



VOICES FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The path towards recovery from conflict and displacement
from the perspective of grassroots organizations

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International Organization for Migration
Address: UNAMI Compound (Diwan 2), International Zone, Baghdad/Iraq
Email: iomiraq@iom.int
Website: iraq.iom.int

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Acronyms

AICS	Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo	ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
AIM	Alliance of Iraqi Minorities	MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance - USAID	NGO	Non-governmental organization
BRHA	Board of Relief and Humanitarian Affairs	OFDA	Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance
BMZ	Bundesministerium Für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit (German Federal Ministry for Economic Development Cooperation)	PFA	Psychological first aid
BWO	Better World Organization for Community Development	PSS	Psychosocial support
CSO	Civil society organization	SEZ	Stiftung Entwicklungs – Zusammenarbeit
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
GBV	Gender-Based Violence	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
GHA	German Humanitarian Assistance	UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (German Agency for International Cooperation)	UPP	Un Ponte Per
HIA	Hungarian Interchurch Aid	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee	WASH	Water and sanitation and hygiene
IDP	Internally displaced persons	WCW	Women Challenging War
IOM	International Organization for Migration	WPHF	Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund

FOREWORD

IOM CHIEF OF MISSION

Since 2003, civil society organizations (CSOs) in Iraq have been playing an increasingly important role in Iraq's recovery from conflict and displacement, particularly following the humanitarian and displacement crises caused by the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2014. Across the country, Iraqi CSOs mobilized in support of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and their host communities, to address new humanitarian needs, gaps in service provision and social tensions.

Through a wide variety of functions – including monitoring; early warning; advocacy; public communication; social change; intermediation; and service provision – CSOs in Iraq contribute depth and durability to peacebuilding and long-term stability, and they play a vital role in community stabilization programming.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) aims to build genuine partnerships with civil society actors and empower CSOs to develop their priorities, expertise and appropriate sources of funding in ways that are not necessarily rooted in the international aid community or in the provision of humanitarian assistance. Moreover, IOM aims to identify opportunities for civil society actors to develop greater solidarity and partnerships across ethnic and religious identity boundaries in order to engage at a deeper level with social issues, governance and human rights.

With generous support from the Government of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA), IOM works closely with CSOs in Ninewa and Duhok Governorates, offering a comprehensive package of support that includes trainings, small grants or in-kind assistance, partnerships and technical support. These efforts strengthen the ability of CSOs to provide valuable peacebuilding and social cohesion activities in their communities and build strong relationships between citizens and their elected officials. We hope that IOM's support will bolster the skills, resources and solidarity already shown by Iraqi CSOs, with the ultimate aim of contributing to a more stable and peaceful Iraq.

Giorgi Gigauri
Chief of Mission
IOM Iraq



INTRODUCTION

Since 2003, Iraq has faced complex challenges to stabilization and peacebuilding. In 2014, ISIL captured large swathes of territory, committing atrocities and causing displacement across the country. The crisis created humanitarian needs ranging from immediate emergency relief to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for survivors. In the long term, overcoming the aftermath requires sustained stabilization and peacebuilding efforts at the community level as IDPs decide to settle down or return home.

IOM Iraq has actively contributed to each of these steps. Indeed, since September 2014, IOM has provided MHPSS for IDPs both in and out of camp settings. In the aftermath of ISIL's occupation, this provision of psychosocial support for individuals, families, and vulnerable groups helps beneficiaries to process the past and look to the future with hope; it also fosters trust and rebuilds social networks within and across communities. Moreover, this service helps to lay the groundwork for peaceful interactions between communities in conflict. In addition to MHPSS, IOM's community stabilization programme also provides services to foster social cohesion, improve livelihoods, implement community service projects and reintegrate ex-combatants.

During this process of recovery, Iraq's civil society actors have worked side-by-side with international organizations like IOM. These diverse actors include youth networks, informal volunteers, activists and community-based organizations. Many CSOs were established in response to the severe upheaval in 2014 to meet the resulting needs of their communities. They have since worked to professionalize their skills for emergency response in line with the principles of 'do no harm' and neutrality. From the community and for the community, these CSOs are an essential link between international organizations and the people of Iraq.

As Iraq began to stabilize in 2018, it entered a new stage. Accordingly, IOM transitioned from emergency response to stabilization programming, seeking durable solutions to address the protracted nature of displacement, shifting focus from direct service delivery to strengthening capacities of local actors, especially CSOs. In Dohuk and Ninewa Governorates, IOM assessed more than 80 active CSOs and provided a capacity-building programme for 17 selected organizations.

The tailored programme began in Duhok in April 2018 and lasted for four months. It covered organizational skills topics such as project management, budgeting and communication; it also included skills building in line with IOM's community stabilization efforts, such as conflict assessment and peacebuilding planning. In particular, the programme focused on building CSOs' capacity to create social cohesion and provide MHPSS.

Following the completion of this programme, IOM provided an opportunity for the CSOs to put their newly gained skills into practice with a call for microgrants. 12 CSOs received funding to carry out three-month-long projects with in-kind support and on-site coaching from IOM. The projects targeted vulnerable and displaced persons and focused on topics such as psychosocial support, social cohesion, increased resilience and livelihood opportunities. Although all CSOs successfully put the microgrants to use, the process brought to light the many challenges they faced along the way. Logistically, the organizations found it difficult to obtain required permissions to implement all activities on time; programmatically, they had a hard time conducting deep assessments and acquiring qualified staff, especially for provision of psychosocial support interventions, where experience and skills are crucial. In addition, as many had never received funding from international donors, they also faced a learning curve in complying with international donor procedures.

To address these challenges, in 2019 IOM asked the 12 CSOs to integrate their activities into IOM programmes in six locations: Qadia, Bajed Kandala, Kabarto, Dawoodiya, Shekhan and Shariya. In the first three months of 2019, the CSOs developed plans for family and community-based activities while receiving in-kind financial support and guidance from IOM field teams; all CSOs made significant progress and overcame previous challenges. Since then, the CSOs have engaged in another three capacity-building programmes focused on youth engagement, women's protection and empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities. Organizationally, IOM has supported its implementing partners in Duhok with a training package on drafting of policies and other institutional guidelines covering finance, HR, logistic and Code of Conduct. Along with the capacity building programmes, IOM continued supporting the CSOs with financial support through subgrants and or in-kind support.

Notably, IOM's capacity-building programme greatly enabled the CSOs to deliver psychosocial support. Throughout the programme, IOM provided MHPSS training in line with 'do no harm' principles outlined in the Sphere Project; the World Health Organization's definition of mental health; and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) *Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services in Emergency Settings*. Specifically, IOM adopts the pyramid of intervention on MHPSS according to the IASC guideline for emergency settings through four layers of services.



The base layer represents social considerations in basic services, and it accounts for 18 per cent of the MHPSS service provision. In this layer, IOM mitigates negative outcomes of difficult living conditions by improving access to basic services and increasing feelings of safety through awareness sessions, coordination and referrals. In the second layer, service provision focuses on community and family support. This is done through activities for parenting support and livelihoods (including vocational courses), formal and informal education, assistance in mourning and communal healing ceremonies and empowerment of youth and women's networks.

Other activities aim to enhance community engagement, including recreational activities and religious and cultural celebrations. Activities in this layer account for most MHPSS services — 67 per cent — the goal of which is to support individuals and families who are able to maintain their own psychosocial wellbeing with the provision of services based on their needs. The third layer is focused non-specialized services, making up 13 per cent of provided services. This includes outreach activities for promoting resilience and identifying cases. Psychological first aid (PFA) and individual and group counselling is offered to displaced individuals and families in distress. The remaining two per cent of MHPSS services lie in the top layer: specialized services. For these, psychiatric consultations and clinical psychological counselling are provided to people with pre-existing and/or emerging forms of severe stress, behavioural and relational problems and mental disorder conditions.

From 2018 to 2019, IOM's capacity-building team focused on improving CSOs' provision of MHPSS in the first and the second layers, centring on basic service delivery and psychosocial support for the family and community. Meanwhile, IOM provided psychologists, psychiatric services and referrals to other specialized services for the top two layers. Since 2020, IOM has helped the CSOs expand their MHPSS services to include focused non-specialized services as well. With the help of IOM-trained psychologists and social workers, CSOs have become able to identify cases through home visits and offer group counselling services. IOM downsized its support to four CSOs in 2019 and in 2022 continues providing assistance to three, further strengthening the CSOs' self-sufficiency in providing community-based MHPSS.

This booklet showcases four of the CSOs: Dak Organization for Ezidi Women Development, Better World Organization for Community Development, Hariwan Organization for Development of Human Rights and Rusaz Organization of Reconstruction, Development, and Humanitarian Aid. These organizations have participated and excelled in IOM's capacity-building programme since its commencement in 2018. Each of them differs in their focuses, which include youth engagement, environmental protection, women's protection and empowerment, suicide prevention and more. Each CSO has become a self-sufficient peacebuilder with the trust of its community and ambitious plans for the future.

BETTER WORLD ORGANIZATION FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (BWO):

Profile

Name: BWO

Year Established: 2017

Areas of Operation: Duhok and Ninawa Governorate

Size: Six board members, six staff, and 30+ youth volunteers

Director: Walaa Musheer Ahmed

Number of people reached through projects: 20,000



Mission:

BWO seeks to protect women and youth from exploitation and empower them to obtain durable solutions and sustainable livelihoods. BWO's goal is to develop peaceful and stable communities in which people accept and respect one other regardless of their differences.

Services:



Basic service provision and non-food item distribution



Sexual and gender-based violence prevention and gender equality advocacy



Protection and empowerment for women and youth



Psychosocial support (PSS)



Prevention of violent extremism



Community development



Social cohesion



تيا چاره سه ريین
دهوام، ئيکگرتنا
و دووباره تیکم
رن ل عیراقی

دعم الحلول
تدامة، التماس
تفاعي و إع
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IN IRAQ

Current Projects:

- Strengthening community resilience with programming implemented through the IOM Psychosocial Support Centre in Kabartu camp, Duhok Governorate; IOM subgrant under USAID/BHA funding
- GBV prevention and response services for returnees, internally displaced people, and host community members, in Telafar and Hamdaniyah districts, Ninewa Governorate; funded by UNICEF
- Enhancing safe environment in vulnerable families from host communities in Duhok city; funded by German SOS Kinderdörfer weltweit
- Provision of income generation opportunities for vulnerable families in the field of agricultural for economic development in Telkaif, Ninawa Governorate; ; funded by Hungarian Interchurch Aid
- Improving the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of IDPs, refugees and returnees using minimum service package as a guide, in Duhok and Ninawa Governorate; funded by UNICEF



Past Projects:

Supporting Survivors Participation in Implementation of the Yazidi Survivors Law

- Period: October 2021 – February 2022
- Donor: IOM subgrant under USAID/ BHA funding
- Number of people reached: 790

Promoting and engaging youth and women in social cohesion programming

- Period: December 2020 – March 2021
- Donor: Hungarian Interchurch Aid
- Number of people reached: 420

Youth empowerment initiatives

- Period: August 2020 – October 2020
- Donor: IOM subgrant under USAD/BHA funding
- Number of people reached: 26

Secondhand clothes exhibition

- Period: May 2019 – November 2020
- Donor: Kardu; Go for Climate
- Number of people reached: 200 families

Strengthening the resilience of adolescents and parents in Garmawa and Hassan Sham Camps

- Period: May 2019 – November 2020
- Donor: GIZ
- Number of people reached: 2,140

“My Right in Reparations” campaign

- Period: September 2019 – November 2019
- Donor: IOM subgrant under Australian DFAT funding
- Number of people reached: 785

Creating small gardens in Kabartu 1 and 2 camps

- Period: March 2019
- Donor: Al-Masalah; Program of Academic Exchange
- Number of people reached: 20

Hate speech in Iraq

- Period: February 2019 – April 2019
- Donor: Peace Tech-Lab (USA)
- Number of people reached: 200 families

Adolescent Girls toolkit Program

- Period: September 2019
- Donor: Global Giving
- Number of people reached: 15

Reintegration of youth through life skills trainings and peace education

- Period: November 2018 – April 2019
- Donor: GIZ
- Number of people reached: 120

Preventing radicalization and peacebuilding

- September 2018 – November 2018
- Donor: Diconia University of Finland
- Number of people reached: 100

-Youth Peace Leaders

- Period: October 2017 – November 2017
- Donor: Maypole Fund-UK
- Target number: 50

Empowering women through peer support groups, in partnership with Bishkoreen Organizations

- Period: September 2018 – November 2018
- Donor: IOM subgrant AICS funding
- Number of people reached: 1800

World Interfaith Harmony Week Campaign

- Period: February 2018
- Donor: Go for Climate-Germany; Al-Baraka Company – Duhok'
- Number of people reached: 50



BWO INTRODUCTION:

Established in May 2017, BWO is a CSO founded by young women for women and youth over five years old.

BWO target vulnerable communities in Dohuk and Ninewa Governorates. Its programming includes capacity building for personnel delivering protection services and tailored activities to empower women, youth and adolescents to achieve sustainable livelihoods and durable solutions to displacement. Interventions include GBV response programming, gender equality advocacy and socioeconomic skills development. BWO implements projects that adopt an all-inclusive approach to providing psychosocial support and fostering social cohesion in communities.

In 2018, IOM included BWO in its comprehensive capacity-building programme and supported its coordination with other programme stakeholders, including

donors. The organization thus enhanced its technical and managerial capacities and acquired skills to provide psychosocial support in accordance with IASC guidelines.

BWO has actively contributed to the peacebuilding process in Iraq through its membership in the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, which was established by UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250, and the Nongovernmental (NGO) Working Group for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Iraq.

Looking ahead, BWO will continue implementing projects that focus on the empowerment of women and youth through initiatives on protection, GBV, PSS and social cohesion.

DIRECTOR: WALAA MUSHEER AHMED

Walaa Musheer Ahmed is the director of BWO. She began her humanitarian work in early 2015, following ISIL's invasion of Sinjar.

During her first years in the field, Walaa observed how young women worked together to implement incredible projects and support their communities.

"So, I thought that we, as young women, can also build something that we can bring different ideas to build a new environment of work that can better support women," says Walaa

Inspired by this, she founded BWO on 24 May 2017, creating a space for skilled and passionate people to join forces in supporting different communities by designing and implementing projects.

Walaa and her BWO co-founders directed their efforts toward the groups their staff members know best: women and youth. Having started the organization at a young age, the founders were able to relate to the needs of the young women of their generation. Moreover, they realized the importance of supporting them to achieve their maximum personal and professional potential, and of supporting their families and communities in the process.

BWO achieves its objectives through a broad and inclusive approach. Walaa recognizes that the organization must reach out to different demographics to realize her vision for women, youth, and adolescents. For example, BWO always supports families as a whole. Walaa explains: "if we build resilience just for the youth, they may find that they are not supported by their parents when they go back to their families." To fill

the gap, BWO actively reaches out to the parents, so the youth receive support from their families and have spaces to develop their personalities at home.

BWO programming also seeks to foster social cohesion and resilience in Dohuk and Ninewa communities. The organization actively participates in World Interfaith Harmony Week, a globally recognized initiative proposed by a UN resolution in 2010 bringing together groups of different faiths to engage in a peaceful dialogue. BWO hosts events during the first week of February each year: in 2018, BWO invited Christian, Muslim and Yazidi scholars to speak to community members and stakeholders, and in 2019 the organization provided garden spaces in Kabartu camp where women of different faiths planted and created "Harmony Gardens" together.

Since 2017, BWO has implemented more than 20 projects with a team of only 42 people, including 30 young volunteers. The group's programming has benefitted over 12,000 community members across genders and ages.

"Motivation and commitment from young people — or perhaps the self-belonging of our staff — are BWO's greatest strengths," says Walaa.

With its flat and equitable structure, partners and volunteers choose to stay with BWO. "The team who worked with us on an IOM project in Kabartu in 2019 has stayed with us," Walaa says, as an example. "We have a very healthy environment. We created a platform that is supportive and flexible, where the employees and volunteers feel they are a part of this journey."

The mobile library, which BWO created with IOM support in 2019, is another example of the organization's innovative programming. Walaa describes how the initiative came to be: "We discovered through our programmes in different camps that young people really want — and need — to read. So, we started providing books to small groups of young people that reached out to us, and then we created reading groups where they exchange what they read." The organization later established a library at the IOM centre. To make the library more accessible, staff and volunteers used bikes to deliver books to residents in all sectors of the camp

IOM's capacity-building programme has played an important role in the successful development of BWO. "IOM's capacity-building programme in 2018 was a turning point for Better World," Walaa says, "It was very important because it helped us develop our network, become more visible in the complex and trained us in different managerial and technical topics. It has lifted Better World to a good level in a very short time."

Walaa has benefited from the programme in her capacity as the Director, too. "There are different topics that improved my skills, including proposal writing, for example" she remarks. "It was an effective training because as director I am the focal point for writing proposals for BWO." Furthermore, the IOM capacity-building programme has expanded Walaa's knowledge beyond her expertise in women's protection, allowing her further depth and nuance in her contributions to BWO.

Reflecting on her organization's partnership with IOM, Walaa speaks positively: "IOM has a strong system and valuable approaches. What they have transferred to us will remain here. It's a complementing process." Walaa believes BWO will continue to be an active player in the community, harnessing her skills and motivation and those of her team to continue providing services to women, youth and adolescents.



NAME

SAHIRA

CSO

BWOCD



PROFILES AND TESTIMONIES

CSO PROFILE(CSU)
BWOCD

Testimonies of beneficiaries
Sahira Saeed Saadun

SAHIRA, ART ACTIVITIES

“When I painted again, I felt I wasn’t alone anymore,” says 20-year-old Sahira.

Being a painter has been a long-cherished dream for her. Inspired by well renowned artists like Van Gogh, Sahira used to visit artists in her village of Dokri, Sinjar district, prior to her displacement.

Sahira’s first four years at Kabartu camp were hard, and she found it exceptionally difficult to pursue painting there, which only added to her frustration. This changed when Sahira was introduced to BWO’s counselling sessions through her mother, who was attending a BWO sewing skills training course at the camp’s IOM centre.

As soon as Sahira expressed her passion for painting to her counselor, the team at BWO provided her with the materials she needed to get back to the easel; later, they provided her with the opportunity to hold her own art exhibition, where she was able to display her work for the community.

“This was a turning point in the journey to my dream,” Sahira recalls, “I started to paint passionately, as much as I could in a short period of time. When I painted again, I felt I wasn’t alone anymore. The organization gave me

complete trust and made me have more confidence in my skills. It is an indescribable feeling to turn your imagination into reality while expressing your thoughts without words.”

In 2019, BWO hosted an art exhibition at the IOM centre where around 50 people from both inside and outside of the camp came to see Sahira’s paintings. Sahira’s collection showed many themes and motifs, including nature, war, humans and sports.

Sahira’s journey as a painter did not stop there. After the exhibition, BWO supported her to launch a drawing course for children in the camp aged between nine and thirteen years old. She taught three days a week for three weeks, and topics ranged from drawing with pencils to painting with water colours and more.

“I think it’s very important for the youth to have something they’re passionate about. I always had negative thoughts while in difficult situations, but painting has really helped me shift my focus and become more positive,” she says. “Left on their own, most youth here spend their time doing nothing, but when they come to the IOM centre, they can meet different people, learn new skills and be more productive.”

MURAD, SPORTS

Before their displacement, Murad and his family lived in Sinjar. Since their arrival at a complex in Sumel district, Duhok Governorate, they have benefited from programming at the IOM centre on many levels. Murad receives monetary support via camp authorities as he cannot work due to a health issue. His wife suffers from mental health problems and receives psychosocial support at the centre. Of the different types of support his family receives, Murad is especially happy with the time his sons — thirteen-year-old Abdulla and eleven-year-old Murad — spend participating in BWO's soccer activities.

Besides supporting the two young boys in mastering their soccer techniques under the guidance of skillful coaches, these activities have provided a safe space for their father to bond with them. Witnessing his sons' progress made Murad feel fulfilled.

"I am also busy with these activities in a good way as I'm here for my kids — to support them," Murad says proudly. "They were even able to reach the finals in the local competition, and I was happy to attend the matches. I even bought them sport clothes — but will give them to [the boys] on the condition that they do well in school."

In this way, BWO's activities contribute to peace and cohesion at the camps amongst both youth and their families. These activities not only improve the youth's sports skills, they also strengthen community ties and enhance social networks between families. "I am happy that my sons spend time here doing something useful. Before joining the soccer team, they used to be bored at home, and I didn't like them going outside of the camp and fighting with other kids. When they come here, they are satisfied, and I'm also satisfied."

In addition to teaching healthy hobbies to the youth, these activities bring together people from different backgrounds.

"I was happy that they [my sons] are interacting with kids," Murad says. "I also got to know some new people from diverse backgrounds through these activities, and now I'm friends with them, just as our kids are also friends."

Murad's opinion on BWO's programming is clear: "If it's possible, I of course want the organization to provide services to more kids — the more the better. I think they get a sense of relief from these activities."



DAK ORGANIZATION FOR EZIDI (YEZIDI) WOMEN DEVELOPMENT (DAK):

Profile:

Name: Dak

Year established: 2015

Areas of operation: Duhok and Ninewa Governorate

Size: Nine board members, 47 staff, and 12 volunteers

Director: Suzane Safar Ismail

Number of people reached through projects: 12,332



Mission:

DAK seeks to protect all women from exploitation by providing advocacy and legal support for victims of gender-based violence (GBV) and strengthening the resilience and well-being of women through psychosocial support, capacity-building and supporting livelihood opportunities. Dak's goal is to support the development of a peaceful and stable community committed to the protection of women's rights and human dignity.

Services:



Psychosocial support (PSS)



Capacity building



Social cohesion



Legal support



Violence reduction



Current Projects:

- Increasing meaningful participation and decision-making of the women of Sinjar district in conflict prevention processes and response, funded under UN Women
- Activating and strengthening the role of minority women in implementing the agenda of women, security, and peace, in Duhok and Ninawa governorates, with Cordaid subgrant under British Consulate to Iraq funding
- Empowerment and empowerment of the local community from the constituent local authorities, in Khatare village, Ninawa Governorate; in partnership with Alliance of Iraqi Minorities (AIM) under UNDP funding

Past projects:

Support for psychosocial activities for children affected by conflict-related sexual violence

- Period: July 2021 – September 2021
- Donor: Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation
- Number of people reached: 20

Increasing the participation of women in conflict prevention and decision making inside the family and community

- Period: October 2019 – September 2021
- Donor: UN Women subgrant under Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund funding
- Number of people reached: 1,500

Legal support centre for women in Shekhan district

- Period: December 2019 – March 2021
- Donor: MSI subgrant under USAID/ BHA funding
- Number of people reached: 387

Engendering peace: a bridge between women in Iraq and Lebanon

- Period: July 2019 – April 2021
- Donor: Un Ponte Per
- Number of people reached: 500

Enhancing psychosocial, social and recreational support for IDPs and the host community in IOM Qadia Centre

- Period: November 2019 – March 2020
- Donor: IOM subgrant under USAID/ BHA funding
- Number of people reached: 1,500

District advocacy campaign, prevention of sexual assault

- Period: February 2020 – June 2020
- Donor: Internews
- Number of people reached: 1000

Enhancing psychosocial, social and recreational support for IDPs and the host community in Berseve 2 Centre

- Period: 2019 – 2020
- Donor: Associazione Salam
- Number of people reached: 400

Enhancing psychosocial, social and recreational support for IDPs and the host community in IOM Sharya Centre

- Period: April 2019 – March 2020
- Donor: IOM subgrant under USAID/ BHA and Australian DFAT funding
- Number of people reached: 4,000

“My Right in Reparation” campaign

- Period: September 2019 – November 2019
- Donor: IOM subgrant under USAID/ BHA funding
- Number of people reached: 500

Capacity-building and social cohesion for actors in Hamdaniyah district

- Period: September 2019 – November 2019
- Donor: IOM subgrant under AICS funding
- Number of people reached: 350

Enhancing social cohesion through alternatives to violence in Duhok

- Period: May 2019 – October 2019
- Donor: ACTED subgrant under Agence Française de Développement; EU European Union Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis
- Number of people reached: 1,500

Family welfare programming

- Period: September 2018 – November 2018
- Donor: IOM subgrant under AICS funding
- Number of people reached: 100 women



Family welfare programming

- Period: December 2018 – March 2019
- Donor: IOM subgrant under German Stiftung Entwicklungs – Zusammenarbeit funding
- Number of people reached: 130 women

Enhancing the role of women in peace building and social cohesion through social media

- Period: September 2018 – November 2018
- Donor: IOM subgrant under AICS funding
- Number of people reached: 15 girls

Bridging communities in the Ninewa Plains

- Period: January 2018 – May 2018
- Donor: GIZ
- Number of people reached: 1000

Ninewa: Paths to cohesion and peace

- Period: December 2016 – March 2017
- Donor: UPP subgrant under UNDP funding
- Number of people reached: 500 women

Developing and building the capacity of women and girls in Sinjar through workshops and training on women's rights, feminist and leadership concepts, with support of the Government of Canada

- Period: September 2018 – November 2018
- Donor: Embassy of Canada to Iraq
- Number of people reached: 71

Supporting survivors' participation in implementing the Yezidi Survivors Law

- Period: October 2021 – February 2022
- Donor: IOM subgrant under Australian DFAT funding
- Number of people reached: 941

DAK INTRODUCTION:

Dak is a women's non-governmental organization founded in June 2015 by Yezidi women with a strong belief in women's rights and gender equality.

The word "Dak" is derived from the Kurdish language and translates to "mother". This was one of the motives behind naming this organization, as the Yezidi community regards women to be the custodians of Yezidi culture and traditions, as well as the family's primary caregiver. Dak supports and empowers girls and young women in Iraq, especially those who suffered during and following ISIL's brutal targeting of women during 2014 genocide. Dak aims to represent them, enhance their resilience, help them become decision makers in their communities and societies and empower them to discover their potential to influence and effect change. The organization works toward this by providing advocacy and legal support, capacity-building and psychosocial support via various community-based activities, including those that emphasize the role of women in education. As mothers play a key role in educating children, this support contributes to building the young generation's and community's future.

Since 2018, Dak has benefited from IOM's capacity-building programme, receiving both comprehensive training packages and in-kind support. Through these programmes, Dak gained the essential skills and knowledge required to successfully implement various MHPSS projects at the IOM psychosocial support centres in the Shariya community. In addition to providing PSS services, Dak is strengthening the peacebuilding and legal capacities of Yezidi women by hosting workshops and awareness-raising sessions.

Looking forward, Dak plans to continue supporting women and returnees through the IOM community centre in Shariya. Dak's intervention will have an increased focus on a family- and community-based PSS approach, paying special attention to women's empowerment. In addition, Dak intends to continue supporting the integration of displaced communities in their various host communities through PSS, education, social cohesion, and livelihoods support.



PRESIDENT: SUZANE SAFAR ISMAIL

Suzane Safar Ismail is the President of Dak. Prior to establishing the organization in 2015, Suzane held a post as a journalist from 2007 to 2013, where she discovered her passion for defending and speaking for the rights of women through her publications.

Then came 2014, when ISIL waged an unprecedented level of violence against Yezidi women.

“Many things changed for me after 2014,” says Suzane, “especially when I was seeing Yezidi women sold as slaves. This really affected me on a personal level.” Faced with such suffering, Suzane responded with firm action. “I had the urgency to defend this case with all the power I had,” says Suzane, “Dak was born amidst these sufferings.”

Initially, the organization faced challenges of sexism, including speculations that women would not be able to run an organization successfully, that mothers should not work with organizations and that women would not be able to manage work-life balance. However, the determination and strong belief of the director and her colleagues made it possible to work through these challenges.

IOM has played a crucial role in supporting Dak through its early stages. Since 2018, Dak has participated in IOM's capacity-building programmes, receiving comprehensive training packages, in-kind support and on-site coaching. These programmes also helped Suzane grow as a director. “I have a notebook where I keep all my notes from trainings,” says Suzane, recalling her experience of the programmes. “This has become my guidance in my work. It provides me with approaches to tackle problems and analyze contexts sequentially in order to make effective decisions for our programming.”

This partnership has helped the organization mobilize the knowledge and available resources to implement successful activities for community youth. For example, the “Shariya Music” group, established in 2019, brought together 15 young members of diverse genders and ethnoreligious backgrounds through learning music. The group successfully completed a five-month course and is now regularly performing at events in different locations.

Another example that highlights the fruitful partnership between Dak and IOM is the hiking group, which was established in 2019 for youth to hike around the Zawa mountain in Duhok Governorate. “Since most of our current programming target activities for youth, we highly consider their opinions through a participatory approach when designing activities to support their interests and increase their skills,” Suzane explains, highlighting the importance of youth involvement in its programming.

“We want our centre to be a safe haven for our women and youth: a place where they feel comfortable visiting and where they can learn skills that they grow to love, whether it is through practicing arts, going on hikes or through their involvement in any other community-based activity.”

Dak also provides livelihood support. To further promote the empowerment of women, this support does not stop at the provision of livelihood opportunities but is also extended to the invitation of skillful candidates who have completed their training to re-join the project as trainers themselves. A successful example of this is “Faiza”, who was once a participant in a Dak sewing skills course and is currently one of the trainers on the team. Faiza has also started her own business and is now well known both locally in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's Yezidi community and internationally for her traditional Yezidi and Kurdish clothing designs for women.

Another successful project carried out in partnership with IOM Iraq in 2018 was a workshop that helped women pursue their careers in the field of media. Dak provided a three-month-long vocational training to 15 young women from displaced and host communities in Shariya, where they enhanced their writing skills in content creation for media including local newspapers, radio shows and social media platforms. At the end of the project, all 15 participants successfully published their articles in a handbook called “Creation: Focusing on Enhancing Women's Roles in Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion through Media”. Four of the participants are currently working as reporters for television, radio and a local newspaper and are active on social media platforms.

Dak also has a robust programme to support women legally. “I remember a mother of two who didn't have IDs and thus couldn't send her children to school,” says Suzane. “We then obtained IDs for her and her children. At the first day of school, the mother sent us pictures of her children and told us: ‘My dream came true when I saw my children in uniform and going to school.’ We were thrilled to put such happiness in a mother's heart.”

Suzane believes that Dak is gaining momentum and will continue to play an active role in the community – empowering women by promoting psychosocial support, skills-building, livelihood training, advocacy for legal support and the provision of education and health services. In the next five years, Dak plans to establish sub-offices in different governorates of Iraq.



NAME
BASM
CSO
DAK

پالپشتیا چاره سەن
بەردەوام، ئیکەرت
شاکێ و دووبارە
کرن ل عێراقێ

مە الحلول
التماسک



BASM, SHARIYA MUSIC GROUP

Originally from Sinjar, Basm was displaced to Sumel district after the ISIL conflict and has been in Shariya camp for two years. To pursue his passion for music and singing, he tried to teach himself how to play the Saz, a traditional Kurdish string instrument — which proved challenging.

This changed when he joined Dak's "Shariya Music" group in April 2019; the class was the perfect calling for Basm, and he attended them three days per week over a two month period. By May 2019, Basm was already able to play several pieces. The music workshop not only provided him with the technical skills necessary for mastering the Saz, but also a medium for psychological relief.

"Playing music brings me great comfort when I feel sad," Basm says. "Every time I get upset, I pick up my instrument and play. My mind really relaxes with it." He adds: "There is a particular Kurdish song called "Zmani Kurdi" (meaning Kurdish language) that gives me a special feeling when I play and sing it. It's very soothing to me."

The group also provided an environment where gender barriers were broken down and friendships flourished, as participants of all genders were brought together to perform music and sing together, all in line with the cultural norms of the community. "Shariya Music" has not only been a success for young musicians but also for their entire community. Music has always been vital to the Yezidi community, for whom songs are adopted as a storytelling medium; core cultural, religious and traditional notions have been passed down this way for generations.

The 2014 crisis took music away from the Yezidi community. For years, Basm's community was not celebrating, and music was absent. When "Shariya Music" began singing at weddings and events, music returned to the Yezidi community in Shariya. It is a symbol of overcoming the past and creating new beginnings. As the lead singer of the group, Basm has become well-known in the community, and the group receives regular invitations to perform.

JAMILA, MEDIA SKILLS TRAINING WORKSHOP

As resident of the Shariya complex, 29-year-old Jamila was one of the 15 young women who participated in Dak's Media Skills Training Workshop in 2018. After graduating from the Institute of Journalism at the University of Duhok in 2016, she took up several English and information technology skills courses at different organizations. However, what she wanted the most was to further specialize her skills as a journalist and pursue a career in the field. Yet as a woman, Jamila knew that she faced additional challenges.

This was when she reached out to Suzane, the Director of Dak, who was already well-known in the community for her role empowering women. At first, Jamila attended Dak-hosted, com-munity-based activities at the Shariya Centre. Then came the Media Workshop in 2018 — an opportunity that would help launch Jamila's successful career.

Through the workshop, Jamila learnt media and other professional skills, notably including communication skills, styles and approaches. More importantly, the workshop was designed for women with a special focus on women's empowerment, so Jamila and her colleagues received trainings on how to deal with women-specific problems in journalism, such as stigma and judgement from the community. They also discussed ways to thrive in this male-dominated field.

Originally, Jamila had found it difficult to interact with students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. However, things were different at the workshop.

"I developed close relationships with other participants, and we supported each other in developing our skills and increasing our knowledge," she says.

"I learned that there is no difference between us. There were no tensions but a lot of mutual understanding and sharing." Personally, Jamila also overcame a major obstacle at the workshop: her shyness. "Although I wanted very much to express myself and share my stories, I was very shy," explains Jamila, "but thanks to the workshop, I learned to manage my shyness and became much more courageous."

When one of the trainers asked her to share her story with "Voice of Lalesh", a local journal, Jamila agreed. Weeks later, Jamila was thrilled to see her piece in the journal. Since then, she has published 15 pieces in "Voice of Lalesh", with ten more expected for publications in the near future. The articles targeted a wide range of topics, such as women's empowerment, children's education and mental health issues and wellbeing, among others. Interestingly, one of the articles Jamila has worked on depicts the story of Dak and her role model, Suzane, the Director of Dak.

Early on in 2021, Jamila's hard work and commitment paid off when she was offered a post as a reporter for the local television channel "Sema", dedicated to the Yezidi community in Shariya and focusing on Yezidi culture, religious views and traditions. She accepted. Jamila is now involved in the development of two programmes: "Women and Community", which highlights women's resilience, contribution to the community and vital role in supporting their families and communities after the 2014 crisis; and "My Land", which explores and documents ancient Yezidi customs and traditions in villages.



HARIWAN ORGANIZATION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS (HARIWAN)

Profile

Name: Hariwan

Year established: 2017

Areas of operation: Duhok and Ninewa Governorates. Hawija and Al-Zab sub-district/Kerkuk, and Anbar Governorate.

Size: Five board members, 24 staff, and 21 youth volunteers

Directors: Sarwar Salih Mohamed (head of organization), Najbir Hussein Ali (executive director)

Number of people reached through projects: 7,317



Mission:

Hariwan seeks to create a secure environment for people from different backgrounds through focusing on human rights, respect, dignity, and protection and by following the core values of humanity, independence, neutrality, justice, transparency, and impartiality all under the Do No Harm principle.

Services:

 Psychosocial support (PSS)	 Life skills and vocational skills training	 Advocacy and awareness raising	
 Community development	 Social cohesion	 Livelihood intervention	 Women's empowerment



Current Projects:

- Provision of protection and education services in Sinjar Governorate; IOM in-kind support
- Psychosocial support and community engagement for Shekhan IDPs Camp in the IOM Centre, IOM subgrant under USAID/BHA funding
- Protection sector assessment in Anbar (Ramadi, Fallujah, and Heet) followed by projects in partnership with Lutheran World Federation (to be implemented in June 2022)
- Strengthening youth, people with disabilities, and women to build inclusive communities through social cohesion in Hawija and Al-Zab sub-district, in partnership with DAKOK Organization in Hawija district; IOM subgrant under Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation government funding



Past projects

Psychosocial support and community engagement

- Period: January 2021 – June 2021
- Donor: IOM subgrant under USAID funding
- Number of people reached: 800

Psychosocial support and peace building project

- Period: June 2021 – December 2021
- Donor: IOM subgrant under USAID and German Humanitarian Assistance
- Number of people reached: 1025

Social Cohesion Initiative in Sumel District

- Period: November 2020 – December 2020
- Donor: IOM subgrant under Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission (EU DG DEVCO) funding
- Number of people reached: 100

Provision of PSS during the COVID-19 pandemic at IOM's Shekhan Centre

- Period: July 2020 – December 2020
- Donor: IOM subgrant under USAID/BHA funding
- Number of people reached: 800

Psychosocial support and community engagement at IOM's Shekhan Centre

- Period: September 2019 – November 2019; November 2019 – February 2020
- Donor: IOM subgrant under Australian DFAT and USAID
- Number of people reached: 1600; 1300

Distribution of non-food items and provision of awareness sessions in Khanke camp

- Period: October 2019 – November 2019
- Donor: Roads of Success
- Number of people reached: 326

Maintenance of water and sanitation and hygiene (WASH) equipment in Dumiz District

- Period: July 2019 – September 2019
- Donor: Shadi Company
- Number of people reached: 76

"Psychosocial support is a societal necessity" at IOM's Shekhan Centre

- Period: April 2019 – July 2019
- Donor: IOM subgrant under USAID/BHA funding
- Number of people reached: 1500

Livelihood project in Bashiqa

- Period: February 2019 – May 2019
- Donor: TearFund subgrant under USAID/BHA funding
- Number of people reached: 75

Psychosocial support for Yazidi women in Ba'adre Sub-district and Essiyan Camp

- Period: October 2018 – December 2018
- Donor: IOM subgrant under AICS funding
- Number of people reached: 640

"Riding for Peace, Freedom, and Rights" initiative

- Period: July 2018 – September 2018
- Donor: IOM subgrant under USAID/BHA funding
- Number of people reached: 100

HARIWAN INTRODUCTION:

Founded by a group of motivated youth volunteers in 2017, Hariwan Organization for Development of Human Rights aims to deliver sustainable solutions that meet the needs of communities in Duhok and Ninewa Governorates.

Hariwan means “helping people” in Kurdish, and the organization follows the core values of humanity, independence, neutrality, justice, transparency and impartiality under the “Do No Harm” principle. Based on these values, Hariwan’s programming seeks to create a safe environment for people of different backgrounds. More specifically, Hariwan focuses on livelihoods, social cohesion, women’s protection and support for families, placing a particular focus on women-headed households.

Hariwan has actively participated in IOM’s capacity-building programme since 2018. Through this partnership, it received technical and managerial

support and capacity-building trainings in topics including the promotion of gender equality, the inclusion of persons with disabilities and the provision of psychosocial support.

Having already served more than 7,000 beneficiaries, Hariwan plans to identify areas of community need that it may be able to expand to meet over the next year, and to increase its staff’s level of expertise through a comprehensive capacity-building programme in the coming years. It will also continue with suicide prevention awareness programmes, with a special focus on women, children and people in vulnerable situations.



DIRECTORS: NAJBIR HUSSEIN ALI AND SARWAR SALIH MOHAMED

Initially established as a group for women's empowerment by Najbir Hussein Ali, Hariwan's Executive Director, and Sarwar Salih Mahamed, the Head of the Organization, Hariwan focuses on uplifting women, especially those in women-headed households.

Sarwar explains the organization's goals and methods: "Our objective is to empower women who support their families and often face financial and social stressors, by teaching them skills in the social and economic fields. In this way, we activate their roles as productive members of society, and they can become more independent and better support their families." As a local organization, Hariwan holds intimate knowledge about the communities.

"We are from the community. We understand people's backgrounds, and they trust us. This is a very powerful strength," Sarwar beams, adding, "I had a beneficiary telling me that 'Hariwan is my second home'; it was a great honor."

Even during the pandemic, Hariwan continued to support women indirectly through activities with specialized trainers and courses on various community-based activities. Hariwan also benefits from effectively involving local residents in its programme implementation. For example, the organization recruited and provided training for five volunteer groups in Shekhan camp, including an electrician group, a suicide prevention group, a first aid group, a theater group and a student support group.

The suicide prevention group has become especially successful. "In 2020, our staff received training on suicide prevention under the supervision of IOM, and then we had the idea of establishing a group of volunteers that work in this field," explains Najbir.

The volunteer group holds suicide prevention awareness sessions at the camp and when cases of potential suicide are identified, those cases are invited to speak with the psychologists at Hariwan, where they received psychosocial support or are accordingly referred to mental health specialists.

The first aid group, consisting of volunteers with a medical background, has also become a key part of the community, offering healthcare to community members in coordination with IOM's Primary Health Care team in Shekhan camp. While IOM provided the group with trainings on PFA and protection from abuse, the volunteers took on the initiative to form and develop this group themselves. So far, the group has raised awareness on several topics, including: the use of first aid kits; stigmas around mental health; and prevention of potential risks of harm. Even during the pandemic, the first aid group used online programmes to raise awareness of COVID-19 daily.

Moreover, Hariwan introduced an electrical skills training group to develop the vocational skills of interested residents at the camp. This aimed at preparing them for potential livelihood opportunities in their current area or place of origin upon their return.



The theatre group aimed to tap into the community's passions. Initially, it had five people, who performed a play at a celebration on the last day of a campaign titled '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence'. The celebration was attended by other organizations, and now these organizations are contacting the group to perform at their events, too.

While Hariwan and IOM have been coordinating this programming, the student support group has been working with teachers in the camp to foster a culture of collaboration and safety for students. The group offers academic assistance to their peers and raises awareness around mental health and peaceful conflict resolution.

Outside of this work, Hariwan organizes activities that foster social cohesion, including hosting picnics for displaced persons and people in Shekhan's host community. To facilitate better interaction between genders, Hariwan has organized many sport activities, including a volleyball team where both girls

and boys participate. "One good thing about the team that I observed is how coherent it is. You don't see the team members differentiate each other by gender," says Sarwar. This shows a significant change in the camp's gender dynamics since the arrival of IDPs six years ago.

Along Hariwan's journey, IOM has provided capacity building in various forms to support its development. "The capacity-building training was extremely helpful for our staff," says Najbir. "We received training very often and on an on-going basis. The training on fundraising was especially useful. There, I learned how to interact with stakeholders and how to write proper proposals."

Now with increased capacity and momentum, Sarwar and Najbir are aiming to expand Hariwan geographically. The organization has begun its assessment period in Anbar, where it seeks to provide services for families with a special focus on female-headed households.

NAME

SALIM

CSO

HARIWAN



PROFILES AND TESTIMONIES

CSO PROFILE(CSU)
Hariwan

Testimonies of beneficiaries
Salim Xdr Haji

SALIM, SUICIDE PREVENTION GROUP

Salim is a 29-year-old nursing institute graduate who is currently residing in the Shekhan IDP camp. He has been an active member of Hariwan's suicide prevention awareness team since 2020.

Salim decided to join this volunteer awareness group to help people in need.

"I saw and heard of the increase of suicide among youth and in the Yezidi community," Salim says, recalling why he joined the team. "I wanted to support my community and improve my skills in helping people in need. I wanted to know how to intervene when people need help."

Hariwan's accessible approach, advocacy for community services and volunteer group courses in Shekhan camp motivated him to join the suicide prevention awareness course.

Salim highlighted that the courses provided him with valuable knowledge and insights on the phenomenon of suicide, including the causes, risk factors and referral pathways to specialized PSS services, as well as practical tips for delivering awareness raising sessions through a community-based approach.

Now, Salim and his team serve as a strong bridge that connects Hariwan with the local community. "The results of the suicide prevention awareness activity have been exceptional," he says with pride. With Hariwan's support, the suicide prevention team has become more independent. "Hariwan's support made us much stronger. Now, we could even continue our services independent from them," says Salim.

Salim is looking forward to increasing the team's size and capacity to reach as many people in the community as possible. Thinking about the future, Salim says:

"It would be great to have more members on our team, more psychologists, newer posters for awareness raising. Expanding our resources will extend the help that we can offer to people here."

KHALIDA, SEWING COURSE

Thirty-year-old Khalida started her journey as a participant in Hariwan’s sewing skills training course; now, she is running her own business and is one of the team’s skilled trainers. It was not easy at first, but joining Hariwan’s two-month skills training course boosted her confidence.

“I took the course for two months, and I saw that it was very beneficial,” says Khalida. “I knew the course would bring me possibilities — job opportunities; there is a future in it.” Facing such positive prospects, Khalida was motivated and determined. “I will not quit, and I will finish the training,” she said to herself.

Indeed, her new skill soon brought her a new opportunity. When Hariwan’s sewing coach position became vacant, Khalida took on the job. She now teaches five lessons a week, each lasting four hours. Since then, Khalida has taught more than 270 students and opened her own tailoring business.

Khalida is especially proud of how her new skill and jobs have helped her family. Before joining the course, she and her family were dealing with a challenging time. “My husband has a chronic disease, and he’d had three surgeries at that point,” Khalida tells us. “Because of that, we were struggling financially, and it took a toll on our mental wellbeing.”

Khalida has become an influential member of the community as a trainer, and she participates in important community-based discussions on mental health, violence prevention and early marriage. Additionally, being a business owner has helped her give back to the community by offering free tailoring services to families in need at special ceremonies and events.

NAME

XALIDA

CSO

HARIWAN



بالشباب جاريتمو رينين
بوردو واهم، نذكرتنا
جفاكى و دووباره تن
كرون عيراقه
دعم الحلو
المستدام
الإج
الإ

RUSAZ ORGANIZATION OF RECONSTRUCTION, DEVELOPMENT, AND HUMANITARIAN AID (RUSAZ)

Profile

Name: Rusaz

Year Established: 2016

Areas of operation: Duhok and Ninewa Governorates

Size: Nine staff and six volunteers

Director: Aram Aref Hassan

Number of people reached through projects: 5,060



Mission:

RUSAZ seeks to provide humanitarian aid and development for communities in need and support green reconstruction by raising awareness about the environment.

Services:

 Emergency humanitarian support	 Basic literacy and education support for children	 Peacebuilding and social cohesion	
 Environmental protection	 Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)	 Protection	 Psychosocial support (PSS)



Current Projects:

- Provision of Psychosocial Support for IDPs in Dawoodiya Camp; IOM sub-grant under USAID/BHA funding

Past Projects:

Provision of psychosocial support during covid-19 pandemic in Dawoodya camp

- Period: 2020 – 2021
- Donor: IOM subgrant under BHA funding
- Number of people reached: 1050

Distribution of food and non-food items

- Period: April 2020
- Donor: Davenshy Instates
- Number of people reached: 137 families

Strengthening social cohesion and psychosocial development for IDPs in Dawoodiya Camp

- Period: November 2019 – March 2020
- Donor: IOM subgrant under USAID/BHA funding
- Number of people reached: 900

Provision of psychosocial support services for IDP adolescents in Dawoodiya Camp

- Period: October 2019 – March 2020
- Donor: Hudara organization subgrant under BMZ funding
- Number of people reached: 80

Empowering Females by Females of different communities in social cohesion and community engagement

- Period: November 2020
- Donor: IOM subgrant under EU DG DEVCO funding
- Number of people reached: 72

“Life Goes Through Our Small Bodies and Big Hearts” exhibition

- Period: 21 November 2019
- Donor: IOM subgrant under Australian DFAT funding
- Number of people reached: 80

Improving the livelihoods of merited people and supporting Hamdaniyah District

- Period: September 2019 – December 2019
- Donor: IOM subgrant under AICS funding
- Number of people reached: 60

Provision of psychosocial support services for IDPs in Dawoodiya Camp

- Period: April 2019 – August 2019
- Donor: IOM subgrant under Australian DFAT funding
- Number of people reached: 1,000

Domestic violence prevention in Dawoodiya Camp

- Period: January 2019 – March 2019
- Donor: IOM subgrant under AICS funding
- Number of people reached: 400

Peaceful coexistence marathon

- Period: 31 October 2018
- Donor: Rusaz in coordination with BAZ organization (volunteer project)
- Number of people reached: 150

“Stick Day” events for people with special needs

- Period: 15 October 2018
- Donor: Rusaz in association with University of Duhok (volunteer project)
- Number of people reached: 34

Improving social cohesion between IDPs and host community through drawing activities and exhibitions

- Period: September 2018
- Donor: IOM subgrant under USAID/BHA funding
- Number of people reached: 830



“All Colors Are Beautiful Together” initiative

- Period: September 2018 – December 2018
- Donor: IOM subgrant under AICS funding
- Number of people reached: 80

“Riding for Peace, Freedom, and Rights” initiative

- Period: June 2018 – July 2018
- Donor: IOM subgrant under USAID/BHA funding
- Number of people reached: 100

“No to Youth Emigration” campaign

- Period: March 2018 – April 2018
- Donor: Government of Finland
- Number of people reached: 80

Awareness raising of protection from sun radiation in summer in Nergizlia Camp 1 & 2

- Period: August 2017
- Donor: Rusaz (volunteer project)
- Number of people reached: occupants of 846 tents

Environment development through tree planting in Duhok Governorate

- Period: July 2017
- Donor: Board of Relief and Humanitarian Affairs
- Outcome : 20,000 trees planted

RUSAZ INTRODUCTION:

Rusaz Organization of Reconstruction, Development, and Humanitarian Aid is a registered non-governmental organization founded in November 2016 by a group of motivated young volunteers. Rusaz, which means 'new face' in Kurdish, focuses on the protection and empowerment of youth and women. It is also involved in environmental protection and the reconstruction of infrastructure and buildings in an environmentally sustainable way.

Rusaz has participated in IOM's capacity-building programme since 2018. Through trainings, on-site coaching, and supervision (in-person and remotely), Rusaz has achieved greater self-reliance and developed its expertise in providing psychosocial support to and fostering social cohesion within the communities it works with.

The organization has reached 5,300 beneficiaries across all age groups in Duhok and Ninewa Governorates in the past five years. To strengthen communities in Dawoodiya Camp during the COVID-19 pandemic, Rusaz provided remote psychosocial support services with a special focus on youth and women. The services consisted of community-based activities and case management, and the Rusaz teams gave a special focus to adolescents.



DIRECTOR: ARAM ARIF HUSSEIN

Aram Aref Hassan, the director of Rusaz, highlights the special focus the organization gives to empowering youth: “We focus on youth because they suffer greatly from the current circumstances: there is a lack of job opportunities, and fresh graduates are mostly unemployed.” To remedy this situation, Rusaz organizes and implements activities to build youths’ skills.

“In Hamdaniyah we had an activity on electrical training,” says Aram. “We hired a trainer and acquired tools so the graduates can start their own work as electricians.” Now, most attendees have opened their own shops and are benefiting from their new skills. In 2019, Rusaz implemented a project in partnership with IOM to improve livelihood opportunities in the Hamdaniyah district of Ninewa Governorate. During the three-month-long project, Rusaz held various vocational courses taught by professionals. These included a 45-day course on electrical maintenance for men, a 30-day course on dairy production for women, a pastry course for making popular, marketable sweets and an agricultural course on managing small poultry for rural families.

In the summer of 2021, Rusaz implemented a training package designed for youth to improve their CVs and English language abilities, and to give them an opportunity to join Rusaz as volunteers.

“We had young people who didn’t have any work to do, so we included them in our centre as staff members,” Aram says. “Now, they are no longer with us but are working in respectable local NGOs and even international NGOs.”

In addition to youth, women also benefit from Rusaz’s programming. In 2018, Rusaz hosted “All Colors Are Beautiful Together”—a series of events that brought together Yezidi girls

and women through IOM funding. Beneficiaries participated in activities including on handicrafts, music and theatre.

“We hoped to improve the confidence and self-esteem of Yezidi girls and women,” explains Aram, “so they will better engage in their community’s social life and can reflect their concerns through the arts.”

Rusaz’ focus on youth and women’s empowerment complements its efforts to promote and enhance social cohesion within communities, including by bringing together participants from different religious backgrounds through vocational skills training courses and other community-based programmes. Currently, Rusaz is supporting sweets and dairy shops run by graduates of the 2019 vocational courses with equipment and regular follow-ups. In these shops, seven employees of Yezidi, Muslim and Christian backgrounds work alongside each other. In addition, Rusaz organizes events that engage a wider community, such as the 2018 “Peaceful Coexistence Marathon”. “The participants were from different communities and ethnicities, and they did a 10 km marathon in Shekhan district,” says Aram. Other events include drawing exhibitions and bike marathons.

Adopting an inclusive approach in its programming, Rusaz has aimed to support persons with disabilities. In 2018 for example, the organization helped 34 people with visual impairments to showcase their talents in violin playing, writing in braille, handicrafts and more at the Dohuk University Student Centre. Another exhibition, funded by the Government of Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and called “Life Goes Through Our Small Bodies and Big Hearts”, was organized to showcase the talents of persons of short stature, raise community awareness and foster social interaction between this group and the broader community.



A unique focus of Rusaz’s work is environmental protection. “We also focus on the environment because we know that people lack awareness on this topic,” Aram explains, “and green areas in Duhok are below standards in Iraq due to factories around the city.” To not only raise awareness but also to bring concrete actions, Rusaz acquired funding from the Board of Relief and Humanities Affairs in Duhok to plant 20,000 trees in 2017. To involve local communities, the organization gave incentives to people in the area to protect the new trees. Rusaz also encouraged residents to give trees as gifts on occasions like birthdays, thereby setting a new eco-friendly trend.

As Rusaz faces obstacles in its development, IOM Iraq’s capacity-building programme has played a crucial role. “The main obstacle we faced was policy and procedure,” Aram says. “Our skills were basic, but we then started to grow with the help of IOM to a point that we can now deal with issues ourselves through our own procedures.”

With increased self-reliance, Rusaz has complemented the work of IOM by leveraging its strength as an organization that is close to communities. “I remember when we partnered with IOM to host a unique biking event for women – ‘Riding for Freedom, Peace and Rights,’” Aram recalls, giving an example of Rusaz’ contribution as an implementing partner. “We were able to gather more than 200 beneficiaries and teach them how to ride — all in a very short period of time.”

Rusaz aims to expand its services in psychosocial support and social cohesion programming in Duhok and Ninewa Governorates with a particular focus on youth in 2022 and beyond. “With adequate resources, our youth have the potential to make a difference, to be change-makers and transform our community to become a better place for all,” highlights the Aram.



NAME

AMAL

CSO

RUSAZ

PROFILES AND TESTIMONIES

CSO PROFILE(CSU)
Rusaz

Testimonies of beneficiaries
Amal Saeed Kumo

AMAL, DANCE GROUP

The opportunity to build strong peer connections has been one of the many things seventeen-year-old Amal benefited from by joining Rusaz's activities at the IOM centre. "I didn't know many people before coming to the IOM centre," she says. However, through activities organized by Rusaz at the centre, Amal quickly found a space to bond with other youth at the camp.

The strong ties of friendship that Amal formed through Rusaz's activities quickly led to exciting results. After Amal learned dancing at the centre, she and three of her friends formed a shayi – Kurdish for "dancing" – group.

"We started teaching other people who joined the group," says Amal with pride, "We have now grown to more than ten members and performed in conferences in different camps."

Since then, Amal has also learned daf, a traditional Kurdish frame drum, and the keyboard. In addition, she participated in Rusaz's activities on environmental protection, learning how to recycle. Reflecting on her experience, Amal says,

"I had some knowledge about environmental issues but after the activity I knew more. Before the course, I threw away things that I didn't think I needed; afterwards, I learned to turn them into artistic and useful stuff."

With Rusaz's support, Amal has become a confident young leader. "Now, the whole camp knows me because I am smart, strong and always hopeful," says Amal.

"I put all my heart into whatever I do, and wherever I go, I dedicate myself to the goal, and I lead."

PARWEEN, ART/THEATRE ACTIVITIES

Sixteen-year-old Parween grew up in Dawoodiya Camp where she developed many skills through Rusaz’s programming. One of the skills — theatre — quickly became her passion.

“When I grew up, I didn’t know anything about theatre,” says Parween. By introducing her to theatre, Rusaz also fostered a healthy social environment for Parween, allowing her to mix with participants from different cultures and backgrounds. “There were people with many backgrounds: Christians, Muslims, Turkmen and Yezidi,” she recalls.

“We got to know each other; we accept each other and have mutual respect.”

Reflecting on how people came to respect each other, Parween says, “If it was a religious ceremonial day for

an ethnic group in the camp, for example, we all wore their traditional clothes and performed a play together. We are happy to learn about each other’s cultures and be there for each other on special days.”

Now, Parween also teaches other children about theatre, and her experience from the previous activities shaped how she acts as a young leader. “At the IOM centre, we listened to the trainers, but they also listened to us and allowed us to share ideas and speak our minds,” Parween remembers.

“I think leaders should learn from the people they lead.”

Parween plans on developing more advanced skills in teaching, hoping to involve more youth in these activities.

“I also would like to draw and join a shayi group,” he adds, “We have many talents in our areas but we want more support so we can open new activities.”



VOICES FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The path towards recovery from conflict and displacement
from the perspective of grassroots organizations

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