

Iraqi Al-Amal Association

Youth Civil Dialogue Programme
Sulaimaniya Conference
September 19th -21st

Preview:

Throughout the Iraqi AlAmal Association experience in the field and development programmes in Iraq, IAA identified the need to establish a civil dialogue amongst Iraqi youth groups, to empower them, and help them interact with the political, economical and social transformation process. Therefore the civil dialogue programme for youth objectives are:

- Promoting dialogue, exchange experience and joint work among young people.
- Empowering young people in the democratic transformation, by rejecting violence and participation in the development process on all levels (political, social, economic and cultural).

To reach common grounds on the following topics:

- Non-violence and conflict resolution.
- Promoting culture of dialogue and tolerance.
- Citizenship and human rights.
- Education, rehabilitation and employment.

Programme, Preparations for the Conference, quick diaries:

- Convening the National Conference for three days, responds to the work plan for phase one of the programme (April-September), the discussion was to present research papers prepared by the youth groups, and through working groups during the conference, recommendations to be laid for the next phase two of the programme scheduled for the period (October '06-January '07).
- The Civil dialogue programme for youth started in April '06, with 56 participant from both gender in eight Iraqi governorates: Baghdad, Kerbala, Nassiriya, Diwaniya, Mosul, Kirkuk, Basra, Sulaimaniya, each group had eight members, for the age category between (18-28), taking into consideration gender balance. During the first implementation months that followed, the Diwaniya Group was clearly moving through the University scholars and faculty, undermining to target young students and build their capacity in civil dialogue, and not academia (which was the main goal of the programme), therefore it was difficult for them to sustain their participation with other youth groups in the programme.
 - 1st meeting between facilitators and coordinators of youth groups and the project's management, was convened in late March '06, to agree on a work plan and delegating tasks.
 - Youth groups went through the following capacity building process:
 1. Lectures, seminars and meetings experts on different subjects,
 2. The majority of the youth groups conducted surveys and collected information on youth problems in each governorate, or over specific youth issue.
 3. Exchanging field visits between governorates groups, and between groups and project management.
 4. Developing technical capacity for youth, by training courses on computers, English language, and how to handle media.
- Early August '06, Coordinators and facilitators of the groups participated in an intense TOT workshop in Baghdad, to train them on research and papers making, this training was a milestone for the groups to enhance their capacity in research writing, and was timely to focus papers to be presented in the first youth dialogue Conference in Sulaimaniya by the 19th of September.
 - Each youth group contributed in the Sulaimaniya conference with two papers:
 1. Citizenship topic.
 2. Shared a topic with another groups from the following: Violence, Terrorism, Conflict Resolution, and youth problems.
 - A group of students from the IAA programme "Conflict Resolution programme for teenage students" for age group (15-17), participated in the conference, with two papers: Citizenship, and on Conflict Resolution.
 - In spite of the security deterioration in whole Iraq, and specifically in Baghdad since March 2006, the youth groups proved to be tolerant and committed to pursue programme objectives in networking, lobby and advocacy, in order to change their roles in society.
 - Since early September, the IAA formed a preparatory committee for the conference, this committee succeeded in safeguarding the flow and performance/ achievements of the conference. There were specific tasks' delegation for two teams, one in Baghdad, and the other in Sulaimaniya, to follow up on:
 1. Finalizing papers of research by the governorates' youth groups, delivery, and making copies to be distributed in the conference bags.
 2. Conference folder, with introduction of civil dialogue programme and goals, in both languages: Kurdish and Arabic.
 3. Logistics and technical preparations (travel, transportation, residence, security clearances), was achieved under very

difficult security deterioration.

4. Providing enough/efficient interpreters for Kurdish and Arabic language, was quite successful, and helped in the smooth flow of the conference sessions' events

5. Inviting a young students' artists' group to the conference' events to present cultural and theatrical activities and mingle with youth groups, helped creating a rare intimate atmosphere amongst youth.

- The conference was convened in Docan Resort in Sulaimaniya, under the patronage of H.E. President Jalal Talabani, where his representative delivered a speech at the opening ceremony. The opening session also witnessed presence of several representatives from the regional government and parliament, and several NGOs.

- Several experts (academia and elites, NGOs representatives, media) from different governorates were invited to the conference, and helped facilitating conference sessions and working groups.

- A delegation from Lebanese youth (a young lady and a young man) participated in the conference, they shared their experience in Lebanon with the conference audience through an open dialogue with Iraqi youth.

- Several International organizations were invited to the conference, unfortunately couldn't attend because of the security deterioration.

- There were 56 participants from youth groups from seven governorates, number of participants at the first day of the conference was 150, the average number of participants for each of the second and third day was 120.

- The first and second days of the conference, witnessed the presentation of groups papers (16 paper), for the five topics: (Citizenship, violence, terrorism, conflict resolution, youth problems which included: youth immigration, unemployment, educational system, legislations for development and youth), these topics were discussed in six working groups. At the third day, in the general session, all recommendations of the working groups were discussed.

- The third day of the conference, 21st of September, was the International Peace Day, the ceremonies started with several artistic and cultural activities, and ended with a capturing improvised speech by one of the young participants (18 years old). To mark this occasion, the participants moved to the Docan city council, where they planted 65 trees at the city council yard, upon finishing, all participants held hands and formed a big circle, they pledged in one voice to work for enhancing dialogue, building peace and accepting the other in building a better future for Iraq.

- The presence of the local and international space channels, in addition to radio broadcasts and written press, was distinctive throughout all the convening days of the conference, where all activities of the conference were covered, and several interviews with participants took place.

- The conference achieved its goals in building bridges between the participants, creating intimate atmosphere between Iraqi youth coming from different ethnicities, backgrounds and places. Their will to resume dialogue amongst each other, to finalize a joint stance towards their own issues and problems, is calling upon the IAA to continue in developing coordination and cooperation in transparency between the youth groups, while introducing new aspects to fulfill the programme goals and objectives to provide necessary tools for youth to study their problems and resolution.

Project Management,
Baghdad,
October 2006