



# External evaluation of the UNESCO project

C9-21 "Strengthening Good Governance Through  
Support for Independent, Pluralistic, Sustainable and  
Professional Media"

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## **Executive Summary**

The programme overall aimed to strengthen freedom of expression and access to information in Iraq. Three strands of work were identified to achieve that end.

Firstly assistance was provided to the Iraqi National Communications and Media (CMC) to help them develop media regulation consistent with the relevant international standards in order to guarantee freedom of expression, promote diversity of opinion and media ownership. Further to this, activities would support the development and promotion of a regulatory framework and professional environment that could build respect for media freedom and principles of access to information, on the belief that this would enhance the ability of the Iraqi population to be better informed about the reconstruction and peace building process.

Secondly the programme aimed to strengthen professionalism among journalists by supporting attempts to build sustainable organizations that can support an independent media, including private journalist associations, operating in a professional manner.

Finally the project aimed to raise awareness among parliamentarians and within public bodies about freedom of expression and access to information as fundamental rights, in the belief that this would enhance dialogue at the national level and help create the necessary preconditions for reconciliation and nation building.

### **Intended beneficiaries**

The intended beneficiaries were journalists and media organisations, members of the CMC, legislators and public officials, as well as, more generally, members of the public. In practice, members of the CMC, public officials, legislators, journalists and media organisations directly benefited from the activities, principally through the legal workshops conducted by Albany Associates and the BBC's work on the Code of Conduct which involved a broad range of journalists.

### **Key findings**

The project was well managed with effective oversight provided by UNESCO and an acceptance that a project of such duration needed to be implemented flexibly. Using the BBC World Service Trust as a lead sub contractor was an effective way of ensuring a degree of coherence across the programme as a whole, as well as minimising the demands upon UNESCO staff. However the sub contractors could have benefited from a more integrated management structure rather than developing the programme as a series of relatively distinct and separate projects. In particular there was no relationship between Albany and Irex in the implementation phase.

The project outputs were delivered on time and to budget. The activities took place as programmed with the exception of some of the Irex workshops which were reorganised because

of security concerns. It may have been better to anticipate these in the beginning and arrive at a more considered approach that was likely to achieve more impact. The flexibility allowed by UNESCO meant that new initiatives, such as the work on the Kurdish law could be incorporated without major difficulty.

In terms of impact where the intended beneficiaries were high level policy makers, editors, journalists or members of the Communications and Media Commission, the desired impact was achieved, although implementation of the legislation has been stalled by domestic political circumstances in Iraq, particularly the pre-occupation with the status of forces agreement and negotiations over oil revenue. The journalist Code of Conduct will be a useful instrument for strengthening Iraqi professionalism among journalists but will require follow up if it is to be utilised fully. The needs assessment needs to be used as a baseline study in future project development. However there is no evidence that the awareness of the importance of freedom of expression and access to information was raised significantly – activities under this heading tended to be disjointed and isolated. Here the programme as a whole would have benefited from greater integration.

In order to maximise the benefit of the project I make the following specific recommendations:

- 1) UNESCO should consider convening a series of small workshops bringing together key parliamentarians (no more than ten or so) to urge the passage of the media law. This is an area of potential collaboration with other UN agencies such as UNDP. Working relations with the CMC should be continued and forms of co-operation identified.
- 2) The Training Needs Assessment should be distributed widely to all the international actors currently active in Iraq as well as the major implementing organisations in order for this activity to be sustainable, and to influence future training activities.
- 3) Sub-contractors should be asked to form a project team that directs and plans programme activities and the relevant UNESCO staff member should oversight over the team as a whole, not just the lead contractor.
- 4) Part of the programme's success was that new objectives were identified and acted upon rapidly. This flexibility should be a regular part of future programme planning. If, for example, the security situation deteriorates suddenly in one part of the country, making activities very difficult, there should be the flexibility to switch the target of activity to where the funds can be spent effectively.
- 5) All future workshops should a system of structured feedback with a confidential focus group at the conclusion of each workshop.
- 6) Follow up work on the Code of Conduct needs to be instituted - at the moment this valuable work is not sustainable unless IMSG becomes functional or the work of ongoing promotion is delegated to another group.

- 7) In future it might be useful to identify external evaluators at the beginning of a project so they can fully assess baseline starting points as well as outcomes and have oversight as the project develops
- 8) Consideration should also be given to the nature of the baseline studies that are required at the commencement of the project.



*Senior Iraqi media representatives vote on elements of the Code of Professional Conduct for Iraqi Media at the final drafting workshop in Amman, Jordan in March 2008 / ©UNESCO*

## **Project description**

The UNESCO project documentation lists the project description as follows:

“Taking point of vantage in the Iraqi Constitution and upon the request of the Iraqi National Communications and Media Commission and building on previous achievements in the same area, this project seeks to continue to promote the construction of a legal framework conducive to independent and pluralistic media, and to enable that framework to protect media freedoms by building capacities both among media professionals (through the development of professional associations and capabilities) as well as public officials (through awareness raising regarding the principles of transparency and access to information). “

### **Project objectives**

The specific objectives of the programme were identified as being:

- 1- Media legislation: to assist the Iraqi National Communications and Media (CMC) in developing media regulation in line with relevant international standards in order to guarantee freedom of expression, promote diversity of opinion and media ownership; to support the development and promotion of a regulatory framework and professional environment in order to cement the basis for respect for media freedom and principles of access to information to enhance the platform for Iraqi population to receive and impart information and opinions on the reconstruction and peace building process ahead. The assistance will consist of direct advisory support in media regulation drafting.
- 2- Professional association building: to support the building of sustainable organizations that support an independent media, including private journalist associations.
- 3- Awareness raising among parliamentarians and within public bodies about freedom of expression and access to information as fundamental rights, enhancing and fostering dialogue at the national level and thereby creating the necessary precondition for reconciliation processes in the context of nation and institution building.

Programme activities were organised and hence evaluated under these three broad headings.

## **The project and project management**

The project was conceived by UNESCO as being spearheaded by a consortium of organizations to be engaged as sub contractors to the Organization. Following a competitive international bidding process, the winning consortium selected was the BBC World Service Trust (BBC WST) acting in partnership with Albany Associates and International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). The UNESCO Project Manager's understanding of both the Iraqi media environment and the challenges to implementation meant that the lead agency were able to respond flexibly to changes in circumstances that offered new opportunities whether they were caused by the evolving situation in Iraq or Iraqis' own response to project initiatives. The original terms of reference (ToR) were amended several times to ensure clarity about changes

and the amendments were confirmed with the UNESCO managing team and recorded in the second and final reports from the BBC WST. The BBC WST produced a first and second interim report and a final report, along with appendices and supplementary information. The reports themselves are a model of clarity. Relations between the implementers were good, aided by the fact each had their own clear, defined objectives that did not overlap with the others. A number of joint and bilateral meetings were held By the BBC WST at their London headquarters with Albany and IREX as well as two joint meetings with the entire team.



*Senior Iraqi media representatives await the formal launch of the Code of Professional Conduct for Iraqi Media at a press conference in Amman, Jordan in March 2008 / ©UNESCO*

## Note on methodology

UNESCO wished to understand the following:

- Efficiency: Were the results achieved at a reasonable cost compared with alternative approaches to accomplishing the same objectives?
- Effectiveness: Has the project realized satisfactorily its stated objectives?
- Relevance: Are the project objectives still relevant? What is the added-value of the project in relation to other priority needs and efforts? Are the problems addressed still the major challenges?
- Impact: In what ways – socially, economically, politically, environmentally and attitudinally - has the program impacted the intended beneficiaries and other stakeholders? What are the social, economic, technical, environmental, and other effects on individuals, communities, and institutions – either short-, medium-, or long-term; intended or unintended; positive and negative; on a micro- or macro-level?
- Sustainability: Are the activities stated in the project sustainable after the cessation of donor support or a targeted effort such as a campaign, electoral and constitutional support, etc? Do the beneficiaries willingly to continue to support the program? Have the program recipient institutions and/or organizations developed the capacity and motivation to execute and administer similar programs? How far the activity can be self-sustained from domestic resources – financial, materials and human?

In order to answer these questions across each of the three project areas Global Partners looked at each activity through three distinct lenses – whether there was a congruence between the programmes overall goals, project objectives and the specific activities undertaken; what internal assessments and quality checks and means of verification were applied and whether there was any means of external verification.

### Explanatory note

Congruence is an ongoing process of assessing the degree to which each level of an organisation's activity correlates and fits with the other, how the goals shape the objectives and in turn determine activities and finally deliverables. The most common weakness in an organisation is that there is either no match between the deliverables on the ground and the higher level goals or no clear internal understanding of how they connect. More specifically, the organisation must understand how the deliverables relate to the programme activities – are they a practical translation of what the programme seeks to achieve; if successful will they do what is hoped for? In turn do the activities genuinely support the organization's objectives; are they the right fit? Is there a match between the activities and objectivities and the needs of the situation as determined by the overall diagnosis of the media environment? Finally there needs to be a logistical match between the deliverables and the objectives – if the organisation claims to be strengthening democracy by training 40 journalists, is this a reasonable claim to make or does it need to be more nuanced? Examining congruence will enable us to answer questions about **relevance** and **efficiency**.

The internal assessments and quality checks should focus on the deliverables and are likely to vary from project to project. When a project is designed the implementers should assess, for themselves, how effective are the proposed deliverables – what is the standard they are aiming for and how will they achieve this. A high quality training organisation will have a set of service standards that set out a process for determining the standard of service to be achieved, the policy required to support this and the accompanying evidence which demonstrates that the standard has been achieved. While service standards are common where activities are externally regulated (such as with public service provision at the national level) in this field there are relatively few agreed standards to draw upon. Another source for quality control is relevant international standards. One example is the ISAS standards for broadcasters and the press which provide individual media organisations with a robust methodology to improve their contribution to social development and to make their progress measurable and transparent. Understanding the process for internal quality control will help us answer questions of **effectiveness**.

Finally the external verification should assess how effective deliverables are in reality; on the ground, do they achieve objectives? This will require reference back to the UNESCO level diagnostic analysis of the particular environment and may involve qualitative measures – feedback from participants, interviews on the ground with stakeholders and quantitative measures involving data analysis and assessment. One of the significant problems here is the lack of reliable up to date publicly available data on media environments globally. Given the lack of reliable media data in Iraq this will be a significant risk in the project. Understanding the perceived impact will enable us to assess the **impact** of the work.

From an understanding of all three analytical tools we will be able to assess **sustainability**.

## **Analysis of Project activities**

### **A Legislative reform**

#### **Media legislation**

The media legislation element was conducted by Albany Associates, a company with considerable experience in the field of media legislative reform. They were able to draw upon the work of international experts in the course of the project. Albany organised a Media Development Workshop from 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> November 2007 in Amman, Jordan in conjunction with the Communications and Media Commission of Iraq (CMC), and UNESCO to discuss the legal and regulatory framework for the media.

The workshops addressed a variety of topics, including, independent regulation of the media, broadcasting codes of practice, laws and regulations that repress freedom of expression, and how to ensure that the Iraqi legal framework met international standards. The discussions also



included the Draft Law on Media and Telecommunications, and the future of CMC. As a follow-up activity, Albany Associates drafted policy papers on a proposed public rule-making process and regional advisory panels. The documents were delivered to and accepted by the CMC in February, and Albany was told that the CMC would press for their implementation.

Albany Associates subsequently learned that another workshop was taking place in Istanbul, where the World Bank and others were discussing a draft telecommunications law proposed by the Ministry of Communications. It appears that the draft law would remove some powers from the CMC, including the management and allocation of radio frequency spectrum. Albany sought clarification from the World Bank about these developments and suggested the World Bank contact the CMC. It does not appear that such contact took place.

Finally, UNESCO requested that Albany Associates complete unscheduled work on a new Kurdistan draft media law. This review was completed in November 2007 and submitted to UNESCO shortly thereafter. Shortly afterwards, Kurdish parliamentarians attempted to pass a media law that included changes not been seen or supported by the Kurdish Journalists' Syndicate, despite previous consultation on the bill.

#### Congruence: relevance and efficiency

In order to review existing laws and draft bills Albany conducted roundtables which brought senior level participation, including CMC management and staff, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Legal Advisor to the Prime Minister, the Head of the Shura Council, the Head and Deputy Head of the Parliamentary Legal Committee, the Head of the Parliamentary Media and Culture Committee, a number of other parliamentarians and over 35 directors general and editors in chief of important Iraqi media outlets. These were the key stakeholders whose support was necessary to deliver change. Gathering such a key group of people represented an efficient and relevant use of resources, thus meeting the evaluation criteria set by UNESCO.

The subsequent work for the CMC on public rule making and regional advisory panels was also timely and relevant, as were the comments on the proposed Kurdish media law (whose passage has been stalled by the president (see below). The CMC participants adopted the proposals arising from the workshops although further progress has been stalled by the subsequent failure to fill the position of Chair of the Commission (see below).

#### Internal assessment - effectiveness

Those participating in the workshops seem to have welcomed the opportunity and given positive feedback to the organizers. An obvious internal measure of success is that the majority of participants endorsed the following changes in line with the UNESCO objectives:

- Support for the independent regulatory structure embodied by the CMC;
- removal of criminal penalties from the draft Iraq media law;
- further dialogue on and input to development of the Code of Professional Conduct for Iraqi broadcast media (see below);
- the establishment of an Iraq-based media training institute;
- further work on legislation to support Iraqis' access to information.

The workshop proved to be an effective means of securing support for UNESCO's media reform objectives among the participants.

#### External verification – impact

Following the November 2007 workshops Albany Associates sought to promote awareness of the workshop proposals on a new media law. This was particularly important given an apparently competitive initiative from the Ministry of Communications and bearing in mind the number of separate drafts and comments on the law in circulation and no clear or cohesive strategy to push for amendment and passage through the parliament. Albany's discussions have discussed this with representatives from the World Bank and the US Department of State and Albany attended an Iraqi media support conference in Istanbul, Turkey, in May 2008, which endorsed the overall approach. However, no progress has yet been made in adopting the law. The Parliament has yet to prove itself an effective institution in provided legal oversight of public bodies and is currently (and perhaps understandably) pre occupied with issues such as the future of the Iraqi oil industry and the impasse over election laws. **One useful follow up might be to convene some small workshop of key parliamentarians – no more than ten - to push again for the passage of the media law.**

The policy papers dealing with a proposed public rule-making process and regional advisory panels for the CMC were accepted by the CMC in February 2008, and Albany understood that the CMC would press for their implementation. However on 18 April 2008 the term of the CEO of the CMC (Siyamend Othman) expired and he has not yet been replaced in accordance with the required appointment process. There is a committee in place in the CMC of department heads, but it is unlikely to try to establish new practices such as the PRPs and RAPs until there is a new CEO. There is a suggestion that Jowan Masum (former Minister of Communications, and likely to be supportive) may be chosen which may help move the process along. This will need to be monitored by UNESCO.

Following the Kurdish parliament's attempt to pass the media law critiqued by Albany, there was significant objections to the proposed law from within the Kurdish media community as well as extensive media coverage of the issue. Albany's review was provided to Kurdish journalists involved in the Code of Conduct initiative (see below) to support their lobbying efforts. At time of this report the President of Kurdistan had refused to pass the media law although it is not clear unclear how things will progress.

Overall the impact of the initiatives has been mitigated by circumstances outside of the control of the project, and which are wrapped up in the general political problems of Iraq. UNESCO's intervention in this area has been effective however – key players such as the US and the World Bank now recognise UNESCO's role, the principal stakeholders from the media, legislative and legal worlds have endorsed the approach suggested and the proposals are ready for implementation. The key challenges going forward are to urge the Iraqi parliament to pass the law and attend to its implementation.

**Unless continuing effort is invested in securing parliamentary support and maintaining the relationship with the CMC these activities will not be sustainable.**

## B Professionalism

A number of separate activities were conducted under the overall heading of increasing professionalism. These were a training needs assessment, the production of a media sustainability index (MSI) and the drafting of a professional Code of Conduct for journalists.

### The training needs assessment

The training needs assessment (TNA) sought the views of Iraqi and international stakeholders to understand their experience of previous training activities in order to understand which areas future training should focus on and how the training could be most effectively delivered. This was a different approach to that normally used where there is an analysis of existing skills and desired training outcomes. The TNA implementers took this approach because they felt that there was no consensus over the objectives of journalism training among the international providers and it was not been possible to determine any overall consensus by looking at past training initiatives. In addition it was not possible to visit media organisations in Iraq to assess the way they work, how they are resourced and their internal structure. Consequently the data available for TNA was limited to the opinions of those surveyed and the Project team's own monitoring of Iraq media output where this was available, mostly satellite television output available outside of Iraq.

### Congruence

The TNA was an obvious benchmarking tool in assessing the needs of the Iraqi media profession in achieving a higher degree of professionalism. In the years since 2003 there has been a substantial expansion in the numbers of Iraqi media outlets – hundreds of newspapers and many broadcast channels in contrast to the five state owned newspapers and single satellite channel that existed during the Ba'ath era. A major concern inside and outside of Iraq has the profusion of what observers have called “ethno-sectarian” media, often directly inciting violence against other members of the Iraqi community. There is a belief that encouraging greater professionalism can help address these concerns, although the fundamental problem is the character of Iraqi politics itself. But the development of more independent, balanced coverage might well reduce the impact of the most sectarian media outlets.

In all, the views of more than 2000 media professionals and academics were collected to inform the TNA. Views were solicited by email from the network of contacts built up by IREX Europe's Baghdad office and through the Code of Professional Conduct activities (see below). While the sample of journalists contacted was not random, the implementers attempted to consult as broadly as possible across the industry.

Against the background the commissioning of a TNA is both relevant and efficient. What is startling is that no such TNA has been available to international donors up until now (although the Institute of War and Peace Reporting undertook an initial assessment in mid 2003). Given the volume of training activities conducted since the fall of the regime in 2003 and the money spent, this is alarming. In the circumstances described by the implementers, the approach adopted was probably the one that was the most relevant and efficient.

#### Internal assessment – effectiveness

The implementers estimated that TNA reached 2000 media professionals and academics during the consultation period. There is no reliable data on how many practicing journalists there are in Iraq (some observers claim there may be as many as 10,000 self described journalists) – but this sample represents a sizeable bloc and, in the circumstances described, represents as broad a sample as could be expected. The key findings were:

- 88% of journalists either work without official contracts or are freelancers
- 32% of media managers are not working under contracts
- 54% of journalists and 32% of media managers are not proficient at using a computer, and
- 62% of journalists do not have computers at their work
- 88% of journalists considered international training courses they'd attended to be either poor or average.
- The most requested training was news writing, computer skills and foreign language training

The data seems to reflect accurately the views of those surveyed and was therefore an effective way of assessing training needs. The ultimate test of the effectiveness of this assessment is whether it is found to be useful in shaping future priorities.

#### External assessment – impact

While the report offers a wealth of material that could impact favourably on future training it needs to be made available to international donors and implementers to be really effective, which at the time of writing has not happened. If the report is not made available then its impact will be lost. **For this to be sustainable, and to influence future training activities, it must be distributed widely to all the international actors currently active in Iraq as well as the major implementing organisations.**



*Souad Jazairy, from the Iraqi Women Journalists Centre, signs the final version of the Code of Professional Conduct for Iraqi Media at a press conference in Amman, Jordan in March 2008 / @UNESCO*

### Media Sustainability Index

The Media Sustainability Index is a system IREX use to assess the media environment of a country. There is a standard format used by IREX since 2000 in nearly 40 countries. An IREX moderator hosts the panels where the panelists discuss a series of indicators on the state of the media which include:

1. Free speech
2. Professional journalism
3. Plurality of news sources
4. Business management
5. Supporting institutions

The moderator is responsible for recording the collective scores against each indicator as well as recording the discussion. The MSI narrative is then based on the panel discussions, which gives a context to the scoring on each indicator. The scoring allows longitudinal and regional comparisons to be made (i.e. against the MSI Iraq 2006, and between countries especially within regions). Because of the extremely unstable situation in Iraq, and particularly the level of threat against Iraqi journalists, compounded by a high turnover of staff within Iraqi media organisations and the departure/displacement of working journalists, only two of the 2007 panelists have acted as panelists for previous MSI.

#### Congruence – relevance and efficiency

The production of an updated MSI for Iraq appears to have been approved as a further benchmarking study that underpins the goal of achieving professionalism. It goes without saying that clear benchmarks are an important basis for improving professionalism – without them it will be difficult to understand if progress is being made. The MSI is one of a number of systems for analyzing a media environment. A recent study for UNESCO has found over twenty five systems for assessing media in operation. The MSI index represent one of the more comprehensive systems analysed by UNESCO, although like many others systems, its results are based on a panel of experts' subjective assessments of the various criteria. UNESCO's model of evaluation brings together and synthesizes all of the extant methodologies and points to a wide variety of potential data sources. Now that this has been adopted by the IPDC governing body it might be sensible in future to use UNESCO's own methodology to carry out baseline studies such as these.

#### Internal assessment – effectiveness

The MSI is a well established system applied in around 40 countries since its development. The assessment for 2007 showed a reduction in sustainability from 1.6 (out of 4) to 0.92 – a significant drop. Large drops were recorded for press freedom and media plurality and business management continued to be seen as very weak.

The panel used for the Iraq assessment comprised a total of more than 50 journalists, media managers, editors and civil society activists (including academics). One panel assessed the national scene and two others looked at the situation in both north and south. The methodology is clearly spelled out in the final report with an explanation of each indicator and the relevance of each score.

The bulk of the report consists of a narrative line, illustrated by comments and quotes from participants. It would benefit from a more distinct structure that's separated out data from the comments of the report's discussants – for example participants refer to the decline in the number of newspapers, or non ethno sectarian media outlets but it is difficult to put reliable numbers on this from the material presented in the report. When data is mentioned in the report, the reference is not sourced. For example there is a reference to private internet cafe

access costing 2,000 dinar (\$1.50) an hour, but without means of verification such facts are of limited value to researchers and policy makers. The overall impact of the MSI is therefore that it is perception based – useful as background to policy makers, as the participants are clearly aware of the situation in Iraq – but impressionistic nonetheless.

#### External assessment – impact

The MSI Media Sustainability Report produced with this programme's support has just been published on the IREX website and printed copies were handed over to IREX two weeks ago (27/28 September) in Baghdad for local distribution (copies have also been sent to the UNESCO office in Jordan and to the Paris headquarters of UNESCO). At this stage it is not possible to say what the impact will be as publication is very recent. A key indicator will be the extent to which other agencies use the findings of the report in shaping their own response to the media environment in Iraq. In future it might be sensible to ask organisations producing reports such as these how they intend to verify the impact of publishing in such an uncertain environment.

#### Capacity building through Code of Professional Conduct

The BBC WST, working with more than 70 Iraqi broadcast outlets either as workshop participants, meeting attendees or contributors produced a Code of Professional Conduct (referred to in the original documentation as a Code of Ethics). There have been several attempts to develop and implement codes of ethics over past years, although none have been widely adopted or adhered to. THE BBC WST tried to establish a development process that was "owned" by Iraqi journalists and participation was sought from senior editorial staff representing a cross-section of Iraqi media, across the full range of the country's political, religious and ethnic affiliations.

This component of the project began with a survey, in Arabic by e-mail which was designed to elicit views on a Code of Ethics for Iraqi broadcasters. Of more than 40 surveys sent out, the BBC WST received around 30 responses. These responses were assessed by the BBC WST's Project Director and the final list of participants in the Code workshop were selected on the basis of quality of survey responses balanced by the need to represent the broadest possible cross-section of Iraqi broadcast media.

The production of the Code itself involved broad based participation over two separate workshops. Once produced several participants across the country took the initiative to organise briefings within their own organisations as well as larger scale regional meetings to discuss the Code, its implications, and how it could be implemented both within individual organisations and right across the Iraqi media scene. The largest workshop was conducted at the headquarters of the Kurdish Journalists' Syndicate on 30 April 2008 and involved 30 journalists. A further initiative from the Code was the creation of a website [www.almihani.net](http://www.almihani.net) permitting both further consultation and networking. The BC WST provided some limited resources to facilitate the follow up meetings and the web-site.

In addition, as part of the Code of professional Conduct a safety Awareness Code was developed. The BBC WST brought in the International Federation of Journalists, a new organisation the Iraq Media Security Group (IMSG) and a security expert from the BBC High Risk Unit to run a one day session on safety awareness. The IMSG then assumed responsibility for both the safety code and to lead on promotion of the Code of Professional Conduct. Unfortunately turmoil in the IMSG seems to have prevented sustained follow up on the Safety Code.

#### Congruence – relevance and efficiency

The development of a professional code of conduct is a crucial element of self regulation and an important step on the path to enhanced professionalism. As such it sits well within UNESCO's objectives of improving professionalism. It is particularly important given the ethno-sectarian character of the Iraqi media referred to above and the need to establish clear and transparent professional standards as a counter weight to biased or inflammatory reporting.

#### Internal assessment – effectiveness

Internal assessments showed that participants in the process valued the opportunity to participate in the development of the Code while appreciating the input of the external facilitators. There was a useful feedback form which gathered the views of eleven participants. They were appreciative of the attempts to ensure a participatory and inclusive approach to the drafting of the Code and the organisation of the conference was complemented. The presence of follow up initiatives to promote discussion of the code, and a web-site, shows that the development process was effective.

#### External assessment – impact

Currently there is no broad based accepted journalist association so the impact of any professional code will depend upon the extent to which different groups of journalists are prepared to follow it up. Initially the follow up was entrusted to IMSG but this has gone through a leadership crisis and does not appear to have continued with relevant activities. The coordinator of the IMSG was removed from post after pressure from the Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate (IJS) who replaced him with a political appointment of their own. The BBC WST felt that the IJS influence over the IMSG presents a dilemma for the project and, more widely for Iraqi media organisations. There appears to be significant concern regarding the IJS' method of operation in Iraq, including allegations of corruption. Various organisations and media professionals have highlighted the restrictive nature of IJS' membership rules, and on occasion legitimate media organisations seem to have been refused membership. An option is to treat the Safety Code as an extension of the professional code of conduct and rely upon the general promotion of the latter for long term impact. However, this will need champions if it is to become widely accepted.



**At the moment this valuable work is not sustainable unless IMSG becomes functional or the work of ongoing promotion is delegated to another group.**

### C. Raising Awareness of freedom of expression and access to information

This third strand of the project was conducted by IREX through the organisation of three regional workshops designed to bring together senior journalists, public officials and others to help them become more effective advocates for freedom of expression and information. The first of the workshops tried to help participants develop practical strategies for promoting freedom of expression. Participation at this first workshop included those identified as leaders of subsequent workshops inside Iraq.

The first of these subsequent workshops was held in Erbil in February 2008, with participation from NGOs, journalists, government officials and members of parliament with around twenty participants. It focused on how to promote access to information. There was a draft law on access to information and its contents provided the basis for debate at the workshop. At the conclusion the participants created a coalition to lobby for better access to information (and stronger support for freedom of expression). This *Access to Information Coalition* (AIC) subsequently changed its name to G19. Following the Erbil workshop the G19 went on to use a small grant from IREX Europe under this project, as detailed below. The Basra workshop proved difficult to organise given the factional fighting in the south and the consequent pressure upon the media. This did not make for a positive environment to discuss greater access to information and it would be unrealistic to expect much of an outcome in these circumstances.

### Congruence - relevance and efficiency

The workshops were designed to provide practical strategies such that Iraqi participants may take away skills, ideas and experiences that they may directly apply on the ground in Iraq, rather than to promote specific laws or policies. This is consistent with the overarching goal of the project to promote awareness among parliamentarians and public officials. The key factor is the nature of the participants and how sustainable are the activities at the workshops. All workshops run the risk of being one off events with little follow-through – this is especially challenging in the field of advocacy which is so contingent upon opportunities and political factors out of the control of the participants. Three workshops is also a very limited number of people –perhaps less than fifty in total. While it makes sense to have an initial workshop in Amman to prepare people, ideally it would have been followed up with a wider range of advocacy activities internally.

### Internal assessment – effectiveness

Feedback on the workshops was positive in Amman and the Erbil workshop produced an initiative to continue to lobby for access to information and freedom of expression. Basra seemed to have been dominated by the factional fighting and, for those external reasons it is not clear if the workshop was seen to be effective. **In the circumstances it may have made**

**more sense to focus resources where they can be effective – in this case in the Kurdish north, rather than trying to organise a workshop in the south during an upsurge in factional fighting.**

#### External assessment - impact

Workshops have limited value in promoting awareness of key values unless they are part of an on going programme of activity. It goes without saying that Iraq presents almost unique challenges in the world today and given the precariousness of day to day life, the economic and physical insecurity, and the internal divisions, creating awareness of the importance of free expression and access to information would always be a challenge. The principal follow up activity was the commissioning of three journalists to produce series of media outputs linking access to information and freedom of expression to democratic and economic development – the logic, presumably, being that this would root an understanding of these key rights in more day to day concerns. There is some evidence supplied by the BBC WST, that there was interest in the product, with articles and wider radio coverage secured. It is not possible to assess the impact of this coverage in the absence of any tracking data or audience survey.

#### Public information campaigns

The final activity in the programme was a workshop for heads of news and programming designed to show how to conduct a public information campaign, an activity linked to the promotion of the Code of Conduct. This was included following a revision of the terms of reference. The course was attended by 23 representatives from Iraqi televisions and radio stations that work inside and outside Iraq; all had been actively involved in the Code of Conduct initiative. It was delivered by an experienced political reporter, with translation and content support from the BBC WST project team. The aim was to encourage participants to develop campaigns in support of the Code on return to their media organisations. This would perform the dual purposes of raising awareness of the Code and its purpose, and promoting stations' own journalistic values to their audiences.

It was planned that a cash prize would be awarded to the best campaign (or several campaigns) based on the Code and broadcast within a certain time limit. However, only seven entries were received and one of these was disqualified. As a result all entries that fulfilled the required criteria received a cash prize and subsidiary awards were made to those who made a specific effort at promoting the code.

An additional activity under this heading was a small grants programme of \$12,000 run by IREX. Three journalists were commissioned to prepare and publish a series of media outputs (articles, radio interviews etc) that highlighted the importance of freedom of expression and access to information. The journalists were selected from participants at the IREX workshops (mentioned above)

### Congruence – relevance and efficiency

This was a late addition to the programme of activities but a logical addition given that it would encourage promotion of the already agreed code to a wider audience and strengthen journalistic values. By gathering heads of news and programming the right decision makers were brought to the table. The cash prizes offered were relatively modest – which may account for the low take up, although to offer more would not have been an efficient use of resources.

The commissioning of direct media content production by IREX obviously creates short term publicity for the issues of freedom of expression and access to information. Content ranged from articles to radio pieces and resulted in wide coverage as well as a plan by one Iraqi paper to combine all of these into a book.

### Internal assessment – effectiveness

The training was well conducted by an experienced UK BBC journalist and seems to have been well received by the participants. The take up of the competition for cash prizes was obviously disappointing and there was no evidence presented to explain the low take up. It may reflect lack of incentive, difficulties of comprehension or even a sense among participants that given the challenges facing the Iraqi media this was a comparatively low priority. Some of the subsequent programming does however appear to have reached a broader audience

### External assessment – impact

A programme with one seminar cannot have a long lasting impact nor can one competition. If it were possible to institutionalize the prize and make it prestigious, a source of professional pride, then the impact would be more sustainable. The organizers say that the award scheme, despite its low participation rate, did result in a number of articles and radio stories throughout Iraq but without sustained follow up it will not be possible to assess any long term impact. One encouraging feature of the project however, is that during subsequent unrelated events, such as a conference on Media and Conflict in Iraq, hosted by the United States Institute of Peace in Istanbul, Iraqi media participants appeared to have accepted the broad premises of the Code.

The impact of content production can be seen as both short and long term. In the short term funding content will produce positive outcomes in that the desired coverage will occur but its long term sustainability is more questionable as it is not clear what the audience of professional imperative is to produce the material without subsidy.



*Emad Al-Khafaji, an independent Iraqi journalist and Chair of the Code drafting team, signs the final version of the Code of Professional Conduct for Iraqi Media at a press conference in Amman, Jordan in March 2008 / ©UNESCO*

## **General Conclusions**

UNESCO has asked for general conclusions on a number of issues.

### **Project implementation**

The overall project implementation worked well. UNESCO leadership was clear and with the BBC WST worked very professionally and ran an effective overall system of project management, liaising with the other partners who each had discrete task to carry out. There were considerable advantages to UNESCO in designating a lead agency and devolving operational responsibility within the project to them. This approach provided clear lines of communication, the ability to respond flexibly and devolved the management burden - in projects requiring a multi skilled approach this should be adopted in future. The programme was delivered on time and to budget.

Having a UNESCO staff member in regular contact with the BBC WST project management team also helped considerably. The role of the UNESCO Project Manager was remarked upon by the consortium, who noted her understanding of Iraqi media issues, and her flexibility when working with the project team as events in Iraq changed priorities. The terms of reference were amended several times in response to these shifting priorities. Sometimes the change came from UNESCO's desire to respond to events and sometimes because the project implementers needed to be flexible in delivering the overall objectives. In the specific circumstances of Iraq, with all its uncertainties this is a positive aspect of the project - nothing running over a lengthy period of time in an atmosphere of such complexity is likely to be effective if it has to run on rigid lines that may have been agreed many months before implementation even begins.

The main activities that need to be followed up are the publication and dissemination of the training assessment, and dissemination of the Media Sustainability Index.

### **Cooperation between partners**

This was partially successful - the relationship between Albany and BBC WST was straightforward given that Albany were tasked with the discrete element of institutional and legal reform. The main output of the IREX involvement was the production of an updated Media Sustainability Index (although at the time of review it has still not been published). This was an existing product and not designed specifically for the project so UNESCO's role appears more to have been a grant funder for an existing methodology rather than providing something unique. Given that the IPDC committee of UNESCO has developed its own methodology for assessing media development – one that UNDP is now considering applying to Iraq – it might have been consistent for UNESCO to commission a media development report that applied its own approach.

There was no apparent contact between Albany and IREX for the duration of the project – communications ran through the BBC World Service Trust. Whether the project would have benefitted for the creation of project team drawn from all organisations (given their geographic dispersal) is an open question. My own view is that it could have provided synergies that would have benefitted the awareness raising elements of the programme – as it was two separate sets of workshops were organised (with distinct purposes) that might have benefitted from greater integration.

### **UNESCO's role as lead agency**

Overall, UNESCO provided effective leadership for the duration of the project. The challenge going forward is that the continuing uncertainty over levels of funding, combined with the need to bid for projects, makes continuity hard to achieve. The crucial task for any agency is to build continuity between programmes, so that the achievements of this cycle reinforce future programmes, rather than managing a series of different initiatives. Any outputs, particularly baseline studies of the kind produced by this project should be published and built upon.

## **Were programme objectives obtained over time?**

The project delivered its outcomes on time and to budget which is to the credit of both UNESCO and the lead sub-contractor. Looking at project outcomes, the picture is more mixed – some clear successes and some potential identified but not yet fully realised.

The legal elements were achieved and there is a need to follow through on the legal reform programme, particularly in sustaining pressure on the parliamentary process and in sustaining a co-operative relationship with the CMC, where it is crucial to maintain and strengthen links.

The capacity building activities were also achieved – the Code of Conduct is an excellent piece of work that can strengthen journalists' capacity in Iraq. There was a heavy investment in baseline studies – both the TNA and MSI. These, in and of themselves, do not build capacity. It is only when they are distributed, promoted and used that their effect becomes tangible. This will require follow up work by UNESCO in Iraq.

The awareness raising activities were more fragmented and had limited success. Awareness raising is somewhat nebulous and simply running workshops is no guarantee of success. While there was evidence of some impact upon a smaller group of targeted beneficiaries – media organisations themselves – I saw no evidence of any wider impact.

It should be noted that UNDP Iraq is also seeking to raise funds for a significant media development programme and it would be very important for that programme to be able to draw upon the results of this UNESCO project.

## **Impact on target clientele**

The impact upon the target beneficiaries was achieved. There was a good range of participation in the different workshops. The legal and policy workshops brought together the key domestic and international players in the field and the production of various policy documents relating to the draft law clearly had an impact, as did the side project focused upon the Kurdish north. The professional Code of Conduct certainly had a significant impact on the participants, as demonstrated by some of the promotional work undertaken subsequently – producing some direct effects. Networks were established but it is evident that they will need longer term resourcing to survive and be fruitful.

## **Capacity building effect on recipients**

The project was successful in creating greater professional capacity among the Iraqi journalist community, although it is always difficult to assess the long term sustainability of any project conducted in Iraq. In the long run, changes to law and policy will endure and have an impact and therefore represent tangible results from investment. There is now an effective and positive Code of Conduct for journalists that has been produced by a domestic Iraqi determined process and which is available for widespread use.

The participants were generally very positive about the experience of the various workshops. A cautionary note here is that views expressed in response to the organizers are usually positive - cultures of hospitality and generosity are often reluctant to express negative views to the host. It is important therefore to provide independent focus group checks upon the activities to ensure that they genuinely build capacity.

## **Future improvements – content, methodology, co-operation, activities and summary of recommendations**

In terms of content the emphasis on ongoing legal, policy and institutional reform is crucial and has a clear focus. The parliamentary processes in Iraq are slow and in recent times other things have been of higher priority in the legislative pipeline--like oil and elections laws (understandably). An extremely useful activity for UNESCO going forward would be to convene small workshops of key parliamentarians--10 or so--to continue to push for the passage of the CMC and IMN laws to provide ongoing momentum. Consistent steady pressure for change is more effective than short bursts of disconnected activity.

Going forward it will be important to ensure that future training programmes reflect the needs assessment that has been produced and the document should be a baseline for future implementers as well as being circulated to other UN agencies such as UNDP. This project, like many others before it has created embryonic networks of contacts – the real challenge is to ensure that these networks are nurtured in the future. All the evidence shows that improved professionalism comes about primarily through self imposed pressure from the journalists themselves. The key here is to have a sharp identification of the incentives for change. Incentivizing change is the most important task in any programme of reform – while there is a benefit in bringing in external trainers and developing standards based on experience elsewhere, the specific circumstances of Iraq will always require the development of an internal driver of change. This will have two aspects, the development of a coherent sense of what the higher standards should be and effective internal networks that allow the circulation of change and good examples that drive altered behaviour. In this sense the awarding of prizes was a useful step, although it was disappointing that so few entered for reasons that were not identified.

The third objective of the programme, to raise awareness of the importance of freedom of expression, is by its very nature somewhat intangible even given the promotion of these values in the Iraqi media. There is, as yet, little research on viewing and listening habits or the degree to which material that is broadcast has any impact. Anecdotally many Iraqis see to switch very rapidly between channels which may militate against content of any length producing a significant impact. Short of detailed surveys conducted at the beginning and end of the project, a realistic assessment of progress made is difficult. Given the limitations assessment of success depends upon the quality of participants at the workshops, and their own assessment as to the value of the events themselves.

The approach to evaluation varied across the project as a whole. In some cases detailed evaluations were conducted, in others not so. This raises a more general point about the internal ongoing evaluation of programme activities. In some cases feedback was solicited and in others inferred. In future it would be sensible to have both structured feedback forms and a focus group of participants at the end to evaluate the workshop itself and the goals, project methodologies etc. This approach has been applied successfully by projects sponsored by private foundations and it enables participants to feed into the project design in a more focused way than informal conversations. It could be made a mandatory requirement for projects in the future.

Finally the level of cooperation varied during the course of the project. Partnerships are the most effective way of combining skills and having a professional lead partner is the most effective structure from UNESCO's point of view. In future UNESCO could consider insisting that there is a project team of all the sub contractors who do not just meet regularly but look at their respective activities side by side and search for potential synergies and ways of combining activities effectively. This is difficult to achieve given the competitive nature of suppliers, including NGOs but co-operation should always be looked for rather than competition and UNESCO could consider favouring those organisations willing to co-operate with each other.



## Recommendations

- UNESCO should consider convening a series of small workshops bringing together key parliamentarians (no more than ten or so) to urge the passage of the media law. This is an area of potential collaboration with other UN agencies such as UNDP. Working relations with the CMC should be continued and forms of co-operation identified.
- The Training Needs Assessment should be distributed widely to all the international actors currently active in Iraq as well as the major implementing organisations in order for this activity to be sustainable, and to influence future training activities.
- Sub-contractors should be asked to form a project team that directs and plans programme activities and the relevant UNESCO staff member should oversight over the team as a whole, not just the lead contractor.
- Part of the programme's success was that new objectives were identified and acted upon rapidly. This flexibility should be a regular part of future programme planning. If, for example, the security situation deteriorates suddenly in one part of the country, making activities very difficult, there should be the flexibility to switch the target of activity to where the funds can be spent effectively.
- All future workshops should a system of structured feedback with a confidential focus group at the conclusion of each workshop.
- Follow up work on the Code of Conduct needs to be instituted - at the moment this valuable work is not sustainable unless IMSG becomes functional or the work of ongoing promotion is delegated to another group
- In future it might be useful to identify external evaluators at the beginning of a project so they can fully assess baseline starting points as well as outcomes and have oversight as the project develops
- Consideration should also be given to the nature of the baseline studies that are required at the commencement of the project.

Finally I would thank all of those who have contributed to production of this report, particularly the UNESCO staff who have been helpful and the staff of the implementing agencies who have given their time so freely.

Andrew Puddephatt, December 2008