



Women's Voices First

WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY IN IRAQ

Sustainable peace is not possible without the full and equal participation of women. Embracing this principle, Cordaid's "Women's Voices First" programme is dedicated to empowering Iraqi Women's Rights Organisations, with a concerted focus on both the Federal and Kurdistan regions of Iraq.

By supporting civil society organisations, including women-led organisations, in defining and implementing their own localised Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) priorities, the programme aims to strengthen their role in contributing to building peace and safety in Iraqi communities. The expected outcomes of the programme encompass a substantial increase in the impact on policymaking, drawing from local perspectives, as well as enhancing local capabilities and promoting self-reliance. Cordaid's strategy encompasses building skills, conducting research, offering flexible funding, creating networking opportunities, and supporting joint lobbying and advocacy.

These initiatives are all geared towards promoting a WPS agenda that genuinely reflect Iraqi women's voices, ensuring their pivotal involvement in attaining sustainable peace and security.

WOMEN VOICES FIRST

Cross-cutting focuses



■ The basic needs of women and girls are better met and prioritised in Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.

■ Local and national policy decision-makers are opening spaces for women and girls to participate in policy decision-making to advance the WPS agenda.

■ Local and national policy decision-makers and informal powerholders adopt policies and practices that benefit women and girls and advance their rights.



PROJECT'S GEOGRAPHY

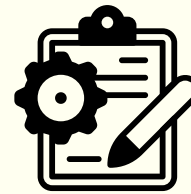


The "Women's Voices First" programme exhibits a geographically diverse footprint, with each partner strategically based in various provinces across Iraq. The selection of partners from these distinct provinces ensures that the program's impact is widespread, reaching communities with unique needs and circumstances.

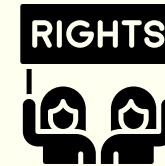
By establishing a presence in these diverse provinces, the program not only contributes to the agency of women-led organisations but also addresses specific challenges and opportunities within each region. This localised approach acknowledges the importance of context and fosters a more inclusive and tailored implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda in Iraq.



Women's Voices First: Its impact at a glance



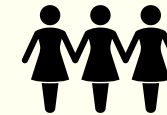
Projects
Funded
40



CSOs & WROs
Supported
29



Direct
Beneficiaries
35,755
(69% women)



Indirect
Beneficiaries
503,626



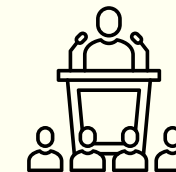
Grants Paid ¹
£ 2,338,399 GBP



Capacity Building
for Partners ²
£ 594,143 GBP



Workshops and
Trainings Performed
14

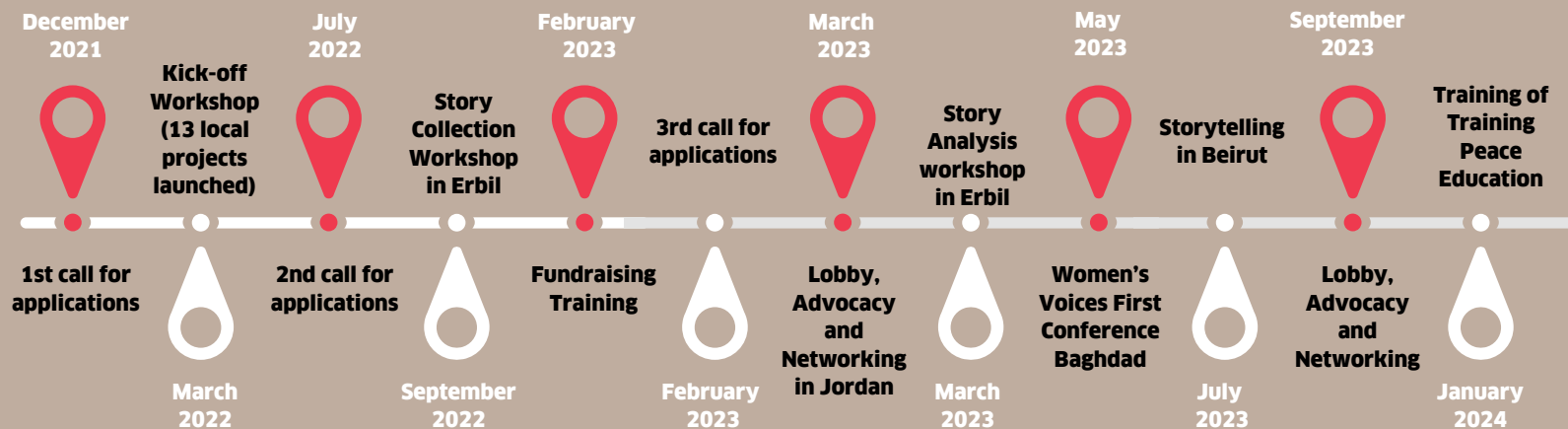


National
Conferences
6

1. The "Grants Paid" category represents direct funding to partners for their projects.

2. The "Capacity Building to Partners" encompasses resources allocated for strengthening in-house capacities of partner organizations.

Timeline



EXAMPLES OF OUR WORK

ADVANCING ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS BY THE TULIP FOUNDATION

Ranked the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, Iraq's environmental challenges directly affect its overall stability and prosperity. The loss of forests throughout the country is already having an impact on nearly seven million Iraqis, leading to record high temperatures in the cities.

The [Tulip Foundation](#), an Iraqi feminist organisation formed by young activists aged 18-36, has been instrumental in addressing these challenges. Since its inception in 2017 and registration as an NGO in 2021, this network of courageous young women activists has been at the forefront of environmental and women's rights advocacy. In 2022, the Women's Voices First programme awarded this group one of their first grants, enabling the expansion of their impactful work. In addition to the financial support, the Tulip Foundation benefited from the different capacity strengthening workshops provided and from their participation at a civil society network promoting women's rights as part of the programme. The Tulip Foundation has been able to expand its geographical scope and reach and to exchange valuable information and experiences.

One of the activities supported by the WVF programme in 2023 was an environmental campaign promoting reforestation through the planting of 1,000 trees across the Kurdistan Region. The initiative included a social media campaign - the #1000_trees on Instagram, aimed at increasing awareness on climate change. Despite the short period, the campaign achieved significant results, raising substantial awareness about environmental preservation. The campaign attracted a large number of women and girls and led to the planting of 1,000 trees. The success and details of this campaign are captured in [the Tulip Foundation's "Women's Voices First" video](#). Moving forward, the telecommunication's company Korek has pledged to support the Tulip Foundation in 2024 to expand the campaign to tourist areas in Kurdistan.



In December 2023, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Plasschaert, participated in the #1000_trees campaign launched by the Tulip Foundation and supported under WVF programme.

SYSTEM STRENGTHENING TO PREVENT & ALLEVIATE ONLINE BLACKMAIL AND (S)EXTORTION



Enhanced Response: Sustainable Peace Foundation's (SPF) training empowers Mosul's Community Police, now actively leading (s)extortion awareness sessions in schools.

[Sustainable Peace Foundation](#) (SPF) is an Iraqi Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) striving to build and sustain peace by addressing the root causes of tensions and conflicts that challenge peace in Iraq. The Women's Voices First programme has provided two grants to SPF to support their vital work to reduce online blackmail and (s)extortion in the Ninewa region.

Prior to SPF's campaign, (s)extortion was a social taboo that was hardly spoken about, even though everyone was aware of its existence as a rising social phenomenon with devastating effects on the lives of many women and girls. SPF's initial campaign successfully raised awareness about (s)extortion's impact on women and girls through various media channels. The "I am not alone" program enhanced local women and girls' knowledge in digital security and online harassment prevention, also engaging male youth and community police.

The follow-up project shifted to a system-strengthening approach. It empowered community police forums and women protection committees to have a better coordination with the Community Police in handling (s)extortion cases. This included extensive training on digital security, as well as mental health and legal support.

Additionally, SPF collaborated with Mosul's education sector to spread awareness in 48 schools. The training provided by SPF significantly improved the Mosul Community Police's capacity to manage (s)extortion cases. They are now not only better capacitated to tackle the phenomenon, but are conducting their own awareness campaigns and engaging other stakeholders. More project insights and testimonials are available on SPF's [Facebook](#) page, including a [video](#) on the awareness sessions in school together with the Community Police.

Capacity strengthening, networking and evidence-building for joint advocacy



“What strikes me the most was the similarity of stories in Iraqi society from north to south and particularly the problems of violence against women.”

Iraqi women's rights activist participating in the story analysis workshop in March 2023.

The Women's Voices First programme, beyond offering a flexible grant mechanism, included workshops and networking opportunities focused on evidence-building and joint advocacy. The first workshop in September 2022 introduced participatory data-collection methodologies, enabling 12 Iraqi women's rights and civil society organisations to gather 119 narratives from various communities. This, despite fear of respondents sharing sensitive information, as well as security and access challenges in remote areas. These stories captured the daily realities and challenges faced by Iraqi women and men.

In March 2023, partners reconvened to analyse these narratives, gaining deeper insights into the conflict's impact on the ground. The stories revealed the enduring effects of violent conflict, the rise in gender-based violence, the deterioration of public services, and limited job opportunities. This collaborative analysis provided a platform for participants to discuss priorities, deepen their understanding of the issues, and build their local initiatives addressing some of these issues.



The Women's Voices First Conference in Baghdad, notably attended by the Duchess of Edinburgh during her historic visit in May 2023, was a pivotal event focusing on empowering women in peace processes and conflict resolution. Organised by Cordaid, this conference represented a significant platform for addressing crucial issues related to women's roles in international peace and security. The Duchess's engagement at the conference highlighted the global importance of such gatherings and the need for continued support for survivors of sexual violence in conflict areas.



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

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