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TOP TOPICS

- EMPOWERING WOMEN
RELIGIOUS LEADERS: A PATH
TO PEACE THROUGH PVE
- CONFERENCE ON THE ROLE OF
CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE PREVENTION
OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM -
BAGHDAD, 15 AUGUST 2023
- EXCITING PARTNERSHIPS
ANNOUNCEMENT: WASL FUND
PROGRAMME JOINS FORCES
WITH UPP AND RM TEAM

DEAR PARTNERS OF THE WASL CIVIL SOCIETY FUND,

It is my pleasure to address this first newsletter to all of you. We are very excited to be working with you for this second round of the Wasl Civil Society Fund and are already impressed by the great work that you are doing, despite the very challenging contexts that you work in.

We hope that this newsletter will provide you with a platform to learn more about the great projects that are being implemented through the Wasl Civil Society Fund. In this first edition, we highlight the great work done by the Halabja Disabled Organization (HDO) and their engagement with female religious leaders, and we are excited to share a story with you about the first girls' football team in Mosul set up by the Sustainable Peace Foundation.

Furthermore, we are happy to announce two new partnerships that will bring great value to each of you. We partnered with Un Ponte Per and RM Team to provide organizational capacity building and third-party monitoring and evaluation, respectively. You can find more information about both partnerships further down in this newsletter.

Lastly, we are aware of the ongoing challenges with the banking system and the receipt of your payments. We are working to find alternative solutions and have been able to provide some of you with alternative payment modalities already. Please reach out to us directly if you want to discuss this topic further and we are keen to explore any modality that works best for you.

We will be publishing this newsletter regularly to share updates, success stories and other important information with all of you. Please share any stories with us that you would like to see highlighted in the next edition - we depend on your inputs to make this newsletter as exciting as possible!

**On behalf of the full Wasl Civil Society Fund team,
Stijn Gabriel**

EMPOWERING WOMEN RELIGIOUS LEADERS: A PATH TO PEACE THROUGH PVE

Halabja Disabled Organization (HDO) Report

As part of its second project implemented through the Wasl Civil Society Fund, the Halabja Disabled Organization (HDO) organized a training for female religious leaders on the prevention of violent extremism, recognizing the important role of religious leaders, especially women, in preventing extremist ideologies.

Religious leaders in Halabja possess considerable influence, shaping public opinion and instilling moral responsibility within their communities. Women religious leaders bring a unique perspective, often deeply rooted in socio-cultural dynamics, enabling effective engagement with those exposed to extremist ideologies. Their roles extend beyond religious teachings, comprehensive education, community-building, and humanitarian efforts, all contributing to preventing the rise of extremism.

Within the framework of "Peace Builders - Empowering Communities for Peace and Social Cohesion," HDO conducted a transformative three-day

training program for 30 women religious leaders from Halabja and its surrounding areas. The program encompassed various modules, including interfaith dialogue enhancement, moral guidance and values, conflict resolution and mediation, theological and religious proficiency, and disability rights and engagement in peacebuilding. Each module aimed to empower the participants with skills and insights vital for fostering peace and inclusivity within their communities. Participant feedback highlighted the program's impact on personal and interpersonal growth, reinforcing the significance of ethical conduct, understanding human complexity, open-mindedness, empathy, and inclusivity.

The positive feedback from participants underscores the program's value in preventing violent extremism and fostering a more inclusive and harmonious society. By investing in the capacity-building of women religious leaders, we invest in a brighter, more inclusive future, demonstrating the power of education, empathy, and collective action in the pursuit of lasting peace and social cohesion.



Exciting Partnerships Announcement: Wasl Fund Programme Joins Forces with UPP and RM Team

IOM Iraq's Wasl Civil Society Fund is thrilled to announce its partnership with Un Ponte Per (UPP) and RM Team for the second round of projects. UPP will focus on delivering tailored organizational capacity building support to all our partners, and RM Team will focus on delivering independent third-party monitoring and evaluation of the projects implemented through the Wasl Civil Society Fund. RM Team will also provide individual M&E technical support to all grantees.

UPP's project, entitled Tafa'ul (Optimism) for Civil Society Engagement will be active from early October and run until the end of the second round of the Wasl Civil Society Fund. UPP's experience in civil society engagement, notably through projects such as "TATWEER" and "Hiwar," makes them a perfect partner for this initiative.

The primary objective of Tafa'ul is to enhance the organizational efficiency and effectiveness of the grantees of the Wasl Civil Society Fund. UPP will work closely with all CSOs to bolster their institutional and organizational policies, processes, and procedures, enabling them to become more sustainable and reliable actors in addressing community-level issues in line with international standards.

We are excited about the possibilities that this partnership with UPP brings to the table. Together, we aim to empower CSOs across Iraq, fostering positive change in communities and building a brighter future.

RM Team will provide support to IOM in conducting targeted monitoring and evaluation of all projects implemented through the Wasl Civil Society Fund. In addition, RM Team will provide detailed feedback on each partners' results matrix and share suggestions for improvement on M&E modalities through individual meetings. We are very excited to learn more about the impact of your projects to RM Team's findings and are very happy that you will be receiving technical support from these M&E experts.

Stay tuned for more updates on the progress and impact of the Tafa'ul project and RM Team's assignment. Our team will be in touch with all of you individually soon to set up the kick-off meetings with UPP and RM Team. We look forward to a successful collaboration with both organizations and a transformative journey ahead!



Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Violent Extremism

On 15 August 2023, IOM Iraq organized a conference on the role of civil society in the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) in partnership with the Directorate of Non-Governmental Organizations (D-NGO). The event brought together a diverse range of stakeholders focused on preventing violent extremism in Iraq and highlighted the crucial role of civil society in implementing PVE initiatives.

In his opening remarks, the Director of the D-NGO Mr. Ashraf al-Dahan, stressed that the department will work with “IOM, international organizations and UN agencies to curb the threat that seeks to tear apart the fabric of civil society.”

The event consisted of several panel discussions, focusing on “Women-led PVE Initiatives.”, “Arts & Sports in the Prevention of Violent Extremism.”, “The role of CSOs in KRI”, and “Youth Empowerment”.

Moreover, the event provided a platform for civil society organizations to showcase their projects and share their successes in implementing PVE initiatives with Government partners and representatives of the international community in Baghdad.

