

**UNESCO Contract**  
**Constitutional Development for Iraq**

**Ref: IRQ/EXT/05/079**

**Report on final evaluation**

**1. Introduction**

Global Partners and Associates was asked to assess a project which aimed to promote the development of independent and pluralistic media landscapes in post conflict Iraq, including raising awareness about human rights. It was developed within the framework of UNESCO's mandate.

There were three key elements to the evaluation:

- a) An assessment of the organisational arrangements for the project including the co-operation between UNESCO and implementing partners ;
- b) An analysis of the project implementation process, including an assessment of the impact of the activities carried out and the results obtained.
- c) General conclusions and priorities for future work in Iraq, with an assesment of UNESCO's role as a lead agency in Iraq in the field of media development, particularly in relation to the constitutional process.

**2. Methodology**

The evaluator visited Amman and Cairo to observe training events on the ground and talked to assessed. A questionnaire was circulated to all participants, the results of which were carefully analysed. Interviews took place with some implementing partners and the UNESCO staff on the ground. Contact was made with Iraqis and other non –Iraqis to seek their views on the impact of the work. An interim report was produced following the first observation of training activities in Amman before drafting the final report. Interim findings were discussed with UNESCO staff in Amman. The final report was prepared after completing discussions with UNESCO staff in Amman.

**3. Context**

This project assumes that a successful transition to democracy in Iraq will depend heavily on the effectiveness and accountability of its government. A precondition of such accountability is the existence of a professional and independent media, which can convey accurate information and promote debate among the diversity of communities and views within Iraq.

The UNESCO project, (like other UN projects in Iraq) was carried out under extraordinary conditions imposed by the on going conflict, lack of security and consequent violence. This is then compounded by the absence of an agreed political settlement, the hostility to external involvement (including of the UN) among many Iraqis, the widespread economic and social problems and

increasing sectarian divisions between Sunni, Shia and Kurd. The challenge posed by this environment to all UN agencies should not be underestimated. Any assessment of the impact of this project must take into account the scale of the obstacles to any project work.

#### 4. Background

Saddam Hussein's regime maintained tight control over the media in Iraq, which was viewed as an instrument of policy. While technical skills were present (Iraq was the largest exporter of children's books in the region) technology was outdated and professional skills atrophied. The effects of sanctions were extremely damaging to the Iraqi middle class and poisoned many Iraqis views of the United Nations. There was little awareness among journalists of the responsibilities of the media, or its role in a democratic society.

Following the US led invasion and the collapse of the regime much new media sprang into existence, and in turn (particularly the print media), went in and out of business very quickly. The effect of years of isolation and sanctions has not just severely damaged the infrastructure of the media in Iraq, it has left Iraqi journalists lacking knowledge of modern journalist techniques or any awareness of the ethics or responsibilities of an independent media in a democracy. Journalism is a self selecting profession with no enforced entry criteria and it is easy for irresponsible or unprofessional journalism to flourish. Lack of awareness of international standards of free expression has left many people to assume that freedom of expression means the right to say what you want when you want. Partisan and unprofessional journalism flourishes.

Iraq remains a very dangerous place to be a journalist. According to INSI 96 journalists and media staff have been killed from the start of the war in Iraq up to December 2005, and of these 70 were Iraqi nationals. In the period of this project between September and November 2005 alone, seven journalists were killed (two of them having been kidnapped prior to being murdered).

As with many other conflict situations, the true nature of the media market is hard to determine and there is likely to be an over-production of media with corresponding problems of securing reasonable pay and conditions, with the danger that journalists come to rely upon the subjects of the stories for funding, or can only secure employment with partisan media established by factions or parties. In a society riven by conflict in the way Iraq, this partisanship and lack of responsibility is a major problem and challenge to the international community. On the positive side the media environment for journalists – in terms of regulation – is probably the freest in the Arab world. The independent regulator is working reasonably well and the governments, with some attempts at censorship, have been more tolerant of the independent media than other governments in the region.

Partisanship and lack of objectivity remains the biggest problem with the media environment in Iraq. Much of the new media is linked to ethnic, religious or political groups who are seeking to establish their own power through the constitution making and subsequent political process. There are more than 100 newspapers and magazines in Baghdad and other cities with a plurality of private radio and television stations. The TV and radio stations set up by the former Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) have been incorporated into a new publicly-funded broadcaster, the Iraqi Public Broadcasting Service.

Ensuring that this vast media industry reported events up to in the constitution process professionally was therefore a major challenge for the UNESCO project. It is impossible for one external agency to change the face of the Iraqi media on its own but by developing a range of initiatives it was possible for UNESCO to ensure that some degree of professionalism was achieved during the constitutional process. The evaluator is confident that this was achieved.

## 5. The project

The contract was part of an umbrella programme involving five UN agencies, and was agreed through the local cluster system which groups agencies with common thematic interest together to ensure better co-operation and smoother decision making. The overall programme, valued at \$24,264,089, was designed to support the Iraqi Constitution Committee in its task of developing a constitution for Iraq and to engage the wider Iraqi public in an “informed and constructive dialogue” about the constitutional process. The umbrella programme was agreed in mid June 2005 and was scheduled to be completed by December 2005. With the constitutional referendum scheduled for mid October, this left very little time to implement the range of projects and the compressed timetable was as significant challenge to achieving success in the project.

The UNESCO element of the programme, which totaled \$1,993,520, was aimed at helping develop local sustainable initiatives in defence of freedom of expression and human rights in general in Iraq. A particular, though not exclusive focus, was supporting the Iraqi constitutional process and trying to ensure that freedom of expression was protected in the new constitution. Key elements included capacity building for officials and journalists, along with engaging the wide Iraqi community in debate about the constitution. There was a conscious effort to support greater professionalism in the Iraqi media and the development partners and in the course of the project made a total of eighteen project grants to NGOs were made with a total value of \$871,553.

Of this overall total:

- International NGOs were awarded \$554,271
- Jordan based NGOs were awarded \$286,000
- Iraqi based NGOs were awarded \$31,462

The limits of timing meant that contracts needed to awarded quickly to progress the work. The contract value was therefore kept below \$100,000 to allow local decision making – in my view the correct approach to take. To assist with this and with the timetable UNESCO itself bore the direct cost of Iraqi participation in the various workshops as well as handling the logistical and administrative arrangements. This inevitably makes it difficult to compare the overall costs of different workshops and make a value for money (VFM) comparison. It is obvious from the contract sizes however, that the locally organised events in Iraq were by far the cheapest. It is also obvious that bringing Iraqis out to Amman or Cairo – with travel costs, hotels and per diems – involves a high per capita cost for training activities. The best value is therefore likely to be achieved by those projects which have a multiplier effect, for example training of trainers or creating sustainable networks.

The fact that UNESCO made grants to implementing partners, although UNESCO carried out much of the logistical work, meant there was a tendency

among some of the implementing NGOs to see UNESCO as a donor or even as a supporting administrator rather than a partner. This is perhaps unsurprising in the circumstances but the potential value of a more integrated approach between NGOs and UNESCO was not realized. In future both NGOs and UNESCO could give thought to how more effective partnerships can be achieved.

## 6. Analysis of activities and preliminary conclusions

Two major constraints shaped the activities developed under this project. The first are the on going security problems which prevented most of the NGOs from traveling and working in Iraq and which meant that most activities had to be conducted outside of the country. This inevitably meant that costs were higher than if the projects could be carried out in Iraq itself. It also meant a considerable administrative burden falling on UNESCO staff who had to arrange flights, accommodation, visas and provide logistical support. Inevitably there was degree of volatility surrounding events as many of the participants were stressed by the day to day problems of existence. UNESCO staff in Amman showed great awareness and sensitivity to this factor and major problems only occurred when events were outside of their control.

The chaotic nature of the country also meant that where activities were undertaken in Iraq there were security problems affecting those attending events, which occasionally limited attendance. In addition where local representatives were seen to be attached to international organisations their own security was sometimes threatened. The bombing of hotels in Amman caused further disruption. It led to the transfer of training activities to Cairo at short notice which led to a project extension to March 2006.

The second constraint was that imposed by the time frame, itself a product of UN processes. Approval for funding was given in June 2005 and the funding was actually received in July 2005. The project was due to be completed by December 2005 and would have been had it not been for the attacks in Amman. In addition the short constitutional timetable meant that a great deal of work had to be packed into the first two months. Overall, and notwithstanding the strain on everyone, a considerable body of work was achieved in the time available, of which UNESCO and its implementing partners can justifiably be proud.

### The projects

Overall the work can be considered as having three components. The first is advocacy, including for constitutional and legal reform as well as raising awareness of human rights and freedom of expression. The second component is training – comprising a mix of professional training for journalists and media managers, as well as the safety training that is so necessary in such a dangerous environment as Iraq. Finally there were media development activities, from direct to programming to broad media sustainability assessments. Each of these is summarised and briefly analysed in the section below.

#### A. Advocacy

Constitutional and legal reform advocacy and legal support was carried out by both the international NGO ARTICLE 19 and the Jordanian based Adaleh Center for Human Rights Studies.

A.1 Working in partnership with UNESCO ARTICLE 19 ran a joint project designed to promote better protection for freedom of expression in the new Iraqi constitution. The project had several components.

- I. ARTICLE 19 published a set of draft constitutional clauses that would protect freedom of expression in the new constitution. It also published research comparing how freedom of expression is protected in other constitutions and under international law.
- II. ARTICLE 19, with UNESCO, organised two workshops on this constitutional protection aimed at members of the constitutional drafting committee and at a wider audience of media professionals, politicians, public officials and civil society actors.
- III. Following on from this constitutional lobbying, it ran a workshop to discuss the essential elements for a media policy for Iraq.
- IV. Finally it ran a pilot Training of Trainers workshop for Iraqi media trainers with the aim of producing and delivering a training manual for that they could use in Iraq.

ARTICLE 19's draft constitutional clauses included a right of access to information and an explicit statement on media freedom, together with clauses on freedom of assembly and on the protection of rights guaranteed in international treaties. The proposals were translated into Arabic by UNESCO and submitted to consultation, including to a workshop of key Iraqi public officials, media professionals, parliamentarians and other stakeholders, and to key individuals working on the protection of freedom of expression in Iraq. Drawing upon contacts made in Iraq, the proposals went to members of the drafting Committee, and to the President's office (through the intervention of former CPA media advisors).

Other training activities were aimed at providing more general awareness of human rights and freedom of expression. Target groups included journalists, security and police officers and human rights and media NGOs. The training was well received although some concern was expressed at the lack of any formal course recognition in one of the post constitution workshops that focused on policy.

A final element in ARTICLE 19's work was the development of a comprehensive media training course for the Iraqi media and human rights community focusing on issues relating to freedom of expression, human rights and the role of the media in the context of elections and in upholding and promoting broader awareness about human rights. This was done by developing a set of training modules designed to fit into a 10 day pilot course which was tested in a pilot workshop held in Cairo from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2005, involving a mix of media professionals, human rights activists and academics. The sessions also involved meetings with key local Egyptian NGOs. ARTICLE 19 also aimed to create a virtual freedom of expression network to follow up the training manual. The trainers manual itself is expected to be finalised and published in Arabic and English by March 2006.

A.2 The Adaleh Center for Human Rights Studies, a predominantly legal, Jordanian based NGO, organized one workshop in partnership with the UNESCO office in Amman, focused on the constitutional process and three others aimed at enhancing local capacity in Iraq. Adaleh had previous experience of organising workshops in partnership with Amnesty International and had planned a workshop with UNAMI although this did not take place. These experiences did

give Adaleh a useful range of contacts in Iraq upon which they could build in their training and in any future activities.

Participants in this workshop included journalists, civil society groups and representatives of the government (specifically from the Human Rights Ministry, the Justice Ministry and the Foreign Ministry). The workshop was designed to develop capacity among the Iraqi journalists and those dealing with journalism to better understand international standards in the field of freedom of expression, the role of independent media in the process of democratization and the importance of defending human rights. Participants were encouraged to consider ways of facilitating Iraqi citizens ability to participate in the democratic process. One specific focus was on access to information. Participants were encouraged to prepare a draft law on the right to access information, and an advocacy strategy that would ensure such a law was supported by the media and civil society groups and adopted by the government.

A.3 Three other noteworthy initiatives also aimed to strengthen awareness of the constitutional process and the importance of freedom of expression. A three-day training workshop carried out for Iraqi journalists by a local NGO in Iraq - Messalla: Human Resources Development Center to raise awareness about the roles and responsibilities of journalists in the constitution process, with a particular focus on freedom of expression, independent media and human rights. The Kurdistan Economic Development Organization (KEDO) carried out a training workshop for security and police officers in Sulimaniya with the aim of raising their awareness about freedom of expression, democracy and human rights to encourage them to understand the role of journalists and the importance of respecting their rights. Finally the Youth League for Human Rights Culture organised a workshop for journalists to strengthen their understanding of human rights and the role of the media in defending rights.

#### A.4 Preliminary assessment

ARTICLE 19 is a highly respected and professional international organisation with years of experience at working in transitional societies and constitutional processes. As might have been expected its materials were of high quality and were welcomed by those involved in the process of constitution drafting. Contacts with the President's and Prime Minister's office undoubtedly helped strengthen the internal argument for freedom of expression and – from my informal soundings – helped play a role in securing the constitutional guarantees that were achieved. Its training had a good content and involved high quality experts but it was noticeable that some of the international trainers, perhaps because of language difficulties, did not form as strong a bond with the Iraqi participants as the regional and locally based NGOs.

Adaleh showed an strong capacity for hard work and a considerable amount of energy in delivering their workshop and their work was positively received by participants. The content was basic but adequate. International speakers came from the US to talk about the US experience, which is difficult to translate into an Iraqi context and caused some resistance from Iraqi participants who challenged the speaker to justify US policy in Iraq. Adaleh's strength was that the workshop was conducted in Arabic and was able to engender a strong sense of ownership in the outcomes. By focusing on a freedom of information law and advocacy strategy it was also easy to assess the long term impact of the workshop as progress in securing support for the draft law can be tracked. In fact this draft was discussed at the subsequent training of trainers workshop organised by

ARTICLE 19 and also in events held in Iraq. It might have been preferable to bring in international experts from comparable regions that have experienced similar transformations (South Africa post conflict or Indonesia for example) whose experience, while still different, would have been closer to that of the participants. Adaleh were also careful to ensure there was a good balance of participants from all the different communities in Iraq and had a conscious strategy to break down suspicion and differences.

The in country training is harder to assess given the difficulties of travel and the fact that the evaluator had no direct experience of the events themselves. From the few reports that have been received it seems to have been relatively successful. It was certainly welcome that police and security officers were included in training – something that UNESCO might consider focusing on in the future as how the constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression are respected and enforced will depend in part on the attitude of the security forces in Iraq. It is also very important that some training took place Iraq itself – although there were obvious problems of transport and security as it demonstrated UNESCO's willingness to commit to Iraq itself and its solidarity with those struggling to improve conditions inside the country.

## B. Media training

The media training provided by the project can be broken into two broad categories. The first is the safety training carried by the International Safety Institute INSI, a Jordanian based NGO Al Ofoq and by INSI and Al-Ofoq in partnership. The second category is the more general professional development training provided for journalists by the IFJ, WAN, and the NPA in Sulimaniya.

### B.1 Safety training.

INSI organised two safety trainings in Baghdad and Basra. They began by employing local safety coordinators between September to November 2005, each one being responsible for the coordination of safety training activities in the central and southern regions of Iraq as well as raising safety awareness among the media community. Each was equipped with two specialised publications in Arabic - Iraq Security Briefings and Survival Guides for Journalists (originally produced by a staff member at the IFJ, now at INSI. The Baghdad co-coordinator distributed 320 copies of the survival guide to the major news organisations including international organisations. The Basra work was undertaken by AFAQ MEDIA FORUM (AMF) who distributed 180 copies including to Central Library and College of Fine Arts for any future research or study.

The Baghdad co-coordinator experienced some hostility at first – partly from an association with an international NGO which itself was seen as potential evidence of support for the occupation. There were also concerns that the Iraq Security Briefings implied a connection with western intelligence agencies. However no such comments were made in the South so this probably reflects the different political make up of Iraq and is an inevitable concomitant of work in the country. Generally the material was welcomed and it was noted that such material was very rare in Iraq and therefore very valuable.

In Baghdad there were 25 participants, including 11 women journalists (which meant there was some specific discussion about the difficulties facing women journalists). Most of the participants were freelance journalists and selection was difficult because of security. Some attended at short notice because of their concerns about travel. The training was positively received however. In Basra the training was organised at

the military base in Basra airport at the insistence of the trainers. This made organising the attendance by local journalist more difficult as they had to enter and leave through strict security. Five journalists were unable to attend for this reason although twenty, including two women journalists, from the four southern provinces managed to attend the course. .

In addition to the safety training organised directly by INSI, a new Jordanian NGO Al-Ofoq – the Dialogue Conference Centre organised two safety workshops. The first was organised in Amman and included theoretical and practical sessions (including basic first aid). Participants were identified by the UNESCO representatives in Iraq and came from southern and central Iraq. The workshop incorporated field visits to the First Aid Unit (FAU) of the Jordanian Civil Defence Directorate, and the official De-mining Center in the Jordan Valley region so that the participating journalists were able to get practical experience of dealing with mines, explosives, improvised and smart bombs, car, motorcycle and parcel bombs.

Al-Ofoq then sub contracted the International News Safety Institute (INSI), to conduct two days safety training for journalists in the North of Iraq, aimed at Kurdish journalists. This training followed a similar format to the INSI training organised in the centre and south of the country. A local safety coordinator was appointed to set up the training and distribute 200 copies of the Safety Guides and Security Briefings. The co-coordinator also organised their translation into Kurdish. The training was conducted in Sulimaniya, to a total of eighteen journalists.

Al-Ofoq also produced a safety guide for journalists in Iraq, to be produced on CD and VHS video with the distribution being handled by the UNESCO office. This is complementary to the written guide circulated by INSI. At the time of writing this guide is still being finalised in consultation with the local UNESCO office.

Alongside the safety training provided by INSI and Al-Ofoq, other international NGOs provided a mixture of professional support to the emerging Iraqi media.

### B.2 Professional development

The International Federations for Journalists (IFJ) hosted two seminars for Journalists in November 2005 and February 2006 both of which focused on professional issues including relations with authorities and gender equality. The meeting, organised by the IFJ in co-operation with UNESCO, was supported by the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate, the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate and was attended by journalists and experts from around the country.

A draft charter covering fundamental rights, editorial and ethical independence, the need for pluralism and open government, and basic demands for improved working conditions, was discussed and has been submitted for consultation with journalists in meetings throughout the country. The Charter has the ability to provide a focus for professional development as well as the basis for establishing a unified journalists union in Iraq. How successful this will be may well depend upon the overall political situation and how sectarian life becomes in Iraq.

The meeting also called for the creation of a series of independent media monitoring bodies, a more transparent process of media regulation and endorsed the need for more positive actions to promote gender equality. the need for a Charter of Social and Professional Rights, and a programme on.

### B.3 Newspaper training

The World Association for Newspapers (WAN), working with UNESCO hosted workshops for Iraqi school teachers to help train them on how to use newspapers as educational tools while considering the overall framework of media and human rights in the classroom. Participants were invited with the support and co-operation with the Ministry of Education in Iraq and came from Mosul, Basra and Baghdad.

The workshops took place between December 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> and subsequently on February 15 and 16 in Cairo, and editors from Egypt, Iraq and Sudan participated in the workshop alongside Iraqi teachers to talk about the Newspaper in Education (NIE) campaign. The aim of NIE is to provide newspapers to schools, so that teachers and students can use them as an educational tool and will have the side benefit of helping students learn the value of newspapers at an early age and build a younger readership. The teachers and journalists debated issues such as news editing and selection, editorial independence, and language usage. The teachers also helped to design their own front page.

### B.4 Capacity building

The Jordanian based NGO Adaleh hosted a total of two workshops at the beginning and end of October, each one involving the training of around 20 or so Iraqi human rights activists, media professionals and NGOs personnel on project management and proposal writing, designed to enable Iraqi organisations secure funding from donors and operate successful projects. Participants were expected to demonstrate a clear outcome – a project proposal – that could be submitted to international donors. The project covered all the elements of a project cycle, showed how to write a project proposal, manage the subsequent project and follow up with evaluation. Adaleh also organised a further workshop in October designed to provide general capacity building for media professionals. Again – as with the constitutional workshop, there was a focus on the need for a draft freedom of information law with participants helping to contribute to a draft.

### B.5 Awareness raising

Norwegian peoples Aid – NPA ran a project from September 1, 2005 to December 15, 2005 in northern Iraq for 40 teachers, male and female, focused on the constitution. The training lasted four weeks and then was rolled out to schools in the region by the teachers themselves. The teachers were asked to prepare a time table and an action plan, given supporting materials and asked to conduct five workshops in the space of five weeks. This second stage ran from November 13, 2005 and through to December 15th, 2005.

There were also a number of workshops in Iraq itself carried out by emerging Iraqi NGOs. In the north the Kurdistan Economic Development Organisation organised an awareness training for police officers on the importance of democracy and human rights providing a total of 45 hours training to twenty police officers which included meetings with working journalists. Two other training sessions were held for Iraqi police, hosted by the Human Rights Organisation in Iraq (Muthan and Balad branches) for about 35 officers each time. The focus was on internal human rights standards and their implications for police practice in Iraq.

The Al Messallah Human Resources Development Centre hosted a workshop in Basra for 16 people from Iraqi media foundations to encourage a better understanding human rights and freedom of expression. Finally the Youth League for Human Rights Culture organised a workshop in Baghdad for Iraqi journalists and media activists also covering human rights and freedom of expression issues. Both

used local trainers and provided, with UNESCO's assistance back up written materials on the key issues.

#### B.6 Preliminary Assessment - training

The safety training was probably the most direct and relevant part of the entire project. Iraq is an extremely dangerous environment for journalists with high and continuing casualty rate so any attempt to prepare journalists is worthwhile. INSI's determination hold the training sessions in Iraq itself was laudable, although even internal workshops are fraught with difficulties and some journalists were unable to attend as a result of travel or security problems. The decision by the trainers to insist upon holding the Basra session at the military airport was problematic but an example of the immense practical difficulties surrounding the implementation of any project in Iraq. Al-Ofoq's two training sessions (one subcontracted to INSI using its model) both seem to have gone well and been appreciated by the participants. The INSI Security Briefings and Safety Guides are both excellent professional documents that have created a longer term market. Al Ofoq's safety guide in CD and VHS format will be useful if it can be produced to a sufficiently high standard. The planned on-line version can also be updated to reflect changing circumstances if necessary.

Feedback from participants at these sessions was good and everyone recognises that this kind of training is of real benefit and support to journalist in the region. While there is some trickle down effect from training one journalist in a media organisation the effect is limited and in any case many of the participants were freelancers. Long term benefit from this kind of training can only be secured if it can be rolled out on a greater scale in Iraq itself, perhaps based in different media organisations.

Other capacity building workshops and training operated on a broader scale than the safety training referred to above. The IFJ charter could be a useful document if it can be followed up and used to help unite the journalists associations. However the initial feedback from Iraqi journalists contacted as part of this evaluation indicated that there is resistance to adopting a Charter that has been drawn up by an ad-hoc group of people in Amman (or Cairo) without its legitimacy being obviously grounded in Iraq.

Ensuring a high level of professionalism and responsible behaviour remains an important tissue in Iraq. In the increasingly sectarian atmosphere of Iraq where the media is often supported by different factions and frequently acts to incite hatred of other groups. Feedback from Iraqis about this initiative indicated that – worthwhile as it undoubtedly was – it is difficult to develop an ethical charter in Cairo or Amman and expect it to be followed in Iraq. It is the kind of project that very much requires local ownership so that it is seen to come out a local demand and a local assumption of responsibility. Ammannet's idea of bringing together senior editors to draft and sign such a document is an excellent idea that might be worth following up.

Adaleh's capacity building workshops were carried with professionalism. Using the database of Iraqi contacts they had built up (with the assistance of the UNESCO office in Amman) they were able to ensure a good and diverse mix of people. There were concrete outcomes and a demonstrable increase in capacity. Although not glamorous this kind of training – if provided in a way that is sensitive to Iraqi sensibilities, is extremely valuable as the country has been isolated for a long time and media and NGOs lack many basic skills.

WAN's project was interesting although assessing its longer term impact will be difficult given that aim was to increase the take-up of newspapers – the most successful media in Iraq is broadcast rather than print, for obvious reasons, and this is unlikely to change. However the focus on schools and bringing newspapers into schools was innovative and might be worth more sustained investment over time. NPA benefited from having a long term relationship inside Iraq in Kurdistan and were able to conduct a good project training teachers and rolling it out to participating schools. The external indications are that this went well – and certainly NPA's contacts and history in the country make them well placed to carry out follow up projects.

Finally it was very encouraging to see that workshops were carried out in Iraq itself. This is a major achievement as very few organisations are able to provide training in Iraq. The local Iraqi NGOs provided a comprehensive range of material and secured the involvement of a good range of participants, and of course, operating locally were able to be very cost effective. This should be built upon in the future.

### C. Media development

The third element of the UNESCO programme can best be understood as comprising of media development activities. Three organisations were involved in this section of the programme – International Research and Exchanges Board Irex, Ammannet, MIC

#### C.1 Irex - Media Sustainability Index

Irex's project sought to produce an assessment of the state of the media and the media environment in Iraq by conducting the first Media Sustainability Index. It also aimed to increase understanding and awareness of, and participation in, the constitutional process and the resulting national elections in Iraq by providing direct content support to the media by providing material for radio and the internet

The core activity was undertaken by IREX Europe which produced material on the development and implementation of the Iraqi Constitution, building upon a programme called Our Constitution, a 90 minute TV programme originally broadcast on Sundays and involving six studio guests and up to 60 participants. The programme was "reversioned" and redistributed for radio and internet. "

For the internet reversioning Irex produced a web site [www.dustourona.com](http://www.dustourona.com) where the radio programs were made available for upload either by individuals or radio stations. The Dustourona site functioned as a central site containing the radio programs and the texts of the programs, and the aim was for other websites to provide links. This approach was chosen as it proved difficult to secure agreement to publish pages directly on Iraqi websites themselves.

The Media Sustainability Index (MSI) was designed to assess Iraq's media sector and set benchmarks for future development. The methodology measures all aspects of the media system against a series of objectives and indicators. This produces a detailed overview of the sector ranging from the regulatory environment to the plurality of news sources to the business viability of the media industry. The Index is an Irex tool that has already been used in other countries such as Russia and Belarus. The Iraqi MSI is to be targeted at Iraqi media professionals, academics and local and international NGOs and Human rights organizations related to the media.

It was drawn up by local consultants, who used focus groups of Iraqis, to better ensure that the views of Iraqis themselves were reflected in the final product. At the time of the evaluation the MSI had not been published so its contents and impact were impossible to assess.

### C.2 Radio report network

Media in Co-operation MIC, based in Berlin and Amman, produces radio programmes, reports and features through a network of 30 reporters located in all parts of Iraq. With the UNESCO programme -"radio report network", produced and disseminated Arabic and Kurdish radio reports (features, interviews, and voxpops) to their partner radio stations in Iraq. In order to ensure the involvement of radio stations in the production of reports, MIC invited the directors of 22 radio stations to Amman to discuss future cooperation and agree on common ground – in terms of content, terminology and even a professional code of honour. It was agreed that the heads of stations would consider forming a professional union of radio stations.

MIC have also established Radio Niqash (a political radio show broadcasted three times weekly on several Iraqi radio stations since June 2005) and the website Niqash [www.niqash.org](http://www.niqash.org) ( in English, Arabic and Kurdish) which focused on the constitutional process and the role of civil society in particular. MIC also produce "360 Degree Iraq", a cultural radio show where two Iraqi journalists and artists travel to Iraq's neighbouring countries (Iran, Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon and Egypt) to report,, with a local host, about the culture and art scene in each country.

### C.3 Constitution programme making

The Jordanian based Ammanet made a series of twenty programmes dealing with different issues relevant to the Iraqi constitution. Spatula Arab Radio station in Basra and the Hansel radio station in Baghdad broadcast the programmes through their station. There was also a collaboration with Radio Niqash (see above – MIC) which agreed to redistribute the programme to the 22 radio stations it worked in partnership with. The programmes were also the Iraqi Constitution Web site under the title "Eye on the Iraqi media".

### C.4 Preliminary assessment

The project implementers for this kind of activity were acutely aware of the difficulties of operating in Iraq as they were attempting to provide direct media content. One of the Irex local consultants working on the Media Sustainability Index had a specific threat to her life during the project as a result of other work she was engaged in, with the result that she had to withdraw for a number of days and keep a low profile. Ammanet remarked that the security situation in Iraq and the inability to travel meant that they had to depend exclusively on the phone and internet which caused considerable communications problems.

Nevertheless overall the quality of programming and content was excellent. It is difficult to assess its impact of course – there are not the audience surveys sophisticated enough to identify the impact of particular programmes. But the providers between them ensured there was high quality content about the constitution available to an Iraqi audience. The agreement with 22 stations secured by MIC, which also benefited Ammanet was a particular bonus as it increase the multiplier effect of the UNESCO project considerably. The Niqash

website is also an excellent source of information both in the region and for a wider international audience that speaks English.

## **Achievements**

The first observation to make is that there were an enormous range of activities mounted at extremely short notice. Final agreement for the programme was made on June 8<sup>th</sup> and the money was received on July 28<sup>th</sup>. UNESCO took on the logistics for organising events in the programme, rather than this being handled by the implementing organisations. This placed enormous strain on local UNESCO staff. In the busiest period of September and October events were occurring almost daily with the corresponding logistical arrangements dealing with travel, visas, per diems and accommodation. The bombings in Amman while leading to an extension of the timetable for implementation until March 31<sup>st</sup> .further complicated implementation. It is to the credit of UNESCO staff and the local organisation that so much was achieved with relative good humour.

The main focus of the UNESCO programme was the help shape the new Constitution and awareness of the provisions on freedom of expression and to encourage Iraqi participation in the process of constitution building. The new constitution does reflect aspects of the proposal made within the UNESCO programme. Freedom of expression is guaranteed, and there is explicit mention of media freedom and the independence of the media regulator. The latter is unique in the region; even in the rest of the world, only a few constitutions contain a similar protective clause. Freedom of thought, conscience and belief are also protected, as is the right to freedom of assembly. Of course there are aspects of constitution that don't reflect the best international standards but overall UNESCO and its partners can be pleased at the impact their contribution has made. Of course the next stage is develop and implement a series of basic laws that give effect to the constitution and how these laws are shaped will determine how effective the constitutional provisions are.

It was laudable that some events were organised by Iraqi NGOs in Iraq itself. These were by far the most cost effective parts of the programme notwithstanding the security issues in Iraq itself. The use of Jordanian based organisations was also a success. With a greater understanding of the region than organisations based in Europe or the US, they were able to respond more readily to the peculiar circumstances of Iraq. Working in Arabic meant that more ground could be covered in the same period of time (as opposed to working in translation) and it was more possible to create a sense of ownership among the participants. The Jordanian based organisations were also better able to develop and sustain networks from among participants that can continue to provide the base for future UNESCO work in Iraq.

Of course some of the international organisations worked in Iraq itself (and NPA had long been based in the Kurdish north). However for such organisations there were technical problems particularly associated with transferring money. European banks do not readily understand the banking system in Iraq and require additional checks before agreeing to transfer money to Iraq. Iraqi partners were not used to receiving international transfers and experienced difficulties in obtaining the necessary information from the local banks. Finally, and most significantly, the intermediary banks, mostly in Jordan hold the funds for an undue length of time before passing them on to the Iraqi banks. This resulted in delays in funds reaching Iraq of 6 weeks

and more. Irex suggested in future that it might be possible for the UNESCO office in Iraq to hold the all the funds for local projects and distribute them on a agreed schedule.

The most substantial block of activities was training – from safety training to professional development, to the training of police officers, officials and schoolteachers in Iraq itself. Several hundred participants were trained in Iraq, Amman and Cairo. In cost terms it was undoubtedly expensive to train people outside of the country, particularly if the UNESCO direct costs are taken into account. The most value for money (VFM) will be achieved if those carrying out the training go back on pass on their experiences to others (for example the training of trainers programme run by ARTICLE 19 in Cairo), or where there has been some nurturing of a network of participants once the trainees have returned to Iraq, both giving a significant multiplier effect. Adaleh, INSI, ARTICLE 19, CDFJ and Ammannet have all built up good networks and connections in the country and IFJ have longstanding links with journalists organisations there. This represents a significant outcome of the project and is a real resource to build upon in the future. It does however highlight the importance of building upon future work in Iraq.

The impact of this training is difficult to measure in the short term except quantitatively. However, in addition to the networks maintained by participating NGOs, UNESCO itself has now developed a strong database of media organisations, individual journalists, and local NGOs in Iraq. As importantly the initial distrust that attached to all UN agencies in Iraq has been broken down by experience of this programme so this network is an invaluable tool for future programme activities. In other words the impact of this programme will be felt in the added value experienced in future project work in Iraq.

It is difficult to assess the impact of the direct support to media programming as there isn't the data to measure audience response. There is next to no reliable data available in Iraq on audience size and reach for radio or television. Very little reliable data is available for internet use either. But we know that a comprehensive range of programming was made available to Iraqis through the co-operation of a network of radio stations in the country. However, as Irex in particular found, there was a widespread unwillingness to publish or broadcast free of charge what was and is essentially public service information. Radio and TV broadcasters especially looked for high fees for rebroadcasts. It may reflect the fact that there is a limited market for the media in Iraq and rebroadcasts offer one of the few revenue streams available. It took considerable effort by implementers – MIC, Ammannet and Irex to get their programmes made available.

In the case of Ammannet, some indication of the impact of their material was shown by the level of response to their requests for submissions to their web-site. At first it proved difficult to get Iraqis to discuss the draft constitution on line and Ammannet had to seek people out and then effectively draft their submissions to kick start discussions. However, in time as people and groups began flooding them with submissions that reflected partisan views, which required strong editorial intervention from Ammannet. In the end Ammannet requested that contributors register before contributing but otherwise did not moderate contributions. This underlined a consistent theme of the experience of all implementers, that the Iraqi media is highly partisan and divided – a considerable challenge for future work.

All of these achievements need to be measured against the internal and external constraints. The internal constraints are referred to briefly above – shortness of time for implementation, contract procedures etc. Among the external constraints were:-

- The damage caused by the Saddam years, physically, institutionally, culturally;
- the effects of occupation and recent war;
- inter-ethnic and religious divides;
- regional conflict and power interests being played out in Iraq.

More specifically, in central Iraq, many journalists identified external organisations as a foreign agency even if they employed local Iraqis and were suspicious that these all foreign agencies and organisations were linked with occupation forces. This provoked both suspicion and fear that the insurgents will discover the relationships and kill participants. Irex had to step down one of its coordinators after threats (not however originating from activities in the UNESCO programme).

Finally many implementers remarked on the lack of professionalism among Iraqi journalists and the belief that freedom of expression gave them a license to write or say anything they wanted to without regard to the fragile nature of a transitional society. The resulting partisanship, combined with an extreme lack of security is a major obstacle to the development of an independent and professional media capable of supporting democracy and good governance. This problem was compounded by the reluctance of owners and editors were reluctant to accept criticism although the journalists themselves (and public officials in Iraq) were very receptive to outside ideas.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

The overriding priority for UNESCO (in fact for the UN system as whole) is to show a sustained and commitment to its work in Iraq. One of the problems within the UN system is that there is little real understanding of the role that the media play in democratic transition – and for example in peace building in conflict environments. The media play a vital role and careful thought needs to be given by the international community to sustaining the media environment, legally, culturally and developmentally.

Specifically this will involve sustained and continued support to media, focusing on independent, sectarian media that support a pluralistic and sectarian Iraq and promote the rights of women and minorities in Iraq. Having built up a good record in Iraq, series of relationships with both domestic actors and international NGOs and implementers, and most importantly an excellent database of contacts in the country, UNESCO is well placed to carry on its important work.

Future progress will obviously be dependent upon the formation of a government that can bring stability to Iraq. However delays in that process should not prevent the planning and indeed the initiation of future work. The priorities in Iraq country remain:

- Consolidation of legal reforms that develop the broad provisions of the Iraqi constitution;
- Continuing professional development and training for media professionals in Iraq;
- The development of a strong sense of responsibility and code of ethics that can able the media to play a constructive role in the reconstruction of Iraq. (Both Ammannet and the ARTICLE 19 trainers

remarked on the difficulties of finding neutral independent journalism in Iraq.)

- Media monitoring and monitoring of government attitudes to the media

Another issue mentioned several times to me by Iraqis that is relevant to UNESCO is the poor state of their universities and particularly the media and communication departments, all of which lack even the most basic equipment. This would, of course, involve considerable international investment.

In order to carry out this work it will be important for UNESCO to maintain a strong, committed core of staff to work on the programme. The organisation has been lucky to find committed and professional staff at relatively short notice. But this may not always be possible. Experience and knowledge of this issues and the country count for a great deal in the UN's work in Iraq.

Other assets from the project are local Iraqi NGOs who did an excellent job in the circumstances and who can be used again to develop UNESCO activities in Iraq itself. Regional and international NGOs can also use their experience and contacts to work effectively in any future project activities.

I would however recommend that future training activities be carried out in Arabic, or Kurdish in the north, both for reasons of cost and effectiveness. This is not to say that there should not be international trainers or speakers requiring translation where necessary, but the day to day training should be carried out in the languages of Iraqis. Where international NGOs are involved in the training they should recruit local language expertise or be partnered with local NGOs.

Compared to earlier projects, while there were stresses and strains involved in implementing the projects, nevertheless in the end most things worked with little complaint from the Iraqis themselves (with the exception of one event in Cairo outside of the day to day control of the Amman staff). In the future however, if there is to be a cash limit on the size of the contracts it would be useful if this was clear to all the implementers in advance so that any unnecessary work is avoided.

Finally I want to express my appreciation to everyone involved in the programme for their open co-operation with me and willing ness to share both the highlights and the problems they encountered. Particular thanks go the UNESCO staff in Amman who did such an effective and professional job at delivering a large and complex programme in such a compressed period of time. Much of the success is down to them.

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