



## Civil Society Resource Centers

USAID's centers provide essential support to Iraqi civil society groups nationwide

The USAID strategy for civil society development in Iraq supports the establishment of an informed, sustainable, and active Iraqi civil society that effectively and responsibly participates within a democratic system of governance. Since 2004, the Iraq Civil Society and Independent Media Program (ICSP) has worked with civil society groups throughout Iraq, helping build local capacity to advance civic education, women's advocacy, anti-corruption, and human rights.

Civil Society Resource Centers have been established to contribute to civil society strengthening throughout Iraq. These Iraqi-staffed centers serve as hubs for training, technical assistance, and grant activities to develop the capacity of civil society organizations. Also, the centers serve as an important source of information and an organizing force in assembling civil society coalitions and advocacy efforts. In addition to providing a full range of capacity building assistance to civil society organizations, the Centers provide specialized services and support to groups engaged in civic education and other essential activities.

### ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE CENTERS

USAID established four Civil Society Resource Centers in December 2004. Through ICSP, USAID provided extensive support to training Iraqi managers and trainers who now staff the centers, enabling them to provide training, technical assistance and grants to civil society organizations across all of Iraq. Located in Baghdad (serving the central region), Basrah (south), Erbil (north) and Hilla (south-central), these Resource Centers provide effective support to civil society groups across the country.

The demand for services at the Civil Society Resource Centers remains high, often surpassing capacity. **Each center provides services to an average of 750 civil society organizations** and 1,000 other institutions through its networking and coalition building activities. Each center maintains an extensive resources library on civil society development in Arabic, Kurdish, and

English. To date, the Civil Society Resource Centers have **sponsored 254 regional and national conferences and forums** that brought civil society groups together to examine key issues and develop a common plan of action. The four centers have **provided direct services to over 3,000 civil society groups** to date.

To remain responsive to the needs of local communities, each center has established a community advisory board that consults with area civil society groups and other stakeholders. These advisory boards will assist the centers in developing sustainability plans, helping them operate independently.

### PROVIDING ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

To encourage institutional development, the Civil Society Resource Centers conduct organizational assessments of local civil society organizations using the well-established Organizational Assessment Tool (OAT). This tool, combined with related technical assistance, enables ICSP and civil society groups to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to tailor technical assistance to meet those needs. During the first year of operation, ICSP **assessed the institutional capacity of 1,200 civil society groups** for sound management, advocacy, and internal governance. ICSP is currently re-evaluating 61 civil society groups to track institutional development, and

#### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The USAID Iraq Civil Society and Independent Media Program (ICSP) has been active in Iraq since September 2004. USAID's implementing partners include America's Development Foundation (ADF) and, focusing on independent media, the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX).

**USAID: Civil Society and Media Development**  
<http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/accomplishments/civsoc.html>

**USAID/Iraq**  
<http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/>



## IRAQ CIVIL SOCIETY PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

### Anticorruption

- Supported civil society groups lobbying for the addition of 13 anticorruption provisions to the Iraqi Constitution
- 6,000 government officials—at the national, regional, and local levels—received training and technical assistance in transparency and accountability
- Reached 1 million Iraqis through a national awareness raising campaign featuring innovative programs by Iraqi organizations

### Women’s Advocacy

- Supported women’s rights groups lobbying for the adoption of 12 constitutional provisions benefiting women
- Over 600 civil society organizations have received training and assistance, increasing their capacity to advocate for the advancement of women
- Led events and conferences, bringing women’s advocacy organizations together to network, organize coalitions, and develop advocacy campaigns

### Human Rights

- Over 4,000 civil society groups and government employees received training and technical assistance on human rights
- Many civil society organizations have improved their abilities to monitor and report on human rights abuses, including poor conditions of detention centers and unlawful detention
- Civil society organizations have developed partnerships with police departments, human rights departments and other government agencies to support the protection of human rights

### Civic Education

- Assisted groups who mobilized citizens to participate in Iraq’s constitutional referendum and the electoral processes
- Hundreds of Iraqi groups have participated in regional and national conferences to advocate for civil society legislation
- Supported Iraqi-driven campaigns to reform inadequate laws affecting women

### Independent Media

- Helped establish and continues to help build the capacity of the first independent news agency and the first independent public broadcasting service in the Arab world
- Increased the knowledge and skills of over 1,000 journalists and media professionals
- Established an Iraqi media watchdog group



encourages multiple evaluations to track organizational development.

### BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY

Each Civil Society Resource Center provides training workshops and technical assistance to build the capacity of Iraqi civil society groups. These services cover a range of topics including financial management, project management, strategic planning, project design/proposal writing, advocacy/networking, internal governance, and report writing. Since the start of the program ICSP has **provided 422 training workshops in core capacity areas and an additional 722 training workshops in sector-specific topics.** Over 27,000 Iraqis have participated in these workshops, and an additional 2,450 civil society clients have benefited from specific technical assistance and training.

### GRANTS PROGRAM

The Civil Society Resource Centers provide and manage grants to civil society groups to reinforce training and technical assistance activities, and to support advocacy and public awareness projects. Over the past year, the centers have greatly improved their ability to manage and administer grants, and now provide an array of support, including small, rapid grants. In the past 18 months, ICSP has **awarded 391 grants to support the activities of 314 civil society groups.** These grants are designed to be appropriate to the mission and capabilities of each organization.

### BUILDING NEW RESOURCES FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Civil Society Resource Centers also develop the capacity of capable “key” local groups to serve as resources for other organizations. These civil society groups have received training in how to facilitate capacity building workshops, using a training-of-trainers methodology. Centers also work with key groups to implement training and technical assistance to Iraqis that are too remote or cannot normally be reached by the center. The four regional Civil Society Resource Centers have been the hub of training and civil society support that reaches tens of thousands of Iraqis countrywide.