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Empowering Iraqi Widows to Thrive project (EIWT)

Progress Report

January 1, 2012 – March 31, 2012

Executive Summary:

During this reporting period, the Iraq Foundation (IF) successfully completed the third cycle of EIWT in Baghdad's two centers, (Karkh & Risafa), Basra's Madaina center, and Nainawa's Hamdania center. Maysan, Thi Qar's Chabaysh center, and Basra's Shat Al-Arab center completed the training in December 2011. Moreover, IF held a graduation ceremony to honor the widows' successful completion of the third training cycle in Baghdad. IF invited representatives from the US Embassy and local government councils, as well as senior officials, civic and tribal leaders. The ceremony was well covered by the local and national media. (Please see section V. Other: Meetings / Workshops / Other Events). During this reporting period, IF also launched EIWT's fourth cycle in six centers: Baghdad's two centers, (Karkh & Risafa), Basra's two centers, (Zubair & Qurna), Maysan's center and Dhi Qar's Fuhood center.

IF is pleased to announce that EIWT project staff succeeded in training almost double the predicted number of widows in vocational skills instruction during the third cycle without exceeding the project's approved budget. While IF planned to train 60 widows, staff and local partners succeeded in training 118 after receiving 58 additional requests from other widows to participate in the vocational training. IF is also pleased to report that staff connected 23 widows with small grants and several other resources that provided them with the means to generate income and thus become economically self-sufficient. Widows used these grants to establish small businesses based out of their homes, which provided services for their community. They join 117 other widows from the previous EIWT cycles, who have benefited from EIWT's vocational and entrepreneurial training.

IF continued to conduct surveys during this reporting period and the results were sent to Dr. Sadoun Chithir, M&E expert, for his analysis and report.

EIWT mentoring continued throughout the training centers. Notably, IF and in collaboration with the partner organization, Women NGO in Maysan arranged mentoring sessions with Maysan Governor, Mr. Ali Dawai Lazm, the International Committee for Red Cross (ICRC) and Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS). (Please see section Activity 2: Mentoring for economic sustainability)

Addendums include:

- EIWT Third Training Cycle – January Update
http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/EIWT/cycle3-update-Jan2012.html
- January Successes
http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/EIWT/SuccessStory-jan2012.html
- EIWT Fourth Training Cycle – February Update
http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/EIWT/cycle4-update-Feb2012.html
- EIWT Fourth Training Cycle – March Update
http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/EIWT/cycle4-update-March2012.html

I. Activities and Evaluation of Progress towards Goals / Objectives:

Objective 1: Increase women's participation in public life as confident and informed citizens with constitutionally mandated rights; enhance widows' quality of life by improving family health and well-being, interpersonal relations, and coping strategies.

Activities to support this objective:

Activity 1: Conduct education on citizenship and women's rights to a diverse group of Iraqi widows in seven locations nation-wide.

Target:

- a) 28 educational training programs in seven centers over 5 locations
- b) 1,120 widows trained over the course of four training cycles on citizenship and women's rights, responsibilities and civic participation

Description of activities during this reporting period:

To achieve stated objectives, IF made all resources available: IF's Democracy and Women's Rights curriculum, well trained staff and partner NGOs which continued to engage the widows in the training activities.

Details of the **third** training cycles in four training centers are described below:

- Baghdad: On January 5, 2012, IF completed the training of the project's third cycle in both centers, Karkh at Saydia Vocational High School and in Risafa at Risafa Vocational High School. 40 widows completed the training in each center.
- Basra: On January 3, 2012, IF completed the training in Madina at Madina training center. 40 widows completed the training in each center.
- Mosul: On January 10, 2012, IF completed the training in Hamdania at Comita NGO headquarter. 40 widows completed the training.

Details of the **fourth** training cycles in six training centers are described below:

- Baghdad: On March 4, 2012, IF started the training of the fourth cycle in both Karkh at Saydia Vocational High School and in Risafa at Risafa Vocational High School. 40 widows participated in each center.
- Basra: On March 4, 2012, IF started the training of the fourth cycle in Zubair at Zubair youth center. On March 28, 2012, IF started the training of the fourth cycle in Qurna at Al Qurna Qaimmaqamiah. 40 widows participated in each center.
- Maysan: On February 4, 2012, IF in collaboration with Woman Organization in Maysan, started the fourth cycle educational component training at the partner's headquarters
- Dhi Qar: On February 10, 2012, IF worked with Nature Iraq in facilitating the fourth cycle educational component training in Fuhood at the Fuhood district council. 40 widows participated in the training.
- Mosul: Mosul center faced some obstacles that resulted in delaying the implementation of the project activities during this reporting period. Cycle 4 in Mosul center will start on the Month of April (please see section **VI. Challenges, Remedial Actions, Staff Changes** for more details).

Status: During this reporting cycle IF successfully completed the training of third cycle in four remaining centers (Baghdad's two centers, Karkh & Risafa, Basra's Madaina center, and Nainawa's Hamdania center). 160 widows completed the training. IF started the fourth cycle in Baghdad's two centers, Karkh and Rusafa, Basra's two centers, Zubair and Qurna, in addition to the Maysan center and Fuhood center in Dhi Qar. In total, 240 widows from six centers participated in the educational trainings. Mosul center faced some obstacles that resulted in delaying the implementation of the project activities during this reporting period. Cycle 4 in Mosul center will start on the Month of April (please see section **VI. Challenges, Remedial Actions, Staff Changes** for more details).

Impact: The educational training had a significant impact on the widows' lifestyle, attitudes and ways of thinking; following the training, widows are more knowledgeable about their rights, employment options and opportunities. Impact of the above objective is well-demonstrated on end of cycle surveys. Please see Section III: Other Impact /Project Surveys.

Activity 2: Conduct education training on life skills education, including family health and well-being, interpersonal relations, and coping skills.

Target:

- a) 28 Educational Training Programs in seven locations.
- b) 1,120 widows trained on life skills education, including family health and well-being, interpersonal relations, and coping strategies.

Description of activities during this reporting period:

IF continued to use the life skills training manual/curriculum that was created explicitly to promote the objectives of the project. The training manual covers interpersonal skills, inter-family relations, cooperation and team work, confidence-building skills and coping strategies. The training was delivered by IF's experienced EIWT staff and well-trained partners.

The family health and well-being training was delivered in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH). The training material included, family health and hygiene, preventive care, especially for infants and children, and basic female health which included information on breast care and parenting. The training was delivered by MoH representatives.

Status: During this reporting cycle IF successfully completed the training of the third cycle in four remaining centers (Baghdad's two centers, Karkh & Risafa, Basra's Madaina center, and Nainawa's Hamdania center). 160 widows completed the training. IF started the fourth cycle in Baghdad's two centers, Karkh and Rusafa, Basra's two centers, Zubair and Qurna, in addition to the Maysan center and Fuhood center in Dhi Qar. In total, 240 widows from six centers participated in the life skills trainings. Mosul center faced some obstacles that resulted in delaying the implementation of the project activities during this reporting period. Cycle 4 in Mosul center will start on the Month of April (please see section **VI. Challenges, Remedial Actions, Staff Changes** for more details).

Impact: As a result of this training, widows learned basic health and life skills. Improved interpersonal communications skills were clearly visible among the widows themselves as they often engaged in collaborate efforts to complete tasks or solve problems. These new-found skills are clearly demonstrated at the end of cycle surveys. Please see Section III: Other Impact /Project Surveys.

Objective 2: Empower widows to participate effectively in the economy and achieve sustainable income generation.

Activities to support this objective:

Activity 1: Hold multiple vocational skills training programs in seven locations throughout Iraq

Target:

- a) 280 widows receive vocational skills training
- b) Total of 28 vocational training programs launched in five governorates (seven training locations)

Description of activities during this reporting period:

IF continues to deliver vocational training as part of EIWT's fourth cycle in six training centers. IF carefully crafted the objectives of each training to the needs of the widows and demands of the local market. The vocational training included computer skills, cosmetology/hairdressing, and traditional sewing. While EIWT originally planned to train 10 widows from each center, due to unexpectedly high demand from the widows, each center was able to accommodate more widows than originally planned. Due to collaboration between IF and its partner NGOs, as well as the commitment of the local community, and the trainers, the additional training took place at no additional cost. In addition to the 60 widows IF had originally planned to train as per the project's approved proposal, IF trained an additional 58 widows. A total of 118 widows received vocational training in cycle three.

Cycle three breakdown for the vocational trainings in the four remaining training centers is outlined below:

- Baghdad
 - 24 widows completed the vocational trainings in Karkh in the following trades (see breakdown below):
 - 8 widows: cosmetology and hairdressing at Saydia Vocational High School.
 - 13 widows: traditional sewing at Saydia Vocational High School
 - 3 widows: computer skills training at Saydia Vocational High School
 - 25 widows completed the vocational trainings in Risafa:
 - 6 widows: cosmetology and hairdressing at Women Kingdom Salon
 - 4 widows: computer skills at Risafa Vocational High School
 - 15 widows: traditional sewing at Risafa Vocational High School
- Basra
 - 25 widows completed vocational trainings in Madina:
 - 20 widows: traditional sewing at Madina training center
 - 5 widows: computer skills at Madina training center

- Mosul
 - 40 widows completed the vocational training in traditional sewing in collaboration with the Eyzidy Solidarity Correlations at Comita NGO head quarter in Hamdania.

Cycle Four breakdown for the vocational trainings is outlined below:

- Baghdad
 - 39 widows continued the vocational trainings in Karkh in the following trades (see breakdown below):
 - 16 widows: cosmetology and hairdressing at Saydia Vocational High School.
 - 18 widows: traditional sewing at Saydia Vocational High School
 - 5 widows: computer skills training at Saydia Vocational High School
 - 25 widows continued the vocational trainings in Risafa:
 - 8 widows: cosmetology and hairdressing at Women Kingdom Salon
 - 5 widows: computer skills at Risafa Vocational High School
 - 12 widows: traditional sewing at Risafa Vocational High School
- Basra
 - 12 widows started vocational trainings on hairdressing in Qurna
 - 15 widows completed vocational trainings on computer skills in Zubair
- Maysan
 - 15 widows started vocational trainings on food manufacturing at Woman Organization training center.
- Dhi Qar
 - 12 widows started the vocational trainings on traditional sewing at the district council meeting hall in Fuhood.
- Mosul
 - This activity has not started yet in Mosul

Status: IF completed the third cycle in four training centers. In total, 114 widows graduated in the training program's vocational component in this reporting period.

IF started the fourth cycle in Baghdad's two centers, Karkh and Rusafa, and Basra's two centers, Zubair and Qurna, as well as the Maysan center and Fuhood center in Dhi Qar. In total, 118 Widows participated in these six centers. The vocational training component of the fourth training was not conducted in Mosul center during this reporting period.

Impact: IF noticed a significant attitude change among the widows as they reported confidence that the vocational skill training is a key step in finding a job. While they acknowledged the difficulty of obtaining employment, they realize that they now have better chances. Impact in terms of employment, job opportunities and other income generating opportunities are detailed in Section III: Other Impact /Project Surveys.

Objective 3: Enable widows to gain greater access to social services and to the income generating opportunities available in their communities and achieve family stability.

Activities to support this objective:

Activity 1: Conduct Life Skills Mentoring

Target: 1,120 Widows develop personal goals and an action plan to achieve those goals.

Description of activities during this reporting period:

The Iraq Foundation EIWT staff and IF's partner NGOs delivered mentoring to the widows in the form of:

- One-to-one sessions
- Group mentoring lectures
- Peer to peer

Details of mentoring activities that IF conducted include the following:

Baghdad

- IF staff in Baghdad conducted mentoring sessions to EIWT's fourth widows by inviting several successful widows from previous EIWT cycles. Fatin Ibraheem, Wurud Taha, and Huda Mutashar shared their experiences and achievements with the widows of EIWT's fourth cycle. Ms. Ibraheem shared that the sewing training helped her obtain employment as an assistant trainer. Huda Mutashar described the dramatic change she has seen in her life as a result of her vocational training and the new hope and happiness she feels. Ms. Mutashar started a beauty salon out of her home, which is providing her with steady income. She commented on IF's commitment and assistance in realizing her dream. Wurud Taha mentioned that the computer skills she gained through the workshop helped her find work with a contracting company and as a result, begins receiving regular income. Our mentors advised other widows that if they use the information presented in the workshops, they will be on the path to success.
- Dr. Mohammed Al Hussieny, chief of dentistry, MOH , visited the widows in Baghdad's Karkh center. Dr. Al Hussieny instructed the widows on dental hygiene, and dental health. Dr. Al Hussieny offered a free checkup for the widows and a reasonably-priced follow up appointment at Alwya Professional Dental Care Center.
- Dr. Aqeel Ismail, Ministry of Health trainer, conducted a mentoring session for the widows on the national campaign on children vaccination against Polio, as well as the national schedule for required vaccines in Iraq. Dr. Ismail distributed pamphlets and brochures that contained places and schedules of the vaccines to the widows. Dr. Ismail handed the widows extra copies to distribute in their neighborhoods.
- IF collaborated with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS) to provide assistance to the widows in their area of expertise. IRCS will provide health awareness in certain categories such as HIV, transmitted diseases, cancer, nutrition and first aid. IRCS will also provide vocational training

skills on internet browsing, hand-made products as well as training on sewing, computer skills and hairdressing. IRCS offered to provide 80 gift baskets for EIWT graduated widows in Baghdad.

Basra

- IF connected widows in the Zubair Center with Ms. Ameera Jasim, a psychological and educational mentor in the directorate of mentoring in Basra, who provided them with best practices on handling their own problems with their families and community. Ms. Jasim responded to the widows' questions and concerns.

Maysan

- EIWT widow, Radhia Hussien and her family were forced by her in-laws to leave her late husband's home, where they had been living. IF and in partnership with the Women NGO in Maysan designated a lawyer (pro-bono) to reclaim the home. This case is now in court.
- The son of an EIWT widow, Sa'adia Munshid, suffered serious burns that his mother could not afford to have treated. EIWT widows in Maysan worked together, assisted by IF's partner NGO in Maysan to help Sa'adia pay for her son's treatment. They also visited her at the hospital where her son was treated for moral support.

Dhi Qar – Fuhood

- IF, in collaboration with Nature Iraq organization invited Mr. Fuad Hasan Bandar, deputy governor of Dhi Qar, He announced the opening of a vocational training center and an orphanage that the widows and their children will benefit from. Mr. Bandar also donated one million Iraqi dinars (ID1000, 000); to EIWT widow Fadhila Mohammed, to help her build her new house after been kicked out from their home.
- IF, in collaboration with Nature Iraq organization invited Mr. Jamal Aziz, head of the Subcommittee for the Social Services in the District Council in Fuhood. Mr. Aziz met with the widows and presented general information on the stipends program. He explained to EIWT widows the process of adding a family member to their stipend program. He also described the obstacles and challenges the widows might face.
- IF EIWT staff visited Fuhood center in Dhi Qar, met the widows and evaluated the training in the new center. IF staff gave the widows a mentoring session on the benefits and what to expect from the training. IF discussed with the widows the vocational training and the skills that they will acquire from the training. IF staff also discussed with the widows the government stipends program and the process to obtain these stipends. IF worked with the partner NGO on exploring income generation opportunities for the widows in this particular neighborhood and outreach to the government entities, private sector and civil society organization on this issue.

Mosul – Hamdania (formerly in Ba'ashiq)

- Mosul center faced some obstacles that resulted in delaying the implementation of the project activities during this reporting period. Cycle 4 in Mosul center will start on the Month of April (please see section **VI. Challenges, Remedial Actions, Staff Changes** for more details).

Status: During this reporting cycle IF successfully completed the training of the third cycle in four remaining centers (Baghdad's two centers, Karkh & Risafa, Basra's Madaina center, and Nainawa's Hamdania center). 160 widows developed their personal action plan. Each widow had three individual mentoring sessions.

IF started the fourth cycle in Baghdad's two centers, Karkh and Rusafa, Basra's two centers, Zubair and Qurna, in addition to the Maysan center and Fuhood center in Dhi Qar. In total, 240 widows from six centers defined their action plans to achieve their personal goals. Mosul center faced some obstacles that resulted in delaying the implementation of the project activities during this reporting period. Cycle 4 in Mosul center will start on the Month of April (please see section VI. Challenges, Remedial Actions, Staff Changes for more details).

Impact: For the third cycle, 158 of widows out of 160 have achieved their personal goals established at the beginning the training.

To date, 754 of widows out of 840 have achieved their personal goal for the project.

Goals identified include: Learning a vocational skill; raising their awareness and education; reintegrating into the community; accessing social benefits; gaining experience in democracy; improving social skills as well as knowledge of cultural and health-related issues; learning inter-personal communication skills; improving family relationships; and starting a business.

Activity 2: Mentoring for economic sustainability

Target: 280 widows received vocational mentoring to enable them to begin generating income locally

Description of activities during this reporting period:

- IF's partner in Maysan, Women NGO, offered EIWT widows access to "Justice for all" program that will provide grants for vulnerable women to claim their legal rights. The head of the NGO, Ms. Siham Al Okaily, offered training in proposal writing, budget plan and how to fill out the project documents.
- IF conducted a group vocational mentoring session with EIWT widows in Basra's Madaina center. IF assisted 20 widows in preparing and completing their employment files. Also, IF helped the widows to submit these files to the Women Committee in Basra's provincial council (BPC). Ms. Natika Shya'a, Head of the Women Committee in BPC, pledged her support to help these widows find job opportunities.
- As part of our close collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross(ICRC), IF arranged a mentoring sessions for the widows in Zubair center to examine their eligibility for the ICRC grants and to help them write their proposals. IF then arranged for a follow meeting with Ms. Aseel Al Hashimi, coordinator for the Red Cross' Widow Support Program. As a result of that meeting, Ms. Hashimi approved initially seven proposals to be submitted to the ICRC administration for final approval.
- IF continued working with local child-care providers to obtain employment opportunities in the Al-Saidiya District for widows at the Al-Karkh Center. IF staff has reached out to the managers of several kindergartens and child care centers. Managers will contact staff when they have positions open for child care providers and office workers.

- IF's partner NGO in Maysan held a mentoring sessions to EIWT widows on the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) mini grants. IF invited Mr. Abdul Sattar Majid, Head of Al Bo'assa'a NGO, the coordinator between Women NGO and ICRC. Mr. Majid, explained the ICRC's mini-grants requirements and availability. He also, offered to help EIWT widows to obtain income generating opportunities.

Status: During this reporting cycle IF successfully completed the vocational mentoring of the third cycle in four remaining centers (Baghdad's two centers, Karkh & Risafa, Basra's Madaina center, and Nainawa's Hamdania center). IF started vocational mentoring sessions for the Projects fourth cycle in Baghdad's two centers, Karkh and Rusafa, Basra's two centers, Zubair and Qurna, in addition to the Maysan center and Fuhood center in Dhi Qar . 240 widows participated in the sessions.

Impact:

During this reporting period 65 job opportunities have been identified and 23 widows accepted job offers.

Since the start of the project and to date, 385 of job opportunities have been identified and 140 widows accepted job offers.

Please see Section III: Other Impact /Project Surveys.

II. Deliverables:

Obj. 1

Number of educational training programs conducted in seven locations:

Target=28

Four educational training completed in this reporting period / 21 overall

Number of widows trained on citizenship, rights, life skills

Target = 1,120

160 Number of widows trained during this reporting period / 840 overall

Obj. 2

Number of widows receiving vocational training

target = 280

114 Number of widows trained during this reporting period / 528 overall

Obj. 3

Number of widows receive mentoring on personal goals

Target = 1,120

160 Number this reporting period / 840 overall

III. Other impact / success stories (not mentioned in description of implementation of project activities)

IF is pleased to report that in addition to the 60 widows that were predicted to receive EWIT vocational training, an additional 58 widows showed interest and insisted in participating in trainings (118 total are receiving vocational training) during the fourth training cycle. With the help of IF's NGO partners, local

businesses, and civil society organizations, IF was able to successfully provide training for these widows without exceeding the project's approved budget for vocational training.

Baghdad:

- As part of IF's efforts to provide employment opportunities for widows, Wurud Tawfiq, Huda Mutashar and Fatin Ibraheem, participants in previous cycles in EIWT, have been selected to become training assistants for computer, hairdressing and sewing training sessions as the result of their diligence and highly developed skill sets. They will act as trainer assistants for other widows. They will also participate in peer mentoring in the 4th cycle. Their success will serve to inspire students.
- As an example of solidarity among the widows and their mutual support, Halab Soury, a graduated EIWT widow from cycle three, Risafa center in Baghdad, found her first job opportunity with a local factory. She contacted other widows from her center when she discovered that the factory was looking for more employees. EIWT participants, Yusra Abdul Hussien and Bushra Juma'a, joined Halab in working at the factory.
- Three EIWT widows attended nearby clinics to receive vaccinations as a result of a health and hygiene mentoring sessions.
- EIWT widow Amal Raheem, stated "I wanted my daughter to get married as soon as possible, I was afraid that I might not be able to replace her father, after attending this workshop I know now protecting my daughter with education will eliminate all my fears."
- Widows in both Baghdad centers received gifts for their graduation from: Iraqi Red Crescent Society(IRCS), Al Rasheed municipality, Women care department, Ms. Bushra Abdul Ameer, Baghdad provincial council member, Dr. Khadija Al Waily and Waleed Khalid Sherhan, Head of Al Madhayf NGO as an encouragement to continue their efforts and be self dependent.
- Dr. Siham Fiori, advisor of the Prime Minister, announced in her speech at the graduation ceremony of the Baghdad centers that she will help secure 20 opportunities for the graduated widows in the government entities. 10 widows were qualified to work at the Ministry of Defense, those are:
 - Nihaya Abbas Auda
 - Sanna Jundi Najdi
 - Sameera Badai Abood
 - Jwan Hasan Ali
 - Balsam Kathem Khrebut
 - Sara Jasim Ubaid
 - Noura Hasan Jabbar
 - Aseel Farooq Abbas
 - Hanna Hamid Sultan

Basra:

- Four widows in Basra received Red Cross grants to start small businesses out of their homes. IF assisted in the establishment of these businesses through direct consultation with the widows on their interests and the needs of the market. Grant awards are described below:
 - Ahlam Abdul Hussain established a small appliance and grocery store out of her home.
 - Besma Khayrallah established a small appliance and grocery store out of her home.
 - Asriya Sultan Saleh established a grocery store. She is in the final stages of establishing a location for the store.

- Ibtisam Hamid established a grocery store.
- Six widows in Basra were able to receive their stipends as a result of IF's cooperation with Basra Provincial council member, Ms. Natika Shya'a, and Ms. Saleema Nofi who supported EIWT widows to overcome all obstacles.
- Ms. Natika Shya'a, head of women committee in Basra Provincial Council, donated ID500,000 as gifts for EIWT widows in Madaina center.

Maysan:

- As a result of EIWT training on citizenship and women's rights, four EIWT widows (Ferdos Qasim, Rahima Yousif, Bushra Ala'a and Eman Hatem) became more aware of their rights and presented their opinion that women legislations should contain laws that regulate traditions especially in Maysan were a tribal community control women marriage.
- EIWT widow, Rabab Abbas, stated "after participating in EIWT life skills component training, I found myself reviewing my acts with my kids and how I was not listening to them and I start recognizing my mistakes in handling their issues, I decided to start to listen and use the problem solving techniques I learned to solve our problems."

Dhi Qar:

- As a result of the collaboration between the Nature Iraq and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society(IRCS) EIWT widows of the forth cycle were covered with IRCS aids>
- Deputy governor in Dhi Qar, Mr. Fuad Hasan Bandar, donated one million Iraqi dinars (ID1000,000), to EIWT widow Fadhila Mohammed, to help her build her new house after been kicked out from their home.

Mosul:

- Mosul center faced some obstacles that resulted in delaying the implementation of the project activities during this reporting period. Cycle 4 in Mosul center will start on the Month of April (please see section VI. Challenges, Remedial Actions, Staff Changes for more details).

GOI Benefits:

Due to the mentoring sessions that IF and partners provide, 280 widows were informed on how to obtain their stipends, six received their government benefits.

Project Surveys:

During this reporting period, IF conducted end of cycle three evaluations in four centers, to measure the success of several key project areas as outlined in the EIWT grant.

Conduct education on citizenship, women's rights to diverse Iraqi widows in seven locations throughout Iraq

Widows in cycle three of EIWT replied positively about their knowledge on women's rights under the Iraqi Constitution and the International Declarations, democracy, citizenship responsibilities & rights and that they had enhanced civic empowerment, expanded range of choices and increased their participation in the public sphere.

Conduct education training component on life skills education, including family health and well-being, interpersonal relations, and coping and life skills

Widows in cycle three of EIWT replied positively on their knowledge in family health and hygiene, preventative care, women's health, parenting, legal services for women and children, interpersonal skills, inter-family relations, cooperation and teamwork, confidence-building, self-management skills and coping with the needs of their families.

Hold multiple vocational skills training programs in seven locations throughout Iraq

Widows in cycle three of EIWT replied that they increased knowledge in the one of the following vocational skills: traditional sewing, computer and hairdressing skills.

Conduct educational component mentoring

EIWT widows who completed cycle three in four centers believed that they had progressed in achieving their personal goal and they have better access to GOI benefits.

Complete survey results will be completed by the M&E expert and will be sent upon completion.

IV. Framework Indicators

Element 2.4: Civil Society

Number of people who have completed USG assisted civic education programs

Target: 1,120 from seven training locations

Number receiving training during this reporting period: 280

Total number who have received training as a result of this project: 1120

Number of civil society organizations using USG assistance to improve internal organizational capacity

Target: 3 NGO partners

Number during reporting period: 3

Total number assisted: 3

V. Other

Meetings / Workshops / Other Events:

➤ Baghdad:

- On February 20, IF celebrated the graduation of the third cycle of EIWT widows in the Cultural Hall of the Ministry of Oil. Approximately 100 guests attended including: Dr. Siham Fiori, advisor of the Prime Minister, Ms. Khawla Ta'i, Director, Ministry of State for Women's Affairs, Eman Al Barazanchi, Member Provincial Council and Head, Women, Family and Childhood Committee, Mohammed Al-Rubeiy, Member, Provincial Council and Head, Strategic Planning Committee, and Ms. Bushra Abdul Ameer, Member, Provincial Council. The ceremony was well-covered by members of the media. Prominent civil society leaders were also in attendance. The ceremony began with speech by the Iraq Foundation's executive director Ms. Rend Al Rahim in which she urged on the continuous role of IF to support vulnerable and marginalized women and then the speech by Dr. Siham Fiori, advisor of the Prime Minister, who emphasized the need to assist Iraqi widows and orphans and announced that she will help secure 20 opportunity for the graduated widows in the government entities. Mohammed Al-Rubeiy echoed these sentiments and added the need for laws that apply the provisions of the Iraqi constitution and aim to empower Iraqi widows to live with dignity. Following the distribution of diplomas to graduates, IF awarded

certificates of achievement to some widows. The General Directorate of Vocational Education, Red Crescent and local council members distributed gifts.

- IF staff met with Abdul Majid Al-Shair, Relief & Economic Security Representative, and Sumia Husayni, Field Representative, of the Red Cross in Baghdad at Red Cross headquarters. IF staff provided an overview of EIWT activities, focusing on the goals and procedures of the project. Red Cross representatives described their activities and highlighted a current program that offers mini-grants to widows with a start-up fund to establish a business and thus generate source of income. IF and the Red Cross have already an ongoing collaboration with EIWT program in the southern region. IF will continue to work with the Red Cross to expand the collaboration to Baghdad as well.
- IF met with Aziz Ibrahim Khalil, Director General of the Department of Labor & Vocational Training, Ministry of Education in Baghdad and discussed with him the following issues: loans offered to widows from a Parliamentary fund, the use of the Ministry's computer training manual to augment vocational trainings, training workshops for widows, and cooperation with the Ministry to provide trainers.
- IF staff met with the "Independent Iraqi Opinion" Organization & Newspaper in Baghdad. IF staff received confirmation from Mr. Kathem Al-Masir, Chief-in-Editor of the Newspaper, that the organization will provide cars to be paid in reasonable installments for the widows. Additionally, Mr. Masir will lead a vocational mentoring session. He has offered to employ a widow from the program as his secretary. IF is in the process of selecting a candidate.

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➤ Basra:

- IF participated in the Tijara conference which was held in Erbil on February 5, through a referral from the DRL/SGWI. The Tijara program is launching a new initiative targeting vulnerable populations. Ms. Zainab Al Fartoosi, EIWT program manager had the opportunity to brief Tijara's microfinance lenders about EIWT activities that focus on vocational training for widows. The goal was to increase the number of women who can qualify for microfinance loans through linking the new initiative with qualified beneficiaries from the DRL/SGWI sponsored vocational training programs. As a result IF will coordinate with Izdiharna representative in Basra and Relief International (RI) representative in Baghdad to organize vocational mentoring sessions for the widows and increase the participation of EIWT widows in the Tijara program.

➤ Maysan:

- IF's partner in Maysan, Women NGO, participated in a workshop under the "Justice for all" program that will provide grants for vulnerable women to claim their legal rights. This program offered the head of the NGO, Ms. Siham Al Okaily, extensive training in proposal writing, budget plan and how to fill out the project documents.
- IF's partner in Maysan, Women NGO, visited Maysan Governor, Mr. Ali Dawai Lazm to present him with an overview of EIWT, and to request his assistance in connecting EIWT widows with income generation opportunities and assisting them in marketing their products in the relevant state institutions. The Governor pledged to follow up, visit the training center and meet with the widows to assess their needs in order to provide them with support and assistance.

VI. Challenges, Remedial Actions, Staff Changes:

Challenges / Remedial Actions:

- EIWT cycle four witnessed several major obstacles during the implementation of the program including the observance of several national occasions as well as the deterioration of the security situation. Road closures due to the Arab Summit and following bombings or explosions made transportation to workshops difficult for many widows.
 - January 5: explosions in Baghdad and some Nasirya, Dhi Qar resulted in the closure of many areas.
 - February 23: explosion in Baghdad targeting the president of the Baghdad Provincial Council (BPC) in the closure of many areas.
 - March 20: explosions in Baghdad and some of the governorates resulted in the closure of many areas.
 - March 21: Official Holiday Observance
 - March 23-30: IF's activities stopped due to observance of *Arab Summit in Baghdad*

- While the family members of some participants were wary of the workshops, IF addressed these issues through honest discussion regarding the goal and procedures of the program as well as choosing the right venues to conduct the trainings.
- The condition and regulation for obtaining microloan from *Tijara* and other USAID partners are difficult for the widows to meet. Despite the recent changes in *Tijara's* requirements to ease loan requirements, many issues remain that discourage widows from applying for these loans. Provisions that are particularly difficult for widows to meet include: the 15% interest rate, which will be deducted out of the loan upon approval, the lack of grace period on the loan, the monthly payments that start immediately after the loan is approved, completing loan repayments in 12 months and the unfamiliarity of the widows with loans.
- This reporting period was the most challenging in terms of obtaining employment opportunities for the widows due to the continuous high levels of unemployment in Iraq resulting from the weak national economy and security concerns as well as discriminatory regulations set by the Iraqi Government in terms of gender.
- International committee of the Red Cross(ICRC) mini- grants are only available to certain category of widows. Therefore, not all EIWT widows are eligible for ICRC grants.
- IF found it challenging to recruit enough number of widows in Basra, Dhi Qar and Mosul centers for cycle four. To overcome this obstacle, IF changed the training venues to Qurna and Zubair centers in Basra and Fuhood center in Thi Qar. IF also collaborated with the Ezyidi Solidarity Correlation to change the Hamdania Qada'a at Comita NGO headquarters to a new location in Karmleta, Hamdania. IF was able to find all requirements to proceed with cycle four in the new locations.

Staffing:

- No changes to be reported during this period.