points of various Iraqi institutions dealing with anti-corruption. Most NGOs found that some of their technical knowledge was no accurate and the workshop has equipped them well for more effective anti-corruption initiatives. The workshop has also resulted in promoting the networking of local NGOs active in this field and encouraged very positive linkages with in the Commission of Integrity and the Integrity Committee of the Council of Representatives. The Commission of Integrity stated its interest to invite the same NGOs to contribute with comments to the draft National Anti-Corruption Strategy that is being finalized. This is considered a very positive by-product of the training.

Following the training the 16 participating NGOs where invited to submit proposals for a USD 5,000 micro-grant initiative to be implemented over a three month period. The purpose is to help the NGOs to implement immediately some of the new skills and ideas generated through the training as a means to consolidate the learning process. The selection process was administered by UNDP and observed by representatives of the three institutions that attended the training. As a result 11 NGOs have received micro-grants to start their anti-corruption initiatives on 1 April 2014. The table below summarizes the micro-grants initiatives approved.

Ref.	Name	Project Title	Geographic Coverage
AC1	ALManahil Association for Women Development	The role of technology in improving governance and anti corruption education and awareness promotion	Basra
AC2	Al-Tadhamun Iraqi League for Youth	Civil Observatory to monitor and evaluate the government's performance and to address administrative corruption in Anbar	Anbar
AC3	Child Rights and Family Protection Association	promote integrity, transparency and accountability	Mosul
AC4	Children and Woman Affairs Organization	To promote and strengthen measures to combat corruption in government institutions in Diwaniyah	Qadisiya
AC5	Hannah Youth Organization	Corruption food scourge of society and everyone is responsible to detect fight and eliminate it	Baghdad
AC6	Iraqi Civic Action Network	The role of the marginalized groups in fighting corruption	Babil
AC7	Iraqi Civil Awareness Team	yes we can	Baghdad
AC8	Negotiation & Strategic Studies Organization	Identify the sources and forms of corruption in real estate loans and how to address them	Erbil

AC9	Shaaub for Democracy Culture Foundation	Promote community participation in the monitoring of local service sectors	Baghdad
AC10	Um Al Yateem Foundation	CSOs alliance for accountability	Baghdad
AC11	Wand Alkhair Human Organization	Promote proper behavior in public office and empowering civil society	Diyala

Challenges and Constraints

Challenges for Human Rights and Accountability Transparency and Anti-Corruption components:

The upcoming election in Iraq is expected to result in delay on the implementation of UN programmes and projects. Thus, UNDP submitted a request for no-cost extension of the Participatory Governance Project till the end of 2014 to ensure that this project will achieve the identified outcomes within the fluid political and security environment.

CSO Component Challenges:

The project faces implementation constraints and challenges related to the security environment in Iraq. Different security incidents and the overall security situation regularly create challenges for CSO participants to attend trainings and other project. This has directly impacted the attendance to the NGO Anti-corruption workshop mentioned above, or the completion of projects by some NGOs working on Human Rights. The upcoming elections have been escalating the situation progressively and this is expected to continue until the end of April when these will take place. It is undertrain what the post-election scenario will be and how it will affect the activities of this component. The security in the Baghdad area is deteriorating rapidly due to the situation in Anbar province, making it difficult to ensure high attendance to project events from CSO travelling from other governorates. For this reason most project activities have been organized in Erbil. Accessing Erbil has become challenging in the past months for CSOs travelling by road form other areas, as the access road from the south has been the target of attacks and the check points to access the Erbil area require a preliminary notification to the Kurdish security authorities to ensure entrance for the CSOs. Despite this challenge, it is worth noting that CSO participants and communities in general have been showing a great level of commitment.

Another main challenge has been sourcing relevant expertise for local consultancies to support the project activities. Several advertising rounds have been necessary to identify suitable candidates that did not necessarily have the time availability to carry out the assignments as per the project's timeline. Compromises had to be made and this will probably lead to the need to request a no-cost extension in the next months.