

News from the Iraq Foundation



April 2009 Activities, Issue 33

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to announce that IF's Widows Empowerment Project staff and two participating widows took part in a successful meeting with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on April 25th. Ms. Al-Assadi, WEP project manager, briefed the Secretary on our activities and accomplishments in empowering Iraqi women. To promote IF's mission and share her expertise on Iraq, Executive Director Rend Al-Rahim appeared on Aljazeera and Alhurra news and gave a talk at the National Press Club. In addition, Chief Operating Officer Selwa Galaini joined a US Institute of Peace (USIP) panel to discuss the Foundation's work with women under the improved security situation during April. IF staff in Mdaina started the literacy and IT computer trainings as part of our newly launched Mdaina Education Project. Following last month's graduation of 50 widows in Baghdad, IF held the first cycle graduation ceremony in Basra as part of the WEP project as well as began the second cycle of trainings in all four training centers. As part of our Southern Governorates NGO Capacity Building Project, IF successfully held two two-day workshops from the 20th -24th of April.

In addition to these activities, IF's Human Rights Advocacy Initiative (HRAI) produced its fourth newsletter, which reports on the HRAI project and the human rights situation in Iraq.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions about our projects or activities!

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Sincerely,

Joseph Sandor
Communication Officer
Iraq Foundation

IF Staff Meet with Secretary Clinton in Baghdad



On April 25, IF's Suhaila Assadi and Eman Abdul Rahman, who both work on the Widow's Empowerment Program (WEP), took two Iraqi widows to meet with US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton at the US Embassy in Baghdad. Ms. Clinton hosted a town hall-style meeting at the embassy to address Iraqis about the US' continued commitment to Iraq and the Iraqi people. This was Ms. Clinton's first visit to Iraq as Secretary of State.

Literacy and IT Training Begins in Mdaina



As part of IF's new Mdaina Education Project (MEP), launched in February, we are pleased to announce the start of the literacy and information technology (IT) training programs in the Southern marshlands of Mdaina! The trainings will continue until August 2009. The literacy training is geared towards 250

illiterate and semiliterate adults, and is taking place in four local schools and run twice a week for two hours and 15 minutes a session. The Iraq Foundation would like to thank the Department of Education in Al-Qorna for offering valuable literacy curricula for the literacy component of this project.

In April, IF also began the IT computer training program, which will provide six local IT experts with advanced skills training. In addition to enhancing these individual's employment skills, this training will ensure that Mdaina has competent IT personal to handle the administration of the computer center established by the MEP project and train an additional 50 teachers and 50 small business owners in basic computer operations, which will benefit their work and livelihood.

[Learn more about MEP...](#)

IF Holds Graduation Ceremony in Basra



IF In the Media:

During the month of April, IF's Executive Director Rend Al-Rahim appeared on several Arabic media outlets. Ms. Al-Rahim interviewed with Alhurra TV on a 27th of April to discuss President Obama's Middle Eastern impact in the first 100 days in office. In addition, Ms. Al-Rahim appeared on Aljazeera's Min [From] Washington program. In addition to meeting with many high-ranking government officials, Ms. Al-Rahim spoke at the National Defense University as well as the National Press Club's conference on Iraq on April 16.

[View the Aljazeera Interview Transcript \(Arabic\)](#)



On April 1st, IF held a graduation ceremony in Basra, Iraq to honor the 135 Iraqi widows who completed the first cycle of training in Basra's two training centers as part of the Widows Empowerment Project (WEP). During this ceremony the participating widows received certificates and small gifts to commemorate this accomplishment.

Alongside the ceremony, IF held an exhibition to displayed the widow's products. In addition, during April the second cycle of training classes began in all four training centers in Baghdad and Basra.

[Learn more about WEP...](#)

IF Convenes Capacity Building Trainings



From April 20 - 24th, IF convened two two-day capacity building trainings in Nasiriyya, as part of our Southern Governorate NGO Capacity Building project. Each training gathered together ten participating NGOs to review and expand the skills learned

last November in Sulaimaniya, which include Strategic planning, project proposal design and project management, advocacy and networking, governance and management, and financial planning.

[Learn more about Southern Governorates NGO Capacity Building...](#)

Chief Operating Officer Addresses USIP

Selwa Gailani, Chief Operating Officer of the Iraq Foundation, addressed a US Institute of Peace panel entitled "Two Years After the Surge: Implications for Women in Iraq" on April 29th. Ms. Gailani's talk highlighted IF's understanding of the role the US surge played and the positive effects felt in Iraq in terms of the environment in which civil society organizations operate. From USIP, "When the surge began... by the end of 2007 we began to notice some improvement. Not only in implementing projects, women were more active in advocating for their rights," she told the USIP audience. Iraqi widows who participate in the Iraq Foundation's Widows Empowerment project have become "empowered to go out and find jobs" said Gailani, as a direct result of improved security."

[Learn more about the USIP Event...](#)



IF Publishes 4th Human Rights Newsletter!

The Human Rights Advocacy Initiative (HRAI) published its third newsletter in April. The newsletter reports on the human rights situation in Iraq. Formed in May 2008 by the Iraq Foundation, the goal of the HRAI project is to empower Iraqi human rights leaders to be better advocates for human rights. Published in Arabic, HRAI's monthly newsletters are available on our website.

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