DEVTECH

Comprehensive Desk Review, Evaluability Assessment, and Results Framework Development of U.S. Department of State's Democracy, Human Rights and Women's Empowerment Programs in Iraq

DRL and S/GWI Iraq Portfolio Evaluation: Evaluation Summary SAQMMA16R0518

Submitted to:

U. S. Department of State
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL)

Submitted by:

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ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DRL	Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL)
ET	Evaluation Team
GoI	Government of Iraq
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
S/GWI	Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI)
USG	United States Government
WSP	Widow Stipend Program

EVALUATION SUMMARY

The objective of the DRL Iraq Portfolio Evaluation was to assess the achievements and weaknesses of the DRL and S/GWI Iraq programs, as well as to identify good practices and lessons learned. The desk review findings are intended to help DRL and S/GWI be more strategic in future programming decisions in Iraq and other similarly situated fragile democracies. This evaluation examined the DRL and S/GWI Iraq Portfolio implemented between 2008 through 2016. For over 12 years, and with programming in excess of $600 million, DRL has worked to support international and Iraq civil society groups with grants to advance human rights, strengthen democratic institutions, advocate for women's rights and marginalized populations, and build civil society capacity with the goal of thereby increasing justice and government accountability. S/GWI has been a strong advocate for a wide array of women and children's issues across Iraq. S/GWI launched the Secretary's War Widows Program in 2010, supporting the empowerment of widows through providing social services, rights awareness, and other trainings designed to enhance life, vocational and business skills, and has continued to fund small grants to advance protection from violence for women and girls through the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security.

Evaluation Design and Methodology
The DevTech evaluation team (ET) utilized mixed-methods approach, which included the review of 126 projects documents implemented from 2008 through 2016; 18 key informant interviews with donors' staff (7) and select grantees (11); and an online survey distributed to 50 grantees that resulted in a 68 percent (37 respondents) response rate. Limitations of the evaluation included inconsistent and limited documents and limited key informant interviews with grantees.

Evaluation Questions and Findings:
A central purpose to this evaluation was the following evaluation questions set by DRL and S/GWI:

1. **Which projects had the greatest achievements, (e.g., what types of interventions had the greatest impact)? What were the achievements? Why were they impactful and what were the supporting factors?**

The evaluation found that on a micro-project level the Iraq programming was successful to a large extent with noticeable achievements were made by projects aimed at empowering women, including widows, advancing and protecting human rights, promoting political participation, building capacity of local civil society organizations (CSO) and service providers.

> **1A: For the S/GWI projects, what progress and results have the initiatives achieved relative to the DoS goal of advancing the role of women and girls in Iraq (e.g., empower women and girls and improve their social, economic, and political standings)?**

S/GWI-supported assistance helped to empower and advance role of women and girls in Iraq to a large extent. Over time slight societal change has been observed in terms of a reduction in forced marriages, a gradual decline in the societal acceptability of honor killings and, to a certain degree, freedom of women's choice over marriage, as well as an increase of Iraqi women in leadership and decision-making positions within political parties, trade unions, elected offices

and government agencies. Surveyed beneficiaries attributed some measure of this progress to effective S/GWI programming.

2. Which projects had the fewest achievements? What were the constraining factors, and why? How can these be overcome?

Evaluation findings suggest that projects that worked directly with the government, especially at the national and sub-national levels, achieved lower results due to political interests, bureaucratic hurdles, corruption, and an overall lack of political stability.

3. In terms of funding mechanism for the S/GWI projects, was the small grants award amount and duration appropriate for the context? Did organizational capacity increase for locally-based partners?

Evaluation Findings were that the funding level was appropriate for meetings small grants' objectives, and that the duration of small grants was appropriate in the majority of instances.

4. Taking into consideration the limited amount of funding for Iraq programs and the effectiveness of past programs, identify good practices that DRL and S/GWI should support in the future for each sector identified in the portfolio analyses.

A rich array of good practices and lessons learned across projects were discovered during the desk review, survey, and interview process. Grantees repeatedly expressed admiration for DRL and S/GWI's ability to determine the right size of grant amounts and tendency to fund programs consistently over time. According to partners, the DRL and S/GWI practice of funding similar projects provided continuity through the continuation of program objective without sustained break or interruption, and, to a certain degree, a long-term effect in the form of lasting impacts not necessarily tied to continued programmatic outputs.

Recommendations
Below are overarching recommendations for continued progress of Iraq programming:

1. DRL and S/GWI and implementing partners should improve consistency of reporting and systematic analysis of project achievements in order to demonstrate qualitative, longer term results and significant change.
2. DRL and S/GWI and their partners should continue to assist in the design of projects in coordination with sub-grantees, and in consultation with local staff, CSOs, local and national authorities, target communities and other key stakeholders.
3. DRL and S/GWI should consider funding more research/evaluations to fill information gaps in order to inform funding and programmatic decisions.
4. DRL and S/GWI and implementing partners should adjust activities to improve effectiveness of interventions