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**Parliamentary Internship Program (PIP)**  
**First progress Report October 1<sup>st</sup> – January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014**

**Executive Summary:**

During this reporting period, the Iraq Foundation (IF) and the partner NGO completed assigning staff to the project immediately following the signing the contract on September 23, 2013. IF met with partner NGO, The Iraqi organization for Women and Future, to set a modified work plan according to the contract signature dates. IF has successfully advertised for the project across the country to attract applicants from all 18 provinces of Iraq.

As a result of the advertisement campaign, IF and the partner NGO received a total of 74 applications. Among these applications, 42 completely fulfilled the program requirements and were interviewed. The interviews were carried out on the CoR premises and were all completed via telephone. The 12 interns were selected on December 1, 2013. IF contracted 9 interns to supervise their work and the partner NGO contracted 3 interns as stated in the contract and the signed MOU.

IF and the partner NGO conducted the 5-day orientation training by December 15, 2013. The training was held in collaboration with Iraqi Parliament members and specialized trainers who offered a 5-day orientation training for interns to build their research skills to enable them to support Iraqi women Parliamentarians.

IF and the partner NGO selected 12 MPs based on the criteria set in the contract and according to the legislative agenda of the MPs which helped in shaping the interns' research.

IF and partner NGO have selected Dr. Saad Zayer as the research consultant to provide ongoing support to the 12 interns throughout the life of the project.

IF and the partner NGO were able to obtain approval and support from 12 MPs and sent them official invitation letters to participate in the internship program as soon as the internship program was launched in December 2013.

IF held the first initial meeting for interns and their MPs on December 18, 2013. The meeting was held on Al-Iraqia Hall inside the CoR building.

## **Addendums include:**

- List of all 74 applicants
- List of the 12 selected interns and the 12 MPs who will be working with the interns
- Link to 5 days orientation training pictures  
[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/Parliamentary\\_Internship/technical-training.html](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/Parliamentary_Internship/technical-training.html)
- Link to 12 interns meeting with MPs& visit to CoR facility  
[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/Parliamentary\\_Internship/interns-MP-meeting.html](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/Parliamentary_Internship/interns-MP-meeting.html)
- Link to Interns meeting with the research consultant  
[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/Parliamentary\\_Internship/interns-meet-consultant.html](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/Parliamentary_Internship/interns-meet-consultant.html)

## **Objective 1: Training female graduates to build their skills and support parliamentarians**

### **1.1 Announcement of Internship (Achieved)**

Immediately after signing the contract on September 23, 2013, IF broadcasted announcements on local radio and TV stations, to inform and invite young women graduates to apply to the internship. The campaign targeted all the 18 provinces of Iraq. IF and the partner NGO used social media to reach more than 6,000 youths who are members in social groups and sent emails to thousands of active participants in the mailing groups of IF and partner NGOs. IF coordinated with UN-WOMEN to post the announcement on the UNAMI website. The announcement was also posted on the websites of IF and the partner NGO. As a result, IF and partner NGOs' staff received hundreds of phone calls, posts on the social media sites, emails and texts to inquire about the program and who can apply. The major obstacle for hundreds of girls was their inability to settle in Baghdad due to the deterioration of the security situation. Another barrier was the age requirement as staff received many calls from young women who graduated five years or more ago and were ineligible as the program is designed for women recent graduates.

IF and the partner NGO started publicizing the announcements on October 4, 2013 but due to a request from UN-WOMEN, postponed the announcement for one month until UN-WOMEN received CoR approval. The advertisement has been edited and re-posted on November 4 and continued until the last date of the application which was November 24, 2013.

### **1.2 Launch Application Process (Achieved)**

IF and the partner NGO designed a very competitive application process. The application specified that candidates must be women, recent graduates (within 3 years) and currently unemployed. The applicant must have proven leadership skills along with excellent knowledge of computers. The applicants also has to answer seven questions focusing on the interest and

past experience of the applicant to enable the selection committee to score her skills. Candidates were asked to submit (1) two essays to demonstrate her qualifications and interest in the internship along with an essay about an important problem facing women in Iraq. The essays should also indicate how they will utilize this opportunity in their future career; (2) two professional and academic recommendation letters.

### **1.3 Selection Process of interns (Achieved)**

IF and the partner NGO set the criteria for the selection of the interns based on the application and the interview. The selection criteria were set as follows:

- 2 scores given to each of the seven questions: total score 14
- 5 scores given for each recommendation letter: total score 10
- The leadership essay scored out of 26
- Important issue for women essay scored out of 20
- Interview scored out of 30

74 applications were received by November 24. The applicants represented were of diverse backgrounds from eight provinces of Salah Eddeen, Kut, Dayala, Baghdad, Babil, Nejaf, Qadisyia and Thi Qar. IF and partner NGO formed a committee to classify the applications and classified applications as follows: 12 excellent, 30 good and 32 weak. All the excellent and good applications were recommended for interviews by the panel. The selection process was completed on December 1 , 2013. List of 12 interns enrolled in the program is attached.

### **1.4 Orientation Program (September 2013):**

The Iraq Foundation and the partner NGO have successfully implemented technical skills training. The training was held on December 15, 2013 in collaboration with Iraqi Parliament and specialized trainers who offered a 5-day orientation for interns to build their research skills to enable them to support Iraqi women Parliamentarians. The training was held in two locations. The first two days were held at IF office, while the remaining three days were held at office of the partner NGO (Iraqi organization for women and future). The topics presented during the training include the following:

- The Iraqi political system, including sessions on the Constitution; Iraqi Parliament, the role of the Parliament, how committees operate, Parliamentary by-laws, the responsibilities and authorities of Parliamentarians and the importance of community outreach; various stages of drafting a law
- Overview of international women's conventions and state of women's rights in Iraq: Discussion of major issues facing women in Iraq today in light of international agreements, including CEDAW and UNSC Resolution 1325, as the standard for women's rights

- Technical intern skills: writing press releases, organizing briefing notes, reviewing legislation, working with staff of parliamentary committees
- Research methods: An overview of basic research methods, format of the final research report and brainstorming of topics.
- Tour of the Parliament: tour of all the committees where interns will be working during the period of the internship, and tour of permanent parliamentary offices, including research department and library Training will be provided by advisors to Parliamentary committees and permanent staff of the Parliament.

### **1.5 Selection of MPs (September 2013) (Achieved)**

IF approached 25 women MPs to assess their willingness and interest to participate in the internship program, and the benefit they may derive from the program. The broader pool of 25 MPs represented MP committee leadership, women MPs that IF is currently working with and who are willing to provide assistance to rising women leaders; and women MPs who are actively engaged in women-related issues, including legislation. IF and the partner NGO were able to obtain approval and support from 12 MPs and sent them official invitation letters to participate in the internship program as soon as the internship program was launched in December 2013.

### **1.6 Ongoing research support:**

IF and partner NGO have selected and contracted Dr. Saad Zayer as a research consultant to provide ongoing support to the 12 interns throughout PIP life. Dr. Saad is acting as a resource for interns and respond to research-related questions or concerns via bi-weekly meetings along with phone and email. IF and the partner NGO have included the 12 interns in the selection of Dr. Saad among the pool of research consultants who provided the training.

**Objective 2: Provide the parliamentarians with support to help them focus on issues that affect women's well-being, and conduct research on related issues.**

**Interns matched with MPs (Achieved)** (December 18, 2013): IF requested that the 12 interns prepare three research topics before participating in the 5-day orientation training. IF used this information to match interns with MPs.

**Half-day meeting between interns and their MPs (Achieved):** IF held the first initial meeting for interns and their MPs on December 18, 2013. The meeting was held on Al-Iraqia Hall inside the CoR building and it provided an excellent opportunity for the interns to meet one-on-one and discuss their research topics and finalize the specific details of the research to be conducted. IF assisted in the development of a work schedule to track progress on research with deliverables indicated at certain dates.

**Launch of internship and research: (Achieved)**

All the 12 MPs invited the interns to attend Parliamentary and committee sessions as public activities. Furthermore, the interns are conducting research according to the work plan developed in collaboration with their MP. Interns and MPs are meeting on bi-weekly basis to discuss the status of research and help the interns wherever needed.

The Iraqi Organization for Women and Future is responsible for the performance of the three interns chosen by Iraqi Organization for Women and Future, including their activities in support of their MPs and their research projects, with outputs and outcomes consistent with Project requirements.

**Roundtable Meetings:** IF will organize the first roundtable on February 16, 2014. IF and the partner NGO invited people from different political parties, media, CSOs, and parliamentary committees to share experiences and shed light on the critical women issues. The topics of roundtables will be based on thematic groupings of research topics. An invitation has been extended to the UN-Women staff to participate in the meeting and have the chance to meet the interns and oversee the progress achieved so far in this regard.

**Three training days devoted to addressing:**

*Planned to take place on March 2014:*

**Objective 3: Launch the research outcome document, participants graduate from the program.**

To be implemented by April 1, 2014.

**Deliverables:**

- Assigned project staff in Washington and Iraq
- Signed MOUs with partner NGO
- Finished the selection process of 12 interns
- Finished the selection of the 12 MPs
- Completed the orientation 5days training
- Contracted with Dr. Saad Zaiyer as research consultant
- Organized one on one meetings between the MPs and the interns
- Launched the internship and selected the final research topics
- Organized half day meeting for interns with the MPs

- Finalized the logistic preparation for the round table meeting to take place February 16, 2014 in the Northern hall at Al-Rashid hotel

### **Challenges and Remedies:**

*The timing of the project is very critical since the program was launched while the CoR was on administrative leave from November 15 to December 15 which makes it difficult to meet in person with the women MPs and introduce them to the program and ask for their participation.*

IF has connected very well with most of MPs and has their personal mobile numbers and emails. IF staff called the MPs and described the program to them to gauge their interest in participating in the program. Then staff sent an official email with an invitation letter and all program documents to the MPs. IF had successfully obtained the approval of 12 MPs to participate in the program.

*The deterioration of the security situations all over Iraq along with the heavy rain and flooding has almost paralyzed movement of Iraqis and stopped all government and universities for almost two weeks and has affected negatively the applicants since they were unable to obtain their recommendation letter within the deadline of the project.*

IF encouraged all applicants who called us to inquire about the recommendation letter and couldn't get their two letters within the deadline to complete their application letter and notify us when they believe they will be able to submit the recommendation in order to enable them to apply to the program.

*The 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> payments were delayed for a significant period which affected the implementation of planned project activities.*

IF and partner NGO used their own resources and experts to conduct major project activities to ensure that the interns will have the maximum benefit from the internship experience.