



Quarterly Progress Report Women Power in Politics Program Iraq

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Scope of Work

Goal 1: More women in leadership positions in parliament and federal government

Outcome A: Female aspirants are skilled and confident candidates in the election campaign

Output 1: 816 female election candidates in all 18 governorates of Iraq have been trained and supported in the run-up of the federal parliamentary elections

Activities 1 (Capacity building and assistance to female aspirants):

- 1.0. Preparatory meeting for training of trainers
- 1.1. Training of trainers
- 1.2. Local seminars for basic skills
- 1.3. Assistance during elections

Output 2: 311 high potential female candidates have received intense capacity building and support, and are connected with civil society at grassroots level

Activities 2 (Capacity building and assistance to high potentials):

- 2.0. Training of trainers
- 2.1. Selection of high potentials
- 2.2. Support to trainers
- 2.3. Advanced trainings and networking sessions for high potentials
- 2.4. Practical support to high potentials

Outcome C: Female representatives in parliament and federal government are more effective leaders who can promote women's rights, and engage in grassroots outreach

Output 3: 40-50 elected female members of parliament have received long-term support and assistance until almost a year after the elections

Activities 3 (Long term assistance to female MPs):

- 3.1. Training of trainers
- 3.2. Continuous support to female MPs and institutions
- 3.3. Advanced training workshops to elected MPs in Baghdad or elsewhere
- 3.4. Advanced training workshops to elected MPs in Erbil or elsewhere
- 3.5. Exchange with MPs from the Netherlands
- 3.6. Meetings to create more support from civil society

Outcome B: Political parties show more gender sensitivity by offering women's leadership training and women's support programs, and appointing more women in influential positions

Output 4: 8-15 political parties received information and support on engaging women on influential positions, offering women leadership training and gender support programs

Activities 4 (Engagement of political parties):

- 4.1. Discussion and educational meetings with Iraqi political parties
- 4.2. Exchange with Dutch political parties
- 4.3. Training and engagement of high potentials in influencing parties

Goal 2: Legislation and environment that is supportive of women's rights

Outcome C: Female representatives are more effective leaders who can promote a legislative agenda, supportive of women's rights, and engage in grassroots outreach (see also under goal 1)

Outcome D: Media have more attention for female politicians and their contributions to politics, show more balanced media coverage of female politicians

Output 5: The wider public (voters), authorities and other stakeholders have received balanced and correct information about the contribution of women to the democratic development of the country

Activities 5 (Awareness raising and education of voters):

- 5.1. Regional stakeholder conferences
- 5.2. Local community meetings for direct awareness raising
- 5.3. Engaging and informing influential media and journalists
- 5.4. Workshop with journalists and media professionals
- 5.5. Regular news releases about WPP program and female politicians
- 5.6. Conference to share results of the WPP program and of research

Summary

During the past quarter, we did mostly preparatory work, awaiting the slow developments in the new federal Parliament. One of the concrete results of our work is that a pool of nine local trainers/counselors is ready to support the new-coming female MPs, so these MPs can fulfill their role more effectively and with more self-confidence. Another concrete result is the agreement with the new Speaker of Parliament (Mr Salim Al-Jabouri) to ensure the Parliament's support to the WPP program. Furthermore, the preparations were done for the direct training series to new-coming female MPs and the exchange between Iraqi and Dutch MPs and party representatives, as well as for the Mid-Term Review. Most of the prepared activities will be realized in the following quarter.

The main obstacles that we faced for the realization of our program (and the insights that they gave us):

- the slow pace in which the new Parliament started to operate from July 2014 on (we realized that we need to be patient with the Parliament, but in the meantime explore all possible alternative ways to get the info we need to realize the program);
- the nominal under-representation of women in the new Parliament and the new government (this made us realize even more that our work is very relevant and there is still a lot to be done, because we are far from where we want to be);
- the safety situation in Iraq, the expansion of the Islamic State, the military operations, the general crisis situation in Iraq and the negative trend in terms of women's participation in the public sphere which have their effects on the lives of ordinary Iraqi citizens, including people who are involved in the WPP program (we realize that we work in a fragile environment, so we have to follow the situation closely and adapt a flexible approach if an emergency situation would occur);
- the fluctuating tensions between the federal government in Baghdad and the regional Kurdish government in Erbil (we realize that the relations between the rulers in Baghdad and Erbil are fragile, so we need to continue looking for alternative locations for in-person events).

Context: Relevant Developments

The new Parliament started to work during the past quarter, which was a crucial step for the post-election phase of our WPP program. The first session of the new Council of Representatives (the federal Parliament) was held on July 1st 2014, only for the oaths of the Members of Parliament. The political parties and blocs then started to nominate candidates for the Speaker of Parliament, the President and the Prime Minister, as well as their deputies, following a strict divisional system ¹. Salim Al-Jabouri became the new Speaker of Parliament (succeeding Osama Al-Nujaifi), Fuad Massoum the new President of Iraq (succeeding Jalal Talabani) and Haidar Al-Abadi the new Prime Minister (succeeding Nuri Al-Maliki). The candidacy of Salim Al-Jabouri as the new Speaker of Parliament was initially problematic due to pending terrorism charges against him, but he was announced not-guilty and appointed as Speaker. In a meeting with Al-Amal, this new Speaker of Parliament expressed his support to the WPP program and confirmed this by signing an agreement, which was another important step for our program.

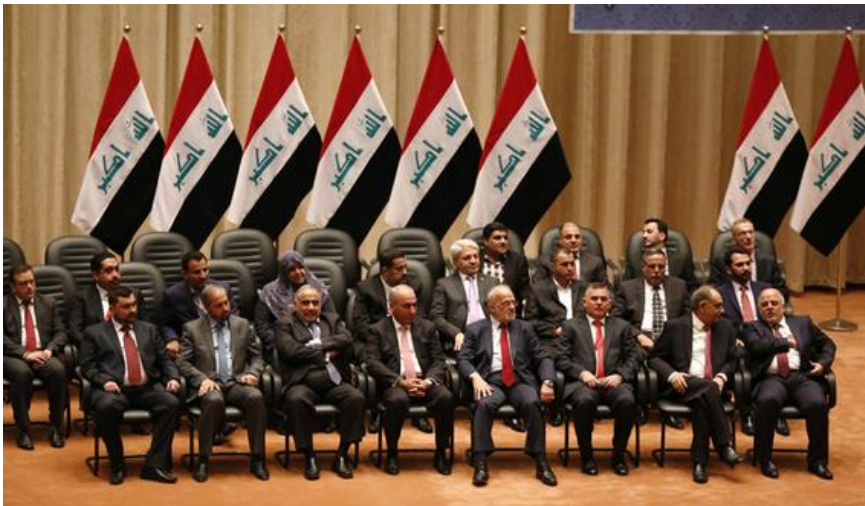
The members of the Parliamentary Committees were not yet approved by Parliament during the past quarter, which was an obstacle for realizing the WPP program, because the Parliamentary Committees are important entries for working with female MPs, especially the Civil Society Committee and the Women's Affairs Committee. Alternative efforts to get the names and contact details of the new-coming female MPs did not lead to concrete results during the past quarter.

On September 8th Prime Minister Haidar Al-Abadi presented his Council of Ministers, and the Parliament approved his governmental program and all 35 proposed ministers the same day. The ministers of Defence and Internal Affairs -two delicate appointments- and some other ministries ² were filled in later, on October 18th. Women were disappointingly under-represented in the new Council of Ministers, presented in September, as only one female minister had been appointed: Adila Hammoud (Shiite) as minister of Health (see the photo below). We considered this as a very important negative development for the WPP program as one of its objectives is to get more women in leadership positions in Parliament and government. On September 11th, the Iraqi Women's Network, with Al-Amal as one of its leading members, issued a statement renewing their claims to grant the legitimate rights of Iraqi women in decision-making

¹ The sectarian division of the main positions: (1) the Speaker of Parliament should be Sunni, the first vice Speaker Shiite and the second vice Speaker Kurdish, (2) the Prime Minister should be Shiite and the two vice PMs Sunni and Kurdish, (3) the President of Iraq should be Kurdish and the two vice Presidents Shiite and Sunni. Eventually, PM Haidar Al-Abadi appointed three deputy Prime Ministers: Hoshyar Zebari (Kurdish), Saleh al-Mutlaq (Sunni) and Bahaa Al-Araji (a Shiite from the Sadrist Bloc).

² Including Ms Bayan Nouri (Kurdish) as Minister of Women's Affairs.

positions. A group of female MPs, with Rehab Al-Abboudh as spokesperson, organized a press conference in the Parliament building at the same day (September 11th), to demand more women in government ³.



Presentation of the new Council of Ministers in Parliament on September 8th 2014, with only one woman: Minister of Health Adila Hammoud.

Meanwhile, the fighting intensified, with first further expansion of the Islamic State and -in reaction to this- renewed military interventions from foreign troops on Iraqi territory. Gross human rights violations were being reported on almost a daily basis. The image of ISIS is one of extreme terror, including mass executions, ethnic cleansing, slavery, physical punishment including decaptivation and stoning, and rape, and this image is kept vivid by the ISIS's own propaganda machine, as well as by its opponents. The past quarter showed a further deterioration of women's rights in Iraq, as more restrictions are being imposed on women's and girls' participation in the public spheres (education, employment, decision-making, etc.). A new flux of internally displaced persons (some 2 million IDPs till now) lead to a new humanitarian crisis. These developments had a negative effect on the WPP program in general, as some trainers and regional coordinators from the pre-election phase became IDPs themselves and the insecurity reduced the mobility of people inside Iraq, even inside Baghdad, but no activities were put on hold due to this. Also, the negative trend in terms of women's participation touches the very soul of the WPP program. It should be emphasized that the country was de facto divided in three parts: Iraqi Kurdistan, the Caliphate of the Islamic State (united with the North-Eastern part of Syria) and the remaining parts of 'federal Iraq'. The expansion of the Islamic State and the weakness of the federal Iraqi state initially encouraged the Kurdish dream of independence, but the wake-up call came when ISIS fighters invaded Kurdish territory and attempted to take Erbil in August 2014. The Kurdish security forces were too poorly armed and were depending on military support from abroad to avoid ISIS occupation. Because the relations between the federal government in Baghdad and the regional Kurdish government in Erbil were being challenged, this first lead to increasing tensions. At the moment, the relations seem to improve again. Nevertheless, during the past quarter, Erbil was gradually becoming a less suitable location for in-person training and exchanges in the framework of the WPP program.

Program Progress by Program Objectives

Program Objective #1: Compared to the current situation, more women will be in leadership positions in parliament and national/federal government.

³ At the press conference, this group stated that "We are a group of members of the House of Representatives that have sent an official letters to the heads of the Republic and the House of Representatives and Minister-designate to form the government, to demand that women be given the right to the assumption of the ministries and sovereign agencies, civilian, military and diplomatic sites".

Significant program activities related to PO #1 during past quarter ⁴:

In the past quarter, **9 trainers were selected** for the post-election stage of support to new-coming female MPs, and **trained in a training of trainers (TOT)** in Erbil in August 2014. These 9 people (4 women, 5 men) were mainly selected on basis of the qualities and dedication they had shown in the pre-election stage, while at the same time we aimed to create a balanced group in terms of gender and geographical basis. We succeeded in this aim, to our estimation. Annex 1 (Trainers of Post Election Stage) shows the result of this selection process.

The 3-day TOT focused on (1) practical and legal procedures for legislation in the Iraqi Parliament, and (2) self-management and facilitation skills. The trainers of trainers for the first part were Amir Al-Kinani ⁵ and Hadi Aziz ⁶ (both as volunteers, so unpaid), and the trainer of trainer for the second part was Ala Moatasim Ali ⁷ (not paid from the WPP program either). As a result of the TOT, this pool of trainers/counselors for the post-election stage was ready to support the new-coming female MPs in the federal Parliament, so the MPs can fulfill their role more effectively and with more self-confidence.

It should be emphasized that this TOT took place in Erbil at the moment that ISIS fighters had invaded Kurdish territory and attempted to take Erbil. Soon afterwards, US forces started air strikes against ISIS positions. After an assessment of the security risks, we decided to continue this TOT, follow the situation closely and adapt a flexible approach if an emergency situation would occur.

Furthermore, **preparations for the direct training to MPs** were done, for the training series to be conducted in the 4th quarter of 2014. For this, we have been discussing cooperation with Women Democracy Network, UN Women and various Iraqi experts, judges and MPs. Also cooperation with the National Democratic Institute was explored. Calls for international trainers on women's leadership and communication, as well as on conflict management, were disseminated in July 2014, which lead to reactions from Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan, and Tunisia. The direct aim of these trainings is to enable the new-coming female MPs to fulfill their role in Parliament more effectively and with more self-confidence. On the longer run, the aim is to enable female representatives in Parliament to be more effective leaders who can promote women's rights and engage in grassroots outreach. For that reason, the topics of these trainings to MPs are (a) gender equality, gender sensitivity, gender responsible budgeting, (b) women's leadership, communication skills, facilitation and conflict management, and (c) structures, procedures, rules, and bylaws of the parliament (including exchange with and mentoring by experienced Iraqi MPs). Preparatory work to organise training in Lebanon was stopped when DRL made clear not to agree with training outside Iraq ⁸.

The **preparations for the exchange between Iraqi and Dutch MPs and party representatives** were ongoing during the past quarter as well, for the actual exchange to be realized in the 4th quarter of 2014 or the 1st quarter of 2015. In this field, we are cooperating with three political parties in the Netherlands (Liberal Party VVD, Labour Party PvdA and Christian-Democratic Party CDA) ⁹ and with the Speaker of Parliament in Iraq. An agreement with Salim Al-Jabouri was signed on August 18th 2014 (see Annex 2: Agreement with Speaker of Parliament – both the Arabic original and the English translation). The exchange with the Dutch MPs aims to develop skills for effective leadership and building strategic partnerships among the new-coming female MPs in Iraqi Parliament. An additional aim is that the Dutch (female) MPs will also function as role models for the Iraqi female MPs. The aim of the exchange between the party representatives from Iraq and the Netherlands (simultaneously with the exchange of MPs) is to encourage and help the Iraqi political parties to develop strategies to support women's leadership in their own circles. On the longer, we want Iraqi political parties to show more gender sensitivity by offering women's leadership training and women's support programmes, and also by appointing more women in influential and leadership positions.

⁴ The capacity building and assistance to female aspirants, as well as to high potential election candidates, took place in the pre-election stage of this program and is therefore left out of sight in this quarterly report July-September 2014.

⁵ Mr Amir Al-Kinani, who has an MA in Law, occupied the position of vice president of the Legal Committee in the Iraqi Parliament. He represents the Sadiri movement.

⁶ Mr Hadi Aziz, who is a judge, is one of the most important legal experts in Iraq, specialized in constitutional issues.

⁷ Ms Ala Moatasim Ali, a member of Al-Amal in Erbil, is a professional trainer. She has an MA in Conflict Management and studied Self-Management Sciences.

⁸ In the previous quarterly report, we had mentioned that we intended to adopt a flexible approach concerning the exact locations of the workshops, as Baghdad may not be safe at the chosen moment and the status of Erbil unclear, so we had Beirut in mind as alternative location. DRL did not agree.

⁹ The Dutch cabinet exists of a coalition of Liberal Party (VVD) and Labour Party (PvdA). Prime Minister Mark Rutte is leader of the Liberal Party.

These are important steps, because women are under-represented in the new government and relatively also in the new Parliament (because although a quarter of the female MPs have gained their seats on basis of majority votes, this did not lead to more women in the new Parliament than just the required quota of 25%). In September, Al-Amal and the Iraqi Women's Network expressed our concerns about this and renewed the demand for more women on decision-making positions. This nominal under-representation of women may not be solved on short term, but on longer term, we see this as a need and challenge to improve the capacities of female politicians. The preparatory work for this has been done in the past quarter and the actual trainings and exchanges will be realized in the following quarters. In that context, it is extremely annoying that during the past quarter we have not managed to get a complete list of names and contact details of the new-coming female MPs. The members of the Parliamentary Committees were not yet approved by Parliament (important entries for working with female MPs). Alternative efforts to get the names and contact details of the new-coming female MPs did not lead to concrete results during the past quarter ¹⁰.

Key successes/outcomes related to PO #1 during past quarter:

- A pool of trainers/counselors for the post-election stage is ready to support the new-coming female MPs in the federal Parliament, so these MPs can fulfill their role more effectively and with more self-confidence;
- Direct trainings to new-coming female MPs were prepared (training series to be conducted in the 4th quarter of 2014) with the aim to enable these MPs to fulfill their role in Parliament more effectively and with more self-confidence, and on the longer run to enable them to be more effective leaders who can promote women's rights and engage in grassroots outreach;
- The exchange between Iraqi and Dutch MPs and party representatives was prepared (actual exchange to be realized in the 4th quarter of 2014 or the 1st quarter of 2015) with the aim to develop skills for effective leadership and building strategic partnerships among the new-coming female MPs, to have Dutch female MPs as role models for Iraqi female MPs, and to encourage and help Iraqi political parties to develop strategies to support women's leadership in their own circles – and on the longer, to encourage Iraqi political parties to show more gender sensitivity by offering women's leadership training and women's support programmes, and also by appointing more women in influential and leadership positions;
- An agreement with the Speaker of Parliament Salim Al-Jabouri was signed, to ensure support to the WPP program.

Program Objective #2: Legislation and an environment that is supportive of women's rights.

Significant program activities related to PO #2 during past quarter ¹¹:

No significant steps in this field were realized.

Significant other program activities during past quarter:

The preparations for the Mid-Term Review were ongoing during this quarter, to be conducted in the 4th quarter of 2014. A terms of reference had been agreed upon with DRL, after having processed the feedback from DRL, and a call for applications was widely disseminated (deadline for reactions: 15 October 2014). The aim of this Mid-Term Review is to evaluate the results of the program in the first stage and to formulate recommendations for improvement of specific aspects or corrective actions, if necessary. The Mid-Term Review will focus on: (1) progress in implementation of the WPP program, (2) quality and relevance of the WPP program, and (3) effectiveness and impact of the WPP program. The report of the review will be available in the 4th quarter of 2014.

The further revision of the Scope of Work, Monitoring & Evaluation Scheme and budget of the WPP program took place in the past quarter as well, based on the feedback from DRL, to be finalized on short term now.

¹⁰ We met with Mr Salam Mohammed, General Director of Outreach Directory of the Iraqi Parliament, who promised to send us the names and contact details of the new-coming female MPs so we would be able to contact them directly, but we did not receive this info during the past quarter.

¹¹ The regional stakeholders conferences, the local community meetings, the work with media and training of journalists/media workers took place in the pre-election phase of this program and are therefore not included in this report.

Key successes/outcomes related to other activities during past quarter:

- The Mid-Term Review was prepared and a call for applications was widely disseminated (MTR to be conducted in the 4th quarter of 2014);
- The Scope of Work, Monitoring & Evaluation Scheme and budget of the WPP program were further adapted (to be finalized on short term).

Profile

Ms Zahra' Faisal (25) studied law and works in her daily life as a human rights activist and provides legal counselling to women in her province, Dhi Qar, in the south of Iraq. Zahra' has witnessed the many social and legal constraints that women face in their daily lives in Iraq. She was lucky herself to have grown up in a family that gave her the opportunity to pursue her ambitions and do something to support women who are excluded from social and political life.



“Constraints come more from society and specifically from traditional political parties. They often forbid women from attending any public rallies and meetings”. Her motivation to become an activist started at an early age in 2003 when she personally experienced what conservatism does to the position of women. “I was forced to wear the hijab; others were deprived of access to education, forced to marry and suffered other forms of social or economic exclusion.” Although it may be a long time before changes become visible in society, Zahra' is not pessimistic. “If you look at the needs of today's women in Iraq, we have to build up their self-confidence and empower them to be able to resist the conservative and traditional mind-set.” Hopefully, she said, the women MPs who entered parliament after Iraq's last elections can become a role model and open doors for others. Zahra' has some advice for the newly-elected women: “Advocate strongly for women's issues in parliament, be authentic defenders of the constitution and foremost, don't let yourself be intimidated by political parties!”

Ms Zahra' Faisal Abd Obdeh was Regional Coordinator of the Women Power in Politics Program in Dhi Qar province.

Updated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

See the updated M&E Plan in the Annex 3 to this report (Annex 3: Updated M&E Plan).

Challenges and Lessons Learned

One of the main obstacles for the realization of the post-election stage of the WPP program is the **slow pace in which the new Parliament started to operate**. As a result, we have not been able to get a complete overview of the new-coming female MPs, with their contact details, in time (also not via alternative channels). The composition and preparation of the pool of nine trainers/counselors (who participated in a training of trainers in August) could be completed during the past quarter and they are ready to start working with the new-coming female MPs, but this actual work with the MPs, as well as the training to the MPs and the exchanges had to be postponed. We have to be patient, but besides the official route with the Parliament, we will continue to explore alternative channels to be able to contact new-coming female MPs directly. On the positive side, it should be mentioned that the governmental program and the council of ministers was formed and approved rapidly. The **main lesson learned** in this context: we need to be patient with the Parliament, but in the meantime explore all possible alternative ways to get the info we need to realize the program.

The **nominal under-representation of women in the new Parliament and the new government** is a major challenge in terms of achieving one of our program objectives to get more women in leadership positions in Parliament and government (we consider women to be under-represented in the new

Parliament, because although 22 of the 83 female MPs have gained their seats on basis of majority votes –4.5 times more than in the previous parliamentary elections of 2010– this did not lead to more women in the new Parliament than 83, exactly following the 25% quota norm). Besides expressing our concerns and trying to influence the main actors in the political scene, there is not much we can do to change this nominal under-representation of women on short term, but on longer term, we see this as a need and challenge to improve the capacities of female politicians (also because the nominal presence of women does not guarantee any qualitative contributions, so focusing on numbers would not be enough). The **main lesson learned** in this context: our work is very relevant and there is still a lot to be done, because we are far from where we want to be.

The **safety situation in Iraq** is a challenge of course. Our training of trainers took place in Erbil at the moment that ISIS fighters attempted to take Erbil. After an assessment of the security risks, we decided to continue this TOT, follow the situation closely and adapt a flexible approach if an emergency situation would occur. Nothing happened and the TOT was completed normally. The expansion of IS, the military operations, the **general crisis situation in Iraq** and the **negative trend in terms of women’s participation in the public sphere** have their effects on the lives of ordinary Iraqi citizens, including some of the people who are involved in the WPP program. Trainees, trainers and regional coordinators from the pre-election phase have fled their homes and have become IDPs. The insecurity also reduced the mobility of people inside Iraq, even inside Baghdad. This leads to delays, but so far, we have not put any activities on hold. The **main lesson learned** in this context: we work in a fragile environment, so we have to follow the situation closely and adapt a flexible approach if an emergency situation would occur.

Another challenge for the WPP program are the **fluctuating tensions between the federal government in Baghdad and the regional Kurdish government in Erbil**. During the past quarter, Erbil has gradually become a less suitable location for training and exchanges in the framework of the WPP program, because we noticed that the KRG authorities are not eager to accept Arabs from Central and South Iraq, and many Arabs are not eager to travel to Iraqi Kurdistan. All participants in our TOT in Erbil in August 2014 were allowed to enter Kurdistan, but many of them only after interrogations upon arrival at Erbil airport. If Erbil or other places in Kurdistan are no longer suitable, this means that we need to identify alternative locations for in-person activities or do it online. The **main lesson learned** in this context: the relations between the federal government and KRG are fragile, so we need to continue looking for alternative locations for our in-person events.

Proposed Activities for Next Quarter

The following activities are planned for the following quarter (Q4 2014). For a more complete overview, please see Annex 4 (Adapted Timeline).

	Q4 2014		
	Oct	Nov	Dec
3. Long term assistance to elected female representatives			
3.2. Continuous support to female MPs		x	x
3.3. Advanced training to female MPs in Baghdad or elsewhere		x	
3.4. Advanced training to female MPs in Erbil or elsewhere			x
3.5. Exchange with Dutch MPs	prep	prep	prep
3.6. Meetings to create more support from civil society			x
5. Awareness raising and education of female voters			
5.2. Local community meetings			x
6. Monitoring & evaluation			
6.1. Regular monitoring	x	x	x
6.2. Planning and monitoring visits		x	
6.3. Mid-term evaluation	x	x	x
6.6. Quarterly reporting	x		

In addition to this, during the following quarter, we will explore the collection and publication of experiences (working title: 'Portraits of Women: Experiences from WPP'). The plan is to collect the stories and experiences of women, who were trained in the WPP program and publish these stories - as digital publication, and if sufficient funding can be found, also in print.

Coordination with other Donors

From the beginning, the WPP program was funded by DRL and the Dutch government (funds from the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation). Hivos and Al-Amal have been communicating and coordinating their work on the WPP program with other donor agencies as well, including EU and UN bodies (such as the EU delegation on Iraq and UN Women in Baghdad), as well as the Dutch Embassy in Baghdad, but this has not lead to a request for additional funding for the WPP program. Cost-sharing was discussed with the Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, Salim Al-Jabouri, who expressed his moral support to the WPP program and agreed to have the exchange with the Dutch MPs in the venues of the Parliament in the Green Zone in Baghdad, as a contribution in kind to the WPP program. The Dutch government promised to take care of safe transport between the airport and the Green Zone and vice versa, as an additional contribution in kind to the WPP program (on top of the grant from the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation). However, because a visit of Dutch MPs to Baghdad seems unrealistic under the current circumstances, we may not be able to make use of these offers from the Iraqi Parliament and the Dutch Embassy. Cost-sharing by the Iraqi Parliament will remain on the agenda for Hivos and Al-Amal.

Sustainability

Hivos and Al-Amal have been discussing the issue of sustainability of the WPP Program since we passed the midpoint of the program. Various ideas have been exchanged. However, because the Mid-Term Review is expected to deliver valuable information in this respect, it was decided to wait for the results of the MTR. These are expected in the 4th quarter of 2014.

Profile

Ms Ferial Al-Ka'abi (43) lives and works in the southern province of Qadisiya and leads Awan, a local women's rights civil society organisation which empowers women to realise their dreams. "My city is very traditional, and we women face a lot of societal constraints. At a special section of the market (Effec), women are not allowed in. To challenge this societal rule, I decided to push the boundaries and walk every day through that part of the market." No other woman had done that before. "Men only stared at me and did not dare to approach me. By doing this, I hope to inspire other women to follow my example and push the societal boundaries. I was lucky because my family always encouraged me to follow my dreams. Today I hold workshops and discussions in that traditional part of my city and I stimulate boys and girls to challenge each other and to talk about their dreams. Also the female MPs can become role models and inspire other women, like Vian Dakhil, who is an Ezidi Member of Parliament."

One of the 17 women who were trained by the WPP Program and who entered the new Parliament is from Qadisiya. Her name is Suham Musa and she represents the Dawlat Al-Qanun party. She was a great success! Although she is a newcomer, she won her Parliamentary seat on basis of majority vote, not on basis of the quota. A great achievement!

Ms Ferial Abd Al-Sada Abud Al-Ka'abi was Regional Coordinator of the Women Power in Politics Program in Qadisiya province.

