IRAQ UNDAF TRUST FUND
MPTF OFFICE GENERIC ANNUAL PROGRAMME[1] NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT
REPORTING PERIOD: 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2012

Programme Title & Project Number	**Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results[2]**
• Programme Title: Empowering CSOs in Iraq • Programme Number: *P1-01* • MPTF Office Project Reference Number:[3] *81967*	*Iraq* *Priority area/ strategic results*
Participating Organization(s)	**Implementing Partners**
• UNDP	• Civil Society Organizations Committee of the Council of Representatives • Civil Society Organizations Committee of the Kurdistan Parliament
Programme/Project Cost (US$)	**Programme Duration**
Total approved budget as per project document: 2,221,818 USD MPTF /JP Contribution[4]: 1,042,435 USD	Overall Duration *28 months* Start Date[5] *12.03.2012* Original End Date[6] *12.09.2013* Current End date[7] *30.06.2014*
Other Contributions (UNOPS) *1,015,601 USD*	
TOTAL: 3,237,419 USD	
Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.	**Report Submitted By**
Assessment/Review - if applicable *please attach* ☐ Yes X No Date: *dd.mm.yyyy* Mid-Term Evaluation Report – *if applicable please attach* ☐ Yes X No Date: *dd.mm.yyyy*	o Name: Teresa Benito Lopez o Title: Project Manager o Participating Organization (Lead): UNDP- Iraq o Email address: teresa.benito@undp.org

---

[1] The term "programme" is used for programmes, joint programmes and projects.

[2] Strategic Results, as formulated in the Strategic UN Planning Framework (e.g. UNDAF) or project document;

[3] The MPTF Office Project Reference Number is the same number as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as "Project ID" on the project's factsheet page the MPTF Office GATEWAY

[4] The MPTF or JP Contribution, refers to the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations, which is available on the MPTF Office GATEWAY

[5] The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent. Transfer date is available on the MPTF Office GATEWAY

[6] As per approval of the original project document by the relevant decision-making body/Steering Committee.

[7] If there has been an extension, then the revised, approved end date should be reflected here. If there has been no extension approved, then the current end date is the same as the original end date. The end date is the same as the operational closure date which is when all activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MPTF / JP have been completed. As per the MOU, agencies are to notify the MPTF Office when a programme completes its operational activities.

List of acronyms

CoR	Council of Representatives of Iraq
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
NCCI	NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization
RFP	Request for Proposals
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services

*__Note:__ This project is composed of two separate components. The UNDP component, Output 2 is funded under the Iraq UNDAF Trust Fund. The UNOPS component, Output 1 is bilaterally funded by DANIDA to UNOPS and respectively UNOPS reports directly to DANIDA. **This report therefore covers the UNDP portion, Output 2 of the Project Document.** A summary of the UNOPS component (Output 1) progress for 2012 can be found in Annex 1.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNDP has developed an innovative grant model to support Iraqi CSOs (Civil Society organizations) with a two-fold approach combining grants and capacity development. The participatory and consultative approach to establishing this grant mechanism is a ground breaking innovation for Iraq that has been appreciated by Iraqi counterparts as the first of its kind.

Grants will be provided in 2013 to local CSO consortia for projects in three thematic areas (i) promotion of adequate service delivery, (ii) anti-corruption, (iii) human and civil rights. The projects will be implemented by the CSO consortia for a maximum duration of 1 year and 50,000 to 150,000 USD budgets.

A total of 100 local CSOs have engaged in the grant application process either as lead applicants or members of a CSO consortium. After a thorough and transparent selection process, 15 CSO consortia (with a total membership of 53 CSOs) have been retained for the final selection round that will take place early 2013. These CSOs have directly benefitted from expert support and coaching on project proposal development.

The linkages, understanding and engagement promoted through the project for closer relations between civil society and the CSO committee of the Council of Representatives (CoR) are creating more opportunities for inclusive decision making and government institutions that are more responsive to engaging and partnering with civil society. The UNDP grant model is being favoured by local parliamentary counterparts for the design of a potential Iraqi budget CSO state fund.

I. Purpose

The project is supporting CSOs to effectively monitor the Government of Iraq's compliance with due process and transparency and enhance CSO capacities for advocacy. UNDP will build the capacity of chosen CSOs to hold the Government accountable in the areas of promotion of adequate service delivery, anti-corruption, and human and civil rights. Through encouraging CSOs to form consortia, the project is transferring know-how whilst working on concrete issues. The Project is also contributing to opening up permanent and sustainable channels between CSOs and Government to interface and advocate for the voices of civil society to be heard and taken into account in relation to public policymaking. The partnership with UNOPS builds on existing strong relationships with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the Kurdistan Parliament and Kurdistan civil society.

The Project falls under UNDAF Outcome 1.1: The Iraqi state has a more inclusive and participatory political process reflecting improved national dialogue.

The Project contributes to the following UNDAF priority areas:
- ➢ Priority 1: Improved governance, including protection of human rights.
- ➢ Priority 4: Increased access to quality essential services.
- ➢ Priority 5: Investment in human capital and empowerment of women, youth and children.

The Project contributes to UNDP Iraq's Country Programme Outcome 1: Enhanced rule of law, protection and respect for human rights in line with international standards.

The project document outlines the following two project outputs:

➢ Output 1: Government is supported to facilitate free engagement of CSOs in development and reconciliation processes.
Note: For this output UNOPS reports bilaterally to its direct donor DANIDA[8].

➢ Output 2: CSOs have an enhanced capacity to promote citizen oversight mechanisms.
Note: UNDP component

II. Results

i) Narrative reporting on results:

- **Outcome level**

At UNDAF Outcome level, the project is contributing to more inclusive and participatory processes by allowing for an enhanced dialogue between parliament and civil society. CSOs are being promoted to become more professional and credible actors that can work alongside decision makers. Equally, through regular contact with CSOs, the CSO parliament committee is progressively considering the added value of a national dialogue alongside CSOs as legitimate voices.

This enhanced dialogue process is serving to improve the information base for parliamentary decisions, influencing them in the direction of being more responsive to actual people's demands. At the same time, CSOs are developing linkages with decision makers that will help them monitor governance and convey important matters in a more knowledgeable way to their constituents (UNDAF Outcome 1.1 Priority 1). The CSOs have initiated a reflection process on CSO consortia-led interventions in the areas of human and civil rights (UNDAF Outcome 1.1 Priority 1), promotion of adequate service delivery (UNDAF Outcome 1.1 Priority 4) and anti-corruption (UNDAF Outcome 1.1 Priority 1). Concrete impact in these three thematic areas will be observed in 2013 with the implementation of the CSO projects looking at enhanced oversight mechanisms to monitor the government's performance (Country Programme Outcome 1).

The project is investing in human capital (UNDAF Outcome 1.1 Priority 5) by empowering active citizens, both men and women, and their initiatives as an organized civil society. The project is contributing to creating a more capable Iraqi civil society that can produce effective and impactful interventions alongside decision makers.

- **Output level**

With regards to the UNDP led Output 2[9] "CSOs have an enhanced capacity to promote citizen oversight mechanisms". Specific output level achievements can be summarized as follows:

---

[8] See Annex 1: 2012 progress summary of UNOPS component (Output 1) of project "Empowering CSOs in Iraq"
[9] For progress on Output 1 see note page 3 of this report and Annex 1.

CSO Grant Guidelines: An extensive consultation process has led to the development of a set of CSO Grant Guidelines that integrate UNDP best practices as well as practical local context aspects. The innovative, participatory and open approach to the development of these guidelines has been appreciated both by the CSO Committee of the Council of Representatives and the CSO community. After several consultations with key informants, the CSO Grant Guidelines went through a final consultation round at the Grants Guidelines Workshop, hosted by the Council of Representatives in Baghdad on 8 November 2012. The workshop resulted in valuable feedback from CSOs and Members of Parliament that led to a vetted version of the document. The guidelines include a transparent three phased selection process, a detailed description of the technical support the CSOs will be part of and a clear description of the monitoring and knowledge management efforts that will be undertaken during the CSO project implementation phase. Such an open process can be said to be a first of its kind experience in Iraq when it comes to international grant schemes for CSOs. The result is a strong ownership, commitment and understanding by local stakeholders to the grant scheme. This has set the ground for a strong buy in from the participating CSOs into the parallel capacity development support provided through the UNDP project.

Engagement of CSO Committee of CoR: A trust-based dialogue has been established with the CSO Committee of the CoR that has led to regular mutual consultations on various issues related to civil society affairs in Iraq and to high levels of support to the UNDP project. Engagement with the CSO Committee from the onset of the project has led to the CSO Committee participating and contributing to project activities. Hosting the Grant Guidelines Workshop within the premises of the Parliament and with the attendance of Members of Parliament belonging to the CSO Committee is one example. The CSO Committee has also recently presented a draft law for a state NGO grant fund to be activated alongside the current NGO Law. A request for UNDP to support this process has been made by the CSO Committee showing that the current grant model is being looked at as a good practice the government of Iraq may apply for its own NGO grant fund.

*CSO selection process***:** A CSO Grant Selection Committee has been established[10] to manage the three phased grant selection process. The Selection Committee is comprised of UNDP and UNOPS staff with voting rights and with the observer role of a representative of the CSO Committee of the CoR. As a first stage CSOs have been invited to come forward under a pre-qualification process that ensured all pre-qualified CSOs complied with basic institutional requirements (such as registration and financial statements). Out of 54 applications, 25 CSOs were invited to present project concept notes after reaching out to other CSOs to form consortia[11]. The evaluation of the 21 CSO consortia project concept notes received led to the selection of 15 CSO consortia that presented their project proposals in January 2013[12]. The Grant Selection Committee found that the general CSO application quality was low although satisfactory. This confirmed the pertinent need for parallel CSO capacity building efforts. CSO applications covered three thematic areas: promotion of adequate service delivery, anti-corruption and human and civil rights. In addition, a strong emphasis was put on gender focused projects by allocating 30% of the grant fund to this purpose. Applications received evenly cover the three thematic areas and the gender focus (see table below). The geographical coverage is equally even with interventions proposed in all the governorates of Iraq[13].

Thematic Areas	Concept Notes Received	% of total
Promotion of adequate service delivery	7	33%
Anti-corruption	5	24%
Human and civil rights	8	38%
Off topic (economic empowerment)	1	5%

---

[10] See annex 2: Terms of reference CSO Grant Selection Committee
[11] See annex 3: Pre-qualification evaluation summary grid
[12] See annex 4: Concept note evaluation summary grid
[13] See annex 5: Concept note thematic and geographical distribution map

Cross Cutting themes		
Gender	6	29%
Youth	4	19%
Environment	1	5%
Human Rights	8	38%

➔ **Indicator 2.1** "Number of vetted national/local CSOs to undertake and promote oversight mechanisms in the areas of service delivery, anti-corruption and protecting and promoting Human and Civil Rights" can be considered as fully on track since out of 54 original applications, 15 CSO consortia have been vetted as potential grantees for implementing interventions in the areas mentioned above. The final number of vetted CSOs will be known in March 2013. This indicator can be considered 75% completed.

CSO capacity development: A CSO capacity development intervention has been designed in parallel and as a complement to the grant process. A Canadian-Lebanese firm with extensive experience in Iraq, CLIC Inc., has been contracted for this purpose[14]. An innovative initial step has been to coach the 15 candidate CSO consortia in project proposal development. This has been done through interactive 3-day training workshops in Baghdad and Erbil, on the ground facilitation meetings and online expert tailored support[15]. The result is that the 53 CSOs comprising those 15 consortia now have better skills to design effective interventions and to access international donor funding in the future. CSOs have appreciated the opportunity to develop their skills independently of the outcome of the final grant selection.

➔ **Indicator 2.2** "Number of CSOs that receive project cycle management and organizational networking skills capacity support from programme" can be considered as fully on track as 53 CSOs have initiated their project cycle management training with the initial project design and proposal writing support. They have also been guided into networking with other CSOs to join one of 15 CSO consortia and been exposed to interaction with an international agency (UNDP) and CSO Committee of the CoR. This indicator can be considered 20% completed.

CSO capacity assessment: Initial observations from the interaction with CSOs point at capacity gaps in establishing an intervention logic (designing activities as a result of a problem analysis and hierarchy of objectives), thorough financial management and administrative arrangements for coordination with other CSOs as part of a consortium. Following a set of requirements, including deadlines as part of an application process, has also proven to be a challenge for most CSOs. CLIC Inc. has also initiated a capacity assessment exercise that will lead to the development of capacity profiles for each of the 15 candidate CSO consortia. The capacity assessment will ensure a baseline for measuring CSO capacity progress throughout the UNDP intervention. In addition, it will fulfil a corporate requirement of ensuring capacity of CSO grantees is adequate prior to a granting decision. Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with all 53 candidate CSOs and further assessment activities will be finalized early March 2013 before the Grant Agreement signature.

Monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management: A competitive contractual package[16] will be finalized early 2013 for the services of an expert firm to ensure monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management. The monitoring process will be looking at progress from two angles: (i) progress of CSO capacity development, (ii) progress of achievement of the CSO consortia project objectives. The CSO capacity

---

[14] See annex 6: Terms of reference for "Provision of Technical Assistance to Iraqi Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Project Development and Project Implementation in Iraq"

[15] See annex 7: Project proposal writing training outline

[16] See annex 8: Terms of reference for "Provision of Monitoring services for Iraqi Society Organizations (CSOs) Project Implementation in Iraq"

assessment will serve as a baseline, along with other tools. An online platform for information exchange, two knowledge sharing workshops regrouping all the grantee CSOs and a lessons learnt and good practice report will constitute the bulk of the knowledge management work. This will inform project management decisions and enhance learning for the international donor community and relevant Iraqi government and parliament stakeholders on working with CSO grants and CSO capacity development programmes.

Project governance and quality assurance: The first Project Board meeting took place in Baghdad on 5 December 2013, with the attendance of UNDP Country Director, a representative of the CSO parliamentary Committee and other relevant UNDP and UNOPS staff. The progress made in 2012 and plans for 2013 were appreciated and approved by the Board without major comments. A civil society representative has been selected through an Expression of Interest call to represent the Senior Beneficiary role at the Project Board. The NGO Tammuz was selected but could not attend this first Project Board meeting due to logistical burdens.

➔ **Beneficiaries:** Direct beneficiaries have been 53 local CSOs (forming 15 CSO consortia) that have passed the concept note selection phase and have benefited from project proposal writing training and coaching. CSO representatives attending UNDP's direct coaching have been on average 80% men and 20% women active members of Iraqi civil society (see section below on implementation challenges and lessons learned).
Another group of direct beneficiaries are the Members of Parliament of the CSO Committee of the CoR that are better linked and aware of CSO granting and capacity building interventions and better able to include them in consultations and decision making. This parliamentary committee is comprised of 6 Members of Parliament and a legal advisor, 4 men and 3 women.
Indirect beneficiaries are Iraqi civil society in general, Members of Parliament and the NGOs Directorate that are benefitting from better linkages and understanding of the potential and role of civil society in promoting citizen-led oversight mechanisms.
The beneficiary structure will evolve and expand in 2013 with the implementation of the CSO consortia projects.

- **Delays in implementation, challenges, lessons learned & best practices**

Implementation delays: The project officially started mid-March 2012 with the reception of the first tranche of funding. The Project Manager was recruited in July 2012 which did not allow for a full fledge initiation of activities before that date. In addition, discussions with the CSO Committee of the CoR and internally within UNDP on the best implementation modality led to a *programmatic revision* with an adjustment on the modality for contracting technical support for the project. This created a delay in the start-up of the technical support to CSO capacity development activities due to the launching of a competitive procurement process in August 2012. Project activities have progressed well on track since that point and a project extension has been processed until 30 June 2014 (see Section IV below on programmatic revisions).

➔ *Lesson learned:* Recruitment time of key project staff has to be taken into account when establishing project timeframes.

➔ *Lesson learned*: Project design phases should allow sufficient time for scoping the options for the implementation of counterparts and obtaining the buy-in of all key stakeholders on implementation modality choices to avoid implementation delays and revisions.

Implementation challenges: The selection process to identify suitable CSOs for participation in the grant scheme has confirmed the need for capacity building efforts to local CSOs. These have shown great difficulties in complying with the grant application process with a number of required documents missing, delays in submission and inconsistent financial information. This in turn has made the application screening process challenging in terms of keeping an objective evaluation methodology. The

application requirements have been consulted with the concerned CSOs directly through the consultations for the CSO Grant Guidelines and have been presented and discussed with the CSOs directly at the CSO Grant Guidelines Workshop held on 8 November 2012. Despite obtaining vetting by the CSOs it has been observed that many of them lacked the capacity to fully take on board the requirements of an international donor type of grant appeal. The CSO Grant Selection Committee had to make several decisions towards applying flexibility with the application criteria to ensure a critical mass of applications could be considered. This was also done as recognition of the CSO capacity development purpose of the UNDP project. The need to apply flexibility was extensively discussed as the Selection Committee aimed at maintaining the highest standard of objectivity and equal treatment for applicant CSOs. Decisions for allowing extended submission deadlines for missing documentation (CSO registration certificate, CSO financial statements etc.) or including CSOs that had a financial capacity slightly below the required criteria were made unanimously and maintained the same standard for all applicants.

➔ *Lesson learned:* Events like the Grant Guidelines Workshop where local CSOs were not only consulted on, but briefed about the grant scheme requirements are very pertinent given the existing low capacities.

➔ *Lesson learned:* The grant scheme selection mechanism needs to incorporate and anticipate flexibility. The exact terms of the flexibility should be agreed upon transparently and communicated to the CSOs.

Another implementation challenge has been the lack of a unified network for reaching out to local CSOs. The Project Management has made great efforts to reach out to local CSOs through different existing networks, previous UNDP CSO partners and the UNOPS NGO database. Despite these efforts, a number of local CSOs have contacted UNDP after the application deadline to participate in the project. A clear gap in the CSO sector has therefore been observed in terms of accessing a comprehensive database of CSOs in Iraq and the lack of existence of an overarching CSO coordination body. This could be the subject of future interventions for the donor community.

➔ *Lesson learned:* Local CSOs are not comprehensively connected through existing internet CSO networks; dedicated efforts need to be undertaken to reach out to a maximum number of local CSOs. A CSO contact list with more than 100 CSOs that have been in touch with the project has been put in place to date and will be expanded with inputs from other UNDP programmes and potentially through a survey with CSOs.

Finally, the project management has put a strong emphasis on promoting the submission by CSOs of gender focused projects by allocating 30% of the grant fund to this purpose. The evaluation grids for the concept notes and the project proposals include gender specific criteria and templates encouraged gender disaggregation. Despite these efforts, it has been observed that gender focus and gender mainstreaming remain weak among local CSO applications. While 30% of the 53 candidate CSOs can be said to have a gender related mandate, only 26% of concept note applications were gender focused, slightly below the 30% allocation for gender focused projects. In addition, the concept of gender mainstreaming is still not well understood by local CSOs as it was absent from most of the remaining concept notes. Also, on average less than 20% of participants proposed by the CSOs to attend the consultation and training workshops organized by the projects were women.

➔ *Lesson learned:* Gender mainstreaming and gender focus in local CSO project proposals needs to be promoted more directly and actively given the low levels of awareness and capacities to mainstream gender as an effective tool to ensure inclusiveness and a more effective project impact.

Risk analysis updated: The risk analysis as presented in the project document remains valid. A number of identified risks have materialized as expected with the project management taking actions to mitigate these.

1. *Unstable security situation in Iraq:* While the project has not been directly affected by the security situation in Iraq, the current political crisis could lead to increased insecurity and political instability in 2013. The observed increase in citizen demonstrations could lead to certain CSOs engaging in the contestation process and neglecting the grant implementation process in the future. Should the political crisis worsen, there is a risk of inoperability of our Parliament counterparts and a decrease in the opportunity for linkages between CSOs and the parliamentary committee. Similarly, if local councils and other government counterparts find themselves challenged by the political crisis, they may not be able to engage as planned as CSO project partners.

➔ The project management will ensure an ongoing dialogue with the CSOs and the CSO Committee of the CoR to anticipate any potential impact of the political crisis developments on project activities. CSOs who will depend on strong ties with their local council or other specific government departments will be asked to plan for contingency measures should the political crisis affect their counterparts significantly.

4. *Difficulty conducting activities in local areas:* Reaching out to local areas remains a challenge, and most group activities for CSOs have taken place in Erbil and Baghdad. Most CSOs have so far not found difficulties in reaching those cities, other than weather factors during winter.

➔ A key criterion for selecting contractual partners for the capacity building component and monitoring support of the project is considering the partners' capacity to implement activities in throughout Iraq. So far, CLIC Inc. has been able to visit all CSOs in their respective locations throughout the country without significant challenges.

5. *Adequate CSOs cannot be identified:* The selection process has revealed expected capacity gaps of local CSOs as explained in this report.

➔ The CSO Grant Selection Committee has applied flexibility across the board to allow a critical mass of CSOs to be included in the grant scheme and given the opportunity to be brought up to a satisfactory capacity level to implement effective projects and access donor resources in the future.

7. *Barriers to participation of women inside CSOs and lack of gender oriented proposals:* While approximately 25% of the 53 CSOs currently forming the 15 CSO consortia on the run for the UNDP grants are women led organizations, the gender orientation of project concept notes has not been very strong. The concept of gender mainstreaming is still not fully understood by most CSOs.

➔ The project management has increased the initial allocation of the CSO grant fund for gender focused projects from 15% to 30% to incentivize applications with a gender focus. The evaluation criteria for the CSO application selection and the templates provided to CSOs include guiding elements related to gender mainstreaming (disaggregation of data and gender specific evaluation criteria).

- **Qualitative assessment**

Despite the initial start-up delays, the project is progressing on track and is building a strong partnership with the local CSOs that have engaged in the grant process so far. A number of good practices or "things that have worked well" have been identified in the first 6 months of activities, here are some highlights:

- *Consultative and participatory approach to the grant guidelines:* As mentioned in the achievements section, UNDP has consulted with local CSOs and the CSO Committee of the CoR on the guidelines for the UNDP grant scheme. This has increased ownership and understanding of the grant scheme requirements by local counterparts. It has also served as a capacity building process for both the CSOs and the CSO Committee of the CoR as they have learned from discussion why certain choices were made and why certain requirements are there. Equally, UNDP-Iraq has learned how to adapt standard grant guidelines to a complex and low capacity context like the Iraqi one.

- *Three-phased CSO selection process:* In anticipation of the low capacity levels of local CSOs, the grant mechanism was designed with a three-phased CSO selection process. The application process was also intentionally made thorough to prepare CSOs for complex international donor grant applications in the future. Simplifying the process too much would not have served the CSO capacity building objective. The first pre-qualification phase allowed for the screening of interested CSOs against basic requirements such as having a valid registration as an NGO in Iraq, having a minimal financial capacity or being able to articulate a simple reply in an application form. This first phase helped set the bar in terms of capacities of local CSOs and allowed the project to tailor the Grant Guidelines to the needs of the pre-qualified CSOs. The second phase, the concept note phase, allowed for pre-qualified CSOs to reach out and form consortia with other CSOs (in most cases with less capacity or experience) to formulate a joint concept note. The final project proposal phase has allowed the CSO consortia that passed the concept note stage to receive direct coaching on project proposal writing and go through a more thorough project design process before submission to UNDP.

- *Continuous coaching approach to capacity development:* The CSO capacity development component has been designed as a continuous accompaniment process that starts working with the CSOs before the grants have been attributed (project proposal phase). The approach is one of one-on-one coaching and mentoring of the CSOs, where the CSOs are not passive recipients of a short-term training programme, but rather full participants in their own capacity progress all along the project life cycle. The CSOs will have multiple and regular contact with technical support specialists and facilitators, to receive coaching on specific project cycle management and NGO administration topics, but also to brainstorm project implementation decisions, identify bottlenecks in implementation and be guided into finding their own solutions.

- *National consortia with a lead CSOs and member CSOs:* It was decided to focus on the capacities of local CSOs only, without the involvement of international NGOs in the CSO consortia. In this way, the pre-qualified CSOs have been empowered as lead CSOs within the consortia they have formed. There is a clear role of these lead CSOs to coach and train the member CSOs they have partnered with. While all CSOs (lead and member CSOs) are benefiting from the capacity development support UNDP is providing, the lead CSOs will also have good and complementary experience to share.

- *Peer learning:* In addition to the peer learning that will take place through the CSO consortia structure mentioned above, horizontal peer learning will be promoted throughout the project implementation phase with two main "Knowledge sharing workshops" events that will gather all CSOs involved in the UNDP grant in 2013 to exchange impressions on their progress, good practices and lessons learned. These events will be facilitated by the monitoring and knowledge management technical support contractors but will be led, content-wise, by the experiences of the CSOs themselves. In addition, an online platform, designed as a sustainable networking tool that will remain active after the UNDP project ends, will be created for continuous peer-exchange.

- *Accountable and transparent selection process:* The CSO Grant Guidelines include a detailed description not only of the evaluation criteria for each of the three selection phases, but also the terms of reference of the CSO Grant Selection Committee. The CSOs have had an opportunity to comment on these and as a consequence the phrasing and weighting of certain criteria have been adapted. The terms of reference of the CSO Grant Selection Committee have also been designed to ensure a balanced assessment of the CSO proposals with each application being evaluated by three general evaluators and one technical evaluator. Great care has been put to avoid or declare any conflict of interest between the evaluators and the candidate CSOs. Another measure that has ensured high levels of transparency and accountability is the fact that a representative of the CSO

Committee of the CoR has been invited as an observer to the Selection Committee meetings. This observer has often contributed with valuable comments and questions that have helped in keeping the process fair for all applicants. Given the positive contribution the observer has had, the project management has recently decided to include a representative of civil society as an additional observer to the final CSO grant selection meeting to be held late February 2013.

- *CSO learning process:* From the initial activities undertaken with the CSOs in 2012, including the Grant Guidelines Workshop, the Proposal Writing coaching and the submission of pre-qualification and concept note applications, CSOs have self-identified a number of key learning areas (through the submission of "learning logs"). CSOs see as very beneficial the consortia modality through which they have gained practice and learned about joint decision making, mutual planning and information sharing. Despite this, most CSOs state finding ways of working well as a consortia as a challenge for the upcoming implementation phase. CSOs also state having benefitted from new project proposal development skills, having learned specifically on planning for monitoring and evaluation, and on how to determine the target groups and their specific needs. Problem identification as a base for the selection of beneficiaries and the development of activities remains a challenge that the CSOs clearly identify themselves. Presenting a project budget in a prescribed format, and in general the anticipation of financial reporting of the activities of the consortia is also a concern for the CSOs. Overall, the self-awareness of CSO capacities, especially when it comes to project implementation remains low as CSO do not state major challenges in their capacity other than access to resources and the security situation.[17]

- *Fruitful partnerships:* The coordination and cooperation with UNOPS has been excellent throughout 2012 with a real added value result. UNDP and UNOPS have been working autonomously on their components but have shared information, experiences and mutually supported each other during different implementation stages as one single team. Equally, the partnership with the CSO Committee of the CoR has been very fruitful. The project management has been able to facilitate contact and consultations on civil society issues in Iraq and with CSOs to a number of other UNDP projects thanks to its partnership with the Committee. In turn, the CSO Committee has been looking at the UNDP grant scheme experience as a good model to inspire a potential state CSO grant fund, for which the CSO Committee has prepared a draft law initiative in December 2012.

Cross-cutting issues:
- *Gender:* A strong emphasis was put on promoting the submission by CSOs of gender focused projects by allocating 30% (instead of the planned 15%) of the grant fund to this purpose. The application templates for CSOs included guides for gender disaggregated data. The evaluation grids for the concept notes and the project proposals include gender specific criteria. During the project proposal writing coaching workshop, gender mainstreaming was presented as a good practice across the board for any type of project. Concepts of gender equity, women participation, women leadership and women empowerment were covered during the discussions with the CSOs. Finally, UNDP's senior gender specialist has been nominated as one of the technical experts for CSO application evaluations. Despite these efforts, it has been observed that promoting gender focus and gender mainstreaming with local CSOs remains a challenge and requires dedicated efforts. Although 30% of the grant fund is allocated for gender specific projects, only 26% of concept notes received aimed at the gender fund and virtually none of the remaining concept notes reflected gender mainstreaming. The project management will make dedicated efforts to increase local CSO capacities to take gender into account during 2013 (see challenges and lessons learned section above).

---

[17] This is based on a preliminary assessment done by the CSOs themselves through brief learning logs. A thorough assessment of capacities will be finalized in March 2013.

- *Youth and environment:* CSOs have proposed four concept notes that include significant elements of youth participation, empowerment and also juvenile penitentiary practices. Only one concept note related to environment (looking at promotion of enhanced municipal environmental and waste management services). At concept note stage, no indication of inclusion of these two cross cutting issues was found in the remaining applications.

- *Human Rights:* This was the most popular thematic area of the call for CSO concept notes as 38% of them covered human rights as their main theme of focus. Topics proposed relate to minorities' rights, women rights, raising awareness of the CSO community, teachers and local councils on human rights issues and monitoring juvenile (including girl) courts and detention for human rights. Given the three main focus areas proposed by UNDP for CSO projects (promotion of adequate service delivery, anti-corruption and human and civil rights) it can be anticipated that all CSO projects will mainstream human rights as a broader overarching theme.

	<u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
UNDAF Outcome 1.1 The Iraqi state has a more inclusive and participatory political process reflecting improved national dialogue.			
Output 2[18] **:** CSOs have an enhanced capacity to promote citizen oversight mechanisms. **<u>Indicator 2.1:</u> Number of vetted national/local CSOs to undertake and promote oversight mechanisms in the areas of service delivery, anti-corruption and protecting and promoting Human and Civil Rights** **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 10**	2.1: A preliminary vetting of 15 local CSO consortia (out of 54 original applications) has been completed. *Project Target:* 7-8 CSO consortia will be vetted to undertake initiatives as mentioned in the indicator in 2013. Those 7-8 CSO consortia will include about 25 CSOs (2013). This indicator can be considered 75% completed.	The completion of this indicator is on track. The target was for 10 CSOs vetted, this will now be about 25 CSOs as part of 7-8 CSO consortia grantees.	• Project Quarterly Reports • CSO Grant Selection Committee report for Pre-qualification phase • CSO Grant Selection Committee report for Concept Note phase
<u>Indicator 2.2</u>: Number of CSOs that receive project cycle management and organizational networking skills capacity support from programme. **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 15**	2.2: 53 local CSOs have initiated their PCM training and been introduced to networking by forming consortia. *Project Target:* 7-8 CSO consortia will be selected as grantees and will continue with capacity development support in 2013 and 2014. Those 7-8 CSO consortia will include about 25 CSOs (2013). This indicator can be considered 20% completed.	The completion of this indicator is on track. The target was for 15 CSOs supported, this will now be about 25 CSOs as part of 7-8 CSO consortia grantees.	• Project Quarterly Reports • CSO Project Proposal writing training workshop report • CSO Learning Logs

---

[18] For progress on Output 1 see note page 3 of this report and Annex 1.

III.   Other Assessments or Evaluations

A CSO capacity assessment and mapping was initiated in December 2012, this will lead to the development of capacity profiles for each of the 15 candidate CSO consortia. The capacity assessment will ensure a baseline for measuring CSO capacity progress throughout the UNDP intervention. In addition, it will fulfil a corporate requirement of ensuring capacity of CSO grantees is adequate prior to a granting decision. Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with all 53 candidate CSOs and further assessment activities will be finalized early March 2013 before the Grant Agreement signature.

Initial observations from the interaction with CSOs point at capacity gaps in establishing an intervention logic (designing activities as a result of a problem analysis and hierarchy of objectives), thorough financial management and administrative arrangements for coordination with other CSOs as part of a consortium. Following a set of requirements, including deadlines as part of an application process has also proven to be a challenge for most CSOs.

Qualitative reports will be produced in 2013 following the two knowledge sharing workshops, as well as through quarterly monitoring reports that will look at the progress of the CSO project implementation and the capacity building efforts. These will include a final assessment or evaluation for the last quarter that will cover the one year implementation of the CSO projects.

A good practices and lessons learned report will also be produced at the end of the project to compile the experience both in terms of CSO project implementation and the capacity development experience for the CSOs.

IV.   Programmatic Revisions

Project extension: A request for extending the project end date from September 2013 to June 2014 was approved on 4 September. The main reasons for the extension are summarized below:

- Recruitment of the project team: delays in the recruitment and arrival of the staff, especially the international programme specialist (start of duty in July 2012) have meant that only a limited number of preparation activities could be undertaken before then.

- CSO grant mechanism: Given the low capacity levels of local CSOs and the decision to work exclusively with local CSOs (without the chaperoning of international CSOs) there was a need to take more time to design a sound and appropriate grant mechanism with emphasis on participation and a parallel capacity development component.

- Given the above, the project implementation required an extension to accommodate for the following activities starting from July 2012: (i) 4-5 months of consultations and design of grant methodologies, (ii) 2 months for the selection process and CSO contract negotiations, (iii) 12 months for the CSO project implementation and parallel capacity development, (iv) 3-4 months for final reporting by CSOs, final project learning exercise and project closure. This timeline leads to an end of the project in June 2014.

Implementation partners (contractors): As explained above, a decision was made to open up the competition for the capacity development and monitoring support instead of going for the partner that was initially identified in the project document. This decision was based on obtaining best value for money, as well as avoiding a conflict of interest with potential grant applicant CSOs belonging to the partner network that had originally been identified in the project document (NCCI). It was also decided to divide the technical service package into two competitive RFPs, one focusing on capacity development and another one for monitoring and knowledge management services.

V.   Resources

Human Resources: The Project Manager (Amman based) was contracted in July 2012 and the Assistant Project Officer (Baghdad based) in November 2012. In addition, the project is supported part-time by the Participatory Governance Coordinator (Amman based) for strategic guidance, the Associate Project Officer (Amman based) for administrative and financial support and a Project Officer (Erbil based) for monitoring and project follow up in the North of Iraq.

Financial resources: The project's 2012 expenditure is approximately 200,000 USD (2012 accounts are not closed yet). The delivery was lower than planned as there was no CSO grant disbursement in 2012. It was a strategic project management decision to invest more time in a good quality CSO grant mechanism and CSO capacity development support. Expenditure for 2013 is planned to be 1,745,775 USD. Given the no-cost project duration extension for an additional 9 months, the financial resources allocated to fixed costs such as staff, regular travel missions and other contributions to office costs are putting a financial strain on the project. The project management will monitor expenditure closely in 2013. If shortage of funds becomes an issue for the appropriate completion of the project, A fund raising effort may be needed for the second half of 2013.

Procurement: The project has undertaken the procurement of services for the "Provision of Technical Assistance to Iraqi Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Project Development and Project Implementation in Iraq"[19] through a competitive RFP won by CLIC Inc. for 361,213 USD. A second competitive RFP for the "Provision of monitoring services for Iraqi Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) project implementation in Iraq"[20] was launched late 2012 and will be contracted in March 2013.

---

[19] See annex 6: Terms of reference for "Provision of Technical Assistance to Iraqi Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Project Development and Project Implementation in Iraq"

[20] See annex 8: Terms of reference for "Provision of Monitoring services for Iraqi Society Organizations (CSOs) Project Implementation in Iraq"