



Iraqi Al-Amal Association

For the welfare of humanit



Iraqi Al-Amal Association Third Conference
Baghdad, 18 -19 / 12 / 2008

Management Committee Report

For the period between the Second Conference, held in November 1999 and the Third Conference held in December 2008

✓ The Conference

For the first time since the establishment of the Association in 1992, the Conference is held in Baghdad, 16 years after its establishment. The Inauguration Conference was held in February 1995 in Dan Hag, Holland, followed by the Second Conference in Arbil in November 1999. With all the dramatic developments in the political situation, the declaration of war by the United States against Iraq, the overthrowing of the regime in early 2003, and the fundamental transformation that ensued in the country, the Association was then able to transfer its main office from Damascus, to its natural location in Baghdad, in accordance with Article 1/25 of the Constitution. The Association was among the first non-governmental organisations to start working in Baghdad back in April 2003. That date stands as a new establishment date for the Association introducing broader horizons for activities throughout Iraq.

But, for many reasons amongst which are the security situation and internal matters, the Management Committee was unable to hold the Third Conference earlier than this date. It was decided to hold the Conference in October 2004 but it was postponed, and set for October 2007 but was postponed again. Members of the Management Committee in Iraq requested another postponement to December when it was set for October 2008 because of workload.

Finally, all the efforts for holding the Third Conference in Baghdad succeeded, and many active members of the Association from several Iraqi provinces who gained knowledge and experience in the work of the Association and the civil society during the last few years assembled in Baghdad. Thanks to their efforts and

their perseverance the Association's programmes expanded and were implemented with high enthusiasm and credibility, which ultimately contributed to building the Association's reputation among the public and private sectors, both local and international. The delegates have a number of draft documents including the Management Committee's report, the Association's strategy for the period from 2009 to 2011, the amendment of the Constitution, which were prepared by the Management Committee for discussion and final approval by the Conference. In addition the delegates will elect members for the leading bodies of the Association.

It is also important to mention the two broader meetings held in Baghdad on the 29th-30th September 2006, and on the 27th-28th December 2007, which were attended by most of the Association's employees and activists from different provinces, in which the Association's activities were reviewed and evaluated, and suggestions were developed for its future.

✓ The Implications of the Deteriorating Security Situation

Our Conference is held today under a relative improvement in the security conditions. Terrorist operations and violence recede notably throughout Iraq, and the number of displaced and forced migrants returning to their original places is increasing. Signs of normal life are returning to the cities and the suburbs which were deserted and near empty. Shops and markets are reopening their doors, although cautiously. Families started to attend public parks and the markets and the cultural activities are re-emerging once again.

But, suicide attacks and car and road bombs are still targeting civilian gatherings, causing massive casualties amongst them, such as the criminal explosion in a restaurant in Kirkuk, which caused the death of 60 people most of whom were women and children. Or the chain of explosions that shook Baghdad on the 24th October last and caused the death of many innocent civilians on their way to work, among them were 15 female employees in the Ministry of Trade. Many assassinations took place targeting intellectuals, academics, doctors, judges, lawyers, media personals, and employees in civil society organisations. We were all shocked by the assassination of our colleague, Mr. Kamil Sheaa – a member of the Association – on the 23rd August last. This heinous crime was actually aiming, by assassinating him, at assassinating free and anti sectarian and anti extremist humanitarian thought. The abductions of civilians also continue, in pursuit of ransoms or for other motives, many of these abductions end up with killing the victim. There is a disturbing occurrence of abducting children in different parts of

Baghdad, such as Hay Al Aalam and Al Baia'a and in other cities, where abductors demand huge sums for the return of the children, causing the parents to live in a constant state of fear for their children's safety.

Violence and Terror reached many activists and members of civil society organisations, who were abducted, killed or forced out of their homes. Many female activists and employees in non-governmental organisations, both local and international, or employee of the media and academics were killed or threatened, as happened in Basra, Baghdad, Mosul and other provinces. A very specific form of terror was aimed against women in the streets, places of work, and even within university campuses, by forcing them to wear hijab (the Islamic dress), There is also a disturbing increase in the numbers of what is known as "honour crimes" against women.

We endured during that grim period deep psychological traumas, as a result of the loss of our dear friends, with whom we had worked, like Dr. Amal Ma'amalchi in November 2004, Kamil Shea'a last August, the abduction of other dear friends, whose fate is still unknown to us, especially Margaret Hassan the representative of Care International in October 2004, and our colleague Dr. Ahmed Musawi, Chairman of the Iraqi Association for Human Rights in March 2006.

Under these dangerous circumstances, our Association witnessed explosions which occurred in close proximity of our office, starting with the explosion aimed at neighbouring church in the summer of 2004. The explosions have been occurred many times and reached as near as 25 meters from our office. We were very concerned about the safety of our staff, and all the threats they were exposed to in their daily route to work, or during their travel out of Baghdad. The decline of the security situation also caused many beneficiaries from the Associations' programmes to stop attending these activities. No less than 10 employees from Baghdad office had to leave their jobs for the period between mid 2006 till the end of 2007, which ultimately affected the level of performance in the Associations.

Despite all this, the activities and the actions have been continued in new initiatives to confront the security situation. After the abduction of the two Italian activists along with two Iraqi activists, in September 2004, we assembled a number of children with chronic illnesses, who benefited from the joint cooperation project between Iraqi Al Amal Association and the Italian organisation "A bridge to Baghdad". We picketed in Al-Ferdaws Square in front of the media's cameras, demanding the release of the abducted activists. It was a very moving scene. Our happiness was indescribable when the activists were released safely. The Chairman of the Italian organisation sent a letter of gratitude for the Associations' efforts in

this case. We also organised an impressive festival promoting anti-violence against women, following the death of our colleague Amal Ma'amalchi, and the abduction of our colleague Margaret Hassan. And, in the summer of 2005, despite the dangers and the security situation, we held two women's pickets against article 41 in the draft Constitution. We must also mention the Ramadhan evening on the 20th September 2007, celebration the International Peace Day, initiated by Al-Amal youth, in cooperation with Dar Al Mada and the Municipality of Karada District, in Abasiyeen district in Karada, the very same location where a criminal horrifying act had taken place on the 26th July of the same year, resulting in the death of more than 100 people and hundreds of wounded. Al-Amal youth performed an outdoor play, portraying stories from the reality of the bereaved families. The attendance was overwhelming and the festival continued until after midnight.

The Association's programmes continued to expand, such as the Civil Dialogue Amongst The Youth project, which was implemented in seven provinces during the period between 2006 and 2007, the National Unity project, which held three extensive provincial conferences and one in Baghdad during 2006/2007, and the Emergency Aid and Relief Distribution project benefiting more than 3100 displaced families in Karbala, which was implemented in the summer of 2007. We must underline here the bravery of the IAA activists, who crossed, during their constant journeys, deaths zones between Hilla and Baghdad, so as to accomplish their missions.

✓ The Evaluation of AAI Programmes and Activities from 2000 until the end Of 2008

The executive report, attached to the Management Committee's report, addresses in detail the programmes and the projects implemented during the last nine years. It gives a clear picture about the Association's development. The report is divided into two phases, as follows:

The First Phase: After the Second Conference in November 1999 until the American invasion and the overthrow of the dictatorship.

The Second Phase: From the opening of the main office in Baghdad in May 2003, until the Third Conference in December 2008.

In a summary review of the Association's activities in the Kurdistan Region, we witness the beginning of qualitative improvement in the Association's development programmes, through the implementation of income generating projects in Arbil which continued for more than three years (1999-2003) and

benefited 3057 widows. The health services activities also expanded to include four medical clinics on the basis of self-financing (in Arbil, Sulaimaniya, Kalar and Perehmakrun). The Clinic in Arbil achieved high reputation, which continued to this day and went beyond the low income neighbourhood in which it is located. More than 5,000 patients visited the monthly, mostly women and children. Furthermore, there is a keen interest in the dissemination of human rights and gender awareness, implementing many projects on legal awareness for women in several government establishments in Arbil and Sulaimaniya, as well as some other rural areas in 1999/2000. Many awareness courses in human rights and gender issues were organised in Sulaimaniya, benefiting 23,000 male and female students from 107 secondary school and institutes. We should also note the field survey on violence against women in Arbil in 2000, which included a sample of more than 2,650. The results were conveyed in a seminar held in Arbil in 2001 attended by a large group of intellectuals, specialists and representatives of civil society organisations, who forwarded their recommendations to the relevant parties.

Other successes were accomplished in Kurdistan during that period in several projects involving the eradication of illiteracy amongst women. Many water projects were implemented in the villages of both the provinces of Sulaimaniya and Arbil. A number of construction projects were also implemented, which included the building of schools and health canters in Arbil, the last of which was the construction of the Maternity and Surgery Hospital in Arbil, which was donated to the Ministry of Health in the Region in May 2005, due to the urgent need for the facilities. Cooperation was strengthened with several International Organisations, such as Save the Children – UK, and United Nation's Agencies like UNICEF, Habitat and WFP.

Before addressing the Second Phase, which includes the transfer of the Association's headquarters to Baghdad in May 2003, we must review the Management Committee's meeting in Damascus in 2002. The meeting analysed the international political indicators and concluded that the US Administration was determined to change the Iraqi regime by force. And, in accordance with Al-Amal strategic paper "The Future of Iraqi Al-Amal Association" adopted by the Second Conference, the meeting developed the final draft "For the Rehabilitation of Human Being and Influencing Social Awareness to Build a Modern Civil Society" as a programme of action for Al-Amal. The essential course for the Association's work was specified. Practical steps were agreed to form a Central Emergency Committee, insure that the representatives of Al-Amal were in Baghdad, begin the preparation for the providing aid for the displaced from southern and central areas, and appealing to several international organisations to provide aid and relief services to those in need. The meeting also resolved not to accept any funds

allocated for the liberation of Iraq by the US Administration. A special budget was allocated for the Emergency Committee's activities from the Association's reserves.

Most of the decisions were implemented. Members of the Management Committee commenced their activities from the last week of April 2003. Baghdad's office was opened at the end of May of the same year, with the presence of Secours Populaire Francais, represented by its chairman. The First Management Committee meeting was held in Baghdad on the 4th and 5th June.

During the last five years, the Association has worked diligently, as a non-governmental, independent, not-for-profit, non-political and non-sectarian organisation, working for the benefit of all Iraqis without discrimination, applying its experience and expertise gained in Kurdistan, endeavouring to expand its activities throughout the country, and the development of its own capabilities in human and financial resources, building work relationships with NGO's, and developing cooperation with INGO's and specialised UN agencies and relevant governmental organs.

In the light of the above, we are able to define the course of the work during this period as follows:

1. **Providing humanitarian aid, educational and health services**, which include relief assistance to the disadvantaged and the displaced families. During 2003-2006 the Association established mobile clinics to provide health services in six provinces, concentrating its activities on rural areas, which benefited 54,799 people, mostly women and children. In the field of education, 26 classes were initiated for the eradication of illiteracy of women in AL Najaf, Karbala, Diwaniya and Basra, which continued for more than 18 months, attended by 814 woman and 20 men.
2. **Capacity building including communication skills** for the activists at the IAA as well as other members of civil society organisations, different governmental organs judges, academics, and social workers in the courts, focusing on human rights, gender issues, conflict resolution, violence against women, and learning to use modern technology along with professional skills in the Women in Technology programme, from which 595 males and females graduated.
3. **Building local NGO's capacities in managing projects and developing human resources**: The Association started the first course in this sphere in Baghdad in February 2004, in which representatives of 17 local organisations took part, followed by another course in August of the same year. Several other courses

followed, held in Baghdad, Karbala and other provinces, as well as in Amman and Beirut.

4. Education and awareness on human rights, women and children rights, international conventions on human rights, and the dissemination of constitution education amongst different social classes: In 2005 for many months, the Association implemented a programme dealing with these matters, in which 25,000 men and women participated in 13 provinces. A pioneering programme was also implemented, named "The social and Legal Clinic" during 2006-2007 in Baghdad and in AL Najaf, which played a vital role in the fields of advocacy and awareness. The IAA held numerous conferences, workshops for women and the youth in Arbil, Sulaimaniya, Kirkuk, Salahadeen, Baghdad, Najaf, Karbala and Diwaniya.
5. Organising lobbying and advocacy campaigns concerning different issues, in order to develop community participation in political procedure and national unity, through networking and cooperating with many NGO's, which achieved remarkable successes in many aspects, such as: women quota in the parliament and lately in the law for the provincial elections, annul the Governing Council's order number 137, which aimed at cancelling Personal Status Law, thus establishing sectarian affiliation among citizens in resolving matters pertaining to their personal status. This was followed by the campaign for the referendum on the Constitution. And, followed by the campaign for the amendments in the Constitution which focused on article 41. The women's movements succeeded in the inclusion of this matter among many other disputable issues. A series of conferences were held on national unity and the means of its achievement, activities to shed light on subjects, such as violence against women, displacement, the ordeal of underage detainees and bad public services which were impressively raised in the conference "The Iraqi Women Call: Stop the Humanitarian Crisis " organised in January this year by the Association in cooperation with Iraqi Women's Movement, and attended by many officials from the government, international organisations and diplomatic missions.
6. Special attention was paid to the field research in specific cases (Human Security) and studying the needs and realities of specific social classes (Women's Situation in Law and in Reality, the Conditions and Needs of Displaced People, the Burden of Human Crisis on Iraqi Woman, and the field survey covering Needs and Opinions of the Poor in Iraq).
7. In order to strengthen the role of the civil society organisations in Iraq, Iraqi Al-Amal participated, from the early days of its presence in Baghdad, along with

other NGO's working in Iraq, in forming the NGO's Coordination Committee In Iraq (NCCI) in April 2003, which included 60 members, mostly international organisations. The NCCI played a vital role in the aid and advocacy campaigns when hostilities erupted in Falouja, Ramadi and Najaf. It played a vital role in establishing an identity for the independent NGO's, and in the amendment of administration order no. 45, concerned with NGO's, issued by the Coalition Authority on the 25th November 2003. In early 2005 the IAA was elected as a member of the leading committee of the NCCI. The Association's representative is also a member of The Coordination Bureau of the Arab NGO's Network for Development (ANND). The IAA participated in its various activities held in Beirut, in the regional workshop on stimulating assistance for civil society organisations held in Kathmandu/Nepal in the autumn of last year.

8. The IAA initiated in August 2005, the organisation of The Iraqi NGO's Forum, which was attended by more than 90 organizations from all over Iraq, together with the representatives of some of the INGO's working in Iraq. Among the results of the Forum was the formulation of important recommendations on the democratic structure of NGO's (transparency, accountability, organisation & management, and leadership), the independence of its vision and management, developing the participation of women in the social work, the relationship between NGO's, the government, the rest of society and INGO's. Following that the activities focused on the demands for the legislation of a new NGO's law. The IAA exerted serious endeavours along with many national organisations during summer of 2006, in the drafting of a paper dealing with "The Causes and Rules for Drafting NGO's Law". UNOPS supported the organisations' campaign and the representatives of the UN pursued the matter patiently with the Ministry of Civil Society Affairs, which resulted in the finalisation of a draft law confirming the organisations' freedom and independence of their work. The new Minister of Civil Society Affairs, during his meeting with a number of organisations at the IAA office in October of this year, expressed his willingness to discuss the draft with them before it is forwarded to the parliament. He emphasised the freedom of the organisations to work without any kind of guardianship by any party whatsoever. The Association was also chosen along with 19 other Iraqi organisations, by UNOPS, to establish a forum for "Election Awareness", which was announced in February 2008. The aim was to create partnership and cooperation between the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) as a government organisation and the Iraqi civil society, in order to insure a successful civil campaign of awareness for the provincial elections.

9. The IAA was one of the organisations which initiated the formation of the Iraqi Women's Network (IWN), which organised its first activity on the 20th January 2004 in Al Ferdaws Square, picketing for no less than 40% women's quota in decision making positions, and for repealing the order No. 137, issued by the Governing Council, concerning personal status issues. During this period, activities and various conferences continued within the framework of the (IWN), which now includes more than 90 women's and other NGO's from different provinces. The network enjoys at present an impressive national and international presence.
10. Since mid 2004, the IAA supported (IWN) activities and its Coordination Committee by sponsoring an office for it and equipped it with computers and internet system. The IAA appointed two employees to attend to the daily tasks of the Network and a technical employee to supervise the use of the computers. The Association also covered all the expenses related to the Networks' activities.
11. IAA maintains good relationships of mutual cooperation with a number of ministries and official departments in the central government and the provinces, as we seek their approvals for our projects. We have an effective relationship with a number of ministries and government offices in several provinces through the attendance of some of the meetings and the training of many employees in these ministries.
12. The IAA participated in a number of conferences and international meetings. There was a vital role for Al-Amal in the formation of the International Coordination for Gender Justice in Iraq in 2006, which is based in London, along with many other international organisations. The IAA had an effective voice during many international events, such as The Social Forum in Porto Allegre in Brazil in January 2005 and the Madrid Summit on Democracy, Terror and Security in March of 2005. In October of 2005, IAA's speech delivered to the meeting of the Security Council on resolution 1325, which described the struggle of Iraqi women for peace and security. In September 2006 the IAA participated in the Social Watch in Sophia/Bulgaria, to discuss the future strategy of the network during 2007-2009. The Association published many reports in the annual Social Watch books; in 2002, 2004, 2007, and lastly in 2008, covering issues such as human security, poverty, youth and displacement in Iraq. The IAA also published an article on youth's leaderships in civil work within the subject of human security for Iraqi youth, in the annual book for 2007, published by the Arabic Civil Organisations Network.

13. The IAA worked to establish a wide network of new relationships, in excess of 30 international organisations, which supported the IAA's programmes and projects financially and morally, including the training programmes. Meetings were also arranged to exchange views concerning issues of interest for the civil society in Iraq and the situation of women and human rights in Iraq.
14. The IAA strengthened its relationship with the UN agencies, especially the UNDP, UNIFEM, UNOPS, and OCHA. The IAA was invited to many workshops, experts' meetings and international conferences held by these and other agencies.

✓ Accomplished Work Assessment and its Failures

In order to assess the work accomplished in the last five years, we must note the following:

1. The diversity of the programmers, the pilot projects, the wide network of relationships and the large geographical area of its operation in the most provinces of Iraq, which the Association directed its efforts on in a relatively short period of time, earned it a leading position. The Association accumulated good experience in implementing big projects within a short period of time.
2. Clarity of vision on the role of the civil society organisations at the present time, devising new programmes and developing transparent joint actions with many local organisations had the greatest influence on the success of the activities carried out by the Association.
3. Implementation of projects in close to the people's interests enabled us to get acquainted with their needs and demands. This enhanced our credibility in our campaigns and our meetings with the government and international organisations. Most importantly it strengthened the people's trust in the Association and facilitated the extension of its base in many areas.
4. Through energetic work, in which many of the Association's volunteers and employees contributed, and through enrolling them in diverse training programmes in Iraq and abroad, the Association developed many cadres of whom there were trainers in the fields of communication, conflict resolution, human rights, gender, violence against women, elections and computer technology. We are proud that most of them are university students, and others are below the age of thirty.

5. As the activities continued and developed in some of the provinces, we found it is necessary to open new offices for the Association. This is what happened in Karbala mid 2006, then Al Amal's centre was opened in Najaf at the end of 2008, and soon we will open a centre in Kirkuk.
6. We updated Al Amal's web site in 2007 after three frozen years. It is now in both English and Arabic. We are very proud of the efforts of Al Amal's youth in updating and improving it.

We can summaries the obstacles, problems and other issues as follows:

- The deterioration of the security situation obliged us to reduce some of the activities. Many of our employees had to leave their jobs, which caused us a sudden shortage. It was not easy to find suitable replacements fast enough. This represented a loss in resources and time spent by Al Amal to train the new ones and develop their skills.
- The repeated postponement of the Third Conference, and the failure of the Management Committee to meet during 2004 till 2007, led to the weakening of communication between the members of the Committee, lack of contribution from most of them in the decision making process and lack of knowledge regarding the management and financial operations.
- The Management Committee suffered from irregularities in the decision taking process and in the delay in circulating the financial reports which require addressing and overcoming in the next session.
- Iraq's labour market lacks prior knowledge and expertise in the work of civil society organisations. Consequently employing new member of staff requires a long time for the person to appreciate the scope of work. This always affects our performance in the implementation of the programmes. The Association's management is, thus, forced to undertake additional tasks, in order to overcome this shortage so as not to hinder our commitments towards others.
- The general lack of proficient English by the staff reduces the ability to network and follow up relationship with international organisations and donors.
- One of the problems faced by the Association was its inability to pay high salaries to its staff to match those paid by foreign companies and organisations. The increase in government's salaries had also an adverse effect where young people and people in general preferred to work for the government which

would provide them with other benefits such as sustainability, pension and fewer work hours in comparison with the private sector.

- Unexpected problems with the NGO's Assistance Office faced the re-registration of the Association which took a long time and efforts to achieve.
- Our shortcoming in preparing necessary management procedure papers for the proper establishment of the Association due to work commitments and constant engagement.
- The sudden stop of funding for the Conflict Resolution project for young students by the donors forced us to stop the fourth year after the program had accomplished many positive results. The same can be said about the Eradication of Illiteracy for Women. Although we received an initial promise of support from a funder, we were informed later that the organisation stopped supporting Iraqi NGO's. We couldn't find an alternative fund.
- Support is often granted for programmes that last for one year and occasionally only several months. This leads us usually to an overwhelming cycle of submitting proposals to the donors and spending time in following up the submission, which may take months to accomplish. All this adversely affect the commencement date of the project and may lead to reconsidering the content of the project itself and its budget due to the change in prices over this period. It puts into question the sustainability of some important projects, as it happened to the mobile clinics project in 2007 and the project for supporting women, who had dropped out of school, implemented in Salahadeen in 2006.
- We suffered from lack of PR activities. The Association lacked publications, media information and brochures in addition to the delay in publishing the human security booklet and another booklet on the displaced people.

✓ The Internal Situation of the Association

Since its establishment and until the transfer of the Association headquarters to Baghdad, its main credential was due to its presence of the Association's branch in Iraqi Kurdistan and the presence of members from many Iraqi communities abroad (Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Austria and Canada) who created a network of relationships with the communities and their social and cultural organisations as well as contacts with international organisations in their countries to support the activities and programmes of the

Association. In 1997 a branch was established in Detroit/USA, which has a well established large Iraqi community. The members of the branch contributed in organising various social activities, such as cultural sessions for women, and family picnics devoted to raising funds for the benefit of the Association. Seminars were held to discuss the activities and aims of the IAA in Kurdistan, and the joint work with a number of establishments of the Iraqi communities to support the solidarity campaign with the Iraqi people.

A seven-member Management Committee was elected at the Second Conference held in Arbil at the end of 1999. The members of the Committee were from Kurdistan, and others living in Damascus, Britain, France and USA. The members in Kurdistan and Damascus formed two thirds of the Committee members. The members of the Management and Financial Monitoring Committee were also elected from three members from Britain, Damascus and Kurdistan. The Constitution stipulated the responsibilities and the powers of each of the committees. The work was divided among the members of the Management Committee. At the end of 1995 the Management Committee resolved to appoint the Secretary in full time capacity to exclusively supervise the activities and develop the branch in Kurdistan. This was the state of the Association right up until April 2003.

In April 2000 the Management Committee lost one of its most prominent members, the distinguished social and patriotic figure, Sheikh Atta AL Talabani, who was the founder of the Association's branch in Kurdistan and headed it until his death. He also was the Vice chairman of the Association. With his death, some members of the branch's Management Committee displayed narrow nationalistic tendencies and worked for an independent branch. They behaved aggressively towards the leading committee of the Association. The Management Committee attempted to contain the crisis and settle it through direct dialogue and extensive meetings with the leadership of the branch in order to reach mutual resolution concerning the nature of the relationship between the branch and the Association, and to prepare jointly for the Third Conference in February 2004, yet the agreement was breached many times by the branch's Administrative Committee.

Finally, they organised a meeting for the branch on 14/8/2003 under the name of the Fourth Conference for Kurdistan's Branch. The meeting resolved to establish a new organisation called "People's Aid". As a result the General Management Committee of the Association announced that the Kurdistan branch meeting was un-constitutional, held without its permission or supervision, and is not related in any way to the IAA. The Management Committee resolved to dismiss the members of the branch Committee, the branch Management and Financial Monitoring

Committee and others who participated in causing this rift to the Association. A settlement was later negotiated between the two sides through an intermediate arbitrator (the Representative of the Ministry of Interior in the region). The Association kept the clinic, the hospital project and the office in Arbil. Sulaimaniya and Kalar's clinics were handed over to the People's Aid Organisation. In light of all these events, the Association obtained a license to work in Kurdistan as an Iraqi Organisation, in spite of the fact that, NGO's work within the region was restricted exclusively to foreign and Kurdish organisations.

In light of the new situation, Arbil's office continued its activities but with restrained scope and limited membership. This is due to lack of initiative taking by members of the Management Committee living in Arbil. We should mention that we have finished the construction of the new clinic in Arbil during the last month. Our office will be relocated there, and we anticipate resuming the communications with the Ministries of Electricity, Municipalities and Health in the near future to obtain a license for the second clinic, which we hope will add a positive contribution to the experience of the Association.

▼ Further Work Direction

The development of the Association's work will not depend only on the programmes, the projects and the funding. We find a persistent need to adopt work procedures, and a clear systems compatible with the need by an institution, and which everyone to follow, even if their work is voluntary in the Association.

Consolidating the spirit of team working has its positive return in the interaction of opinions and expertise, to develop work and enhance the feelings of solidarity amongst staff and beneficiaries.

The extension of the work in many spheres and provinces demands searching for and appointing specialised experienced people, as far as possible, especially in the fields of management, human resources, financial management together with training young people on public relation activities and modern media technologies.

Continuing the research in the real conditions of the people and their needs, especially the marginalised and disadvantaged categories, providing essential services for them, working on developing their skills and capacities, and raising the level of their awareness as citizens who have equal rights and equal opportunities, regardless to gender, race, nationality, ethnic origins, religion, creed, belief, opinion or economical status in society.

Focusing on working with women and young people, and empowering them to participate in public life, particularly because we are anticipating parliamentary elections, the constitution referendum and another referendum concerning the American Iraqi agreement during next year and the year that follows.

We are confident that the discussions at the Conference will enhance the issues stated in this report and in the draft of the strategy plan for the next three years, through the interaction of varied experiences and diverse thoughts, all aiming at developing the activities of the Association as a civil society organisation, with its special position, and its initiatives in the mobilisation and social advocacy, its influence on the decision makers to maintain legislative, economical, political and services guarantees in order for the people to live with dignity as human beings and secure their rights to participate in formulating the policy of their country and its development .

We need to mobilise joint efforts from us and others. We need a common language of dialogue, communication and support so that we may achieve an effective civil society movement, which has the right to participate in the decision making process with the government and its different institutions, and with the legislative authority, in their implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It is the promising route to build democracy in Iraq.

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