



**Final Report**  
**Widows Empowerment Project (WEP)**  
**May 12, 2008 – May 12, 2010**

**Executive Summary:**

*“The training is like a verdict for freedom to prisoners who have lost hope”  
Basra widow Wassan Adnan, November 2, 2009*

From May 12, 2008 to May 12, 2010, The Iraq Foundation (IF) successfully implemented the Widows Empowerment Project (WEP), which provided training to disadvantaged Iraqi widows on a set of skills that will empower them politically and increase their economic independence. As a direct result of this project, IF provided life-changing education and skills training to total of 470 female heads of house (FHH), 200 from Baghdad and 270 from the Basra area. IF also placed 48 widows in Jobs, and provided entrepreneurial training to empower widows to sell locally produced goods in their local markets.

The WEP had four objectives:

- Politically empower the participants in the program through educating them on their rights and civic responsibilities and roles in a democratic society.
- Train 200 widows who are single heads of their household from Baghdad neighborhoods on a set of targeted vocational skills that gives them the necessary expertise to enter the workplace.
- Provide literacy and income-generating skills classes to 270 widows who are single heads of their households in semi-rural neighborhoods in the Basra governorate that enables them to participate in the democratic process and better support themselves and their families.
- Establish systems through which IF could assist the graduates of the training program in Baghdad and Basra to network with employers and secure jobs and other income generating opportunities as well as provide mentoring services to enable participants to successfully write CVs, conduct interviews, and access social services as well as assert their rights in the workplace.

To accomplish the above objectives, IF worked with various government officials and other stakeholders to strengthen the implementing the WEP project. IF staff also identified two locations for the Basra trainings as well as two locations for Baghdad. IF created customized training materials, including democracy training curricula, literacy training as well as tailored vocational skills training materials, which could be successfully delivered to widows from the diverse communities of Baghdad and Basra. IF also provided project participants with mentoring services, including employment assistance and entrepreneurial skills training.



## **1. Selecting Training Locations, Training Centers, and Instructors**

### *A. Selecting Training Locations and Centers*

During the initial months of the project, from May to July 2008, IF staff conducted numerous meetings with representatives from potential training centers in Baghdad and Basra. To ensure the independence of these potential partner organizations, IF administered an independence questionnaire. After a thorough search, IF identified a total of four centers, two in each training location, which fully met the project's requirements. To ensure diversity of the participants, the project chose two centers in Baghdad; one in Rasafa and the other in Karakh, and two centers in the semi-rural areas of the Basra governorate, Zubair and Qurna.

Working in Baghdad during the month of June, IF's Baghdad WEP team visited various official institutions and organizations to request their assistance in either finding locations for the trainings or finding an institute to conduct the training. IF explored potential locations in both the Karkh and Rasafa districts. The institutions visited included the Iraqi American Chamber of Commerce (IACC), the Iraqi Bar Association, the Mansour Institute for Training, the Karkh Municipal Council, the Karrada Municipal Council, the Mustansiriyya Institute for Language and Computer Training (Karradah).

IACC showed interest both to cooperate with IF to deliver the training in their facility in Karada, at Al-Rasafa District, and to allow its trainers and programs to be used in the Al-Karkh district (IACC does not have a location in Al-Karkh). Based on that, IF Baghdad and Washington started negotiating with IACC the terms of their cooperation. However, after two weeks of negotiations, IACC expressed their regret that they are not able to perform the training. Based on that, IF immediately started negotiating with both Al-Mustansyria and Al-Mansour Institutes for Language and Computer Training to perform this training on all four components of the WEP vocational training program.

In Basra after exploring several possible locations, IF's WEP project manager Ms. Sukaina Jameel, with the help of the Municipal Councils, selected two training locations in the Basra governorate. The first location in Al-Qurna, is located in the northern part of Basra. The Municipal Council provided the "Al-Khadra' High School" to be used for the widows training. In addition, IF, with the assistance of the Municipal Council in Al-Qurna obtained the approval of Al-Qurna Hospital to provide the training center with electricity from the hospital generators whenever needed.

The second location was identified in the southern part of Basra in Al-Zubair. IF rented a training facility from Akeelat Zainab Organization. This training facility is fully equipped with sewing machines, desks, and other necessary furniture for the training. Both Municipal Councils in Al-Qurna and Al-Zubair cooperated with IF to facilitate all issues that are related to the training.



### B. Selecting Training Instructors

In Baghdad, IF contracted Al-Mustansiriya and Al-Mansour Institutes to deliver the training. Both institutes are well established with certified trainers in the subjects related to WEP training. IF WEP staff met with the Directors of both institutes and with trainers individually to go over the details of the training and to explain the goals of the project. IF WEP staff Ms. Suhaila Al-Assadi and Ms. Eman Abdulrahman –both lawyers and have experience in democracy and women’s rights education – are delivering the democracy education and women’s rights education, using the curriculum developed by the three selected experts.

In Basra, IF signed an agreement with Al-Noor Organization to deliver the sewing training. IF, also reached an agreement with Ministry of Education, Basra Branch to use the ministry’s literacy curriculum. IF signed agreements with six literacy teachers (three for each training center) to provide the literacy training. IF WEP staff Ms. Zainab Al-Fartousi and Ms. Nidhal Fadil delivered the democracy education and women’s rights.

## **2. Development of Training Materials**

In June 2008, IF’s Baghdad staff visited the Ministry of Education, and the College of Education at Baghdad University, to discuss the possibility of using their training material for the Vocational Skills Training (VST) in Baghdad. The Minister of Education and his adviser agreed on having IF use the Ministry’s training manuals for Computer and English. The staff also met with a number of professors and experts from the College of Education, as well as with Child Psychology expert, Dr. Laila Al-A’thami to discuss the possibility of preparing manuals for the computer literacy, English business writing, book-keeping and child care trainings.

In Basra, IF coordinated with the municipal councils and the Education Administration in Basra to obtain the Ministry of Education literacy programs (reading and arithmetic) to be used in the training. All programs were delivered to IF late June.

Baghdad and Basra staff also started working on developing the democracy curriculum. IF contacted experts in democracy and women’s rights in Baghdad and Basra to help develop the democracy and women’s rights program. IF identified three experts, Judge Hadi Aziz and Dr. Bushra Al-Ubaidi from Baghdad, and Dr. Sajed Al-Rikabi from Basra to create the democracy curriculum. Each member of the committee will prepare part of the democracy and women’s rights education curriculum according to his or her expertise and then meet with the other two experts in IF’s Baghdad office to combine all three curricula into one final manual. In late July, early August 2008, IF reviewed, revised, and approved the manual.

*Democracy Education and Women’s Rights:*



On July 3 2008, democracy education and women's rights experts Dr. Bushra Al-Obaidi and Judge Hadi Aziz met with IF's WEP project manager at IF's office in Baghdad to discuss the necessary details to design a suitable curriculum for democracy education and women's rights. Dr. Sajed Al-Rikabi, the third expert from Basra, joined in the meeting by telephone. IF requested that the experts make use of "Claiming our Rights" booklet that was developed by the Women's Learning Partnership and the UNDP's "Introductory Gender Analysis and Gender Training Module". The three experts agreed to meet on July 13, in Baghdad to put together a strategy for developing the curriculum. IF and the three experts signed MOUs to design the curriculum. It was also agreed in the meeting that the three experts will design the project's Baseline, Follow-up, and End of project survey. In addition, IF reached an agreement with Dr. Sa'adoun Chithir to prepare reports on the findings of the project's Baseline, Follow-up, and End of Project surveys. The curriculum was finalized on August 9, 2008.

*Computer, Business English, Childcare, and Bookkeeping:*

Al-Mustansiriya and Al-Mansour Institutes management developed curricula for the subjects mentioned above. IF worked closely with the management in reviewing their work to make sure that it will be suitable for the widows. IF's Executive Director and IF's WEP project manager in DC approved the curricula to be used in the training.

*Literacy Education:*

IF obtained the Ministry of Education's approval to use their literacy curriculum. The Ministry of Education provided IF with the necessary curriculum for the training.

*Sewing training:*

IF signed an agreement with Al-Noor Organization to develop, provide raw material for the training program and deliver the sewing training. Due to the educational and social background of the Basra widows, Al-Noor Organization developed a suitable curriculum for the sewing training. To achieve the best results from the training, Al-Noor Organization trained 14 master seamstresses (7 for each training center) to deliver the sewing training in the most efficient way.

*Entrepreneurial Skills:*

IF is working with the Dr. Chithir from The Market Research Center at Baghdad University to develop the Entrepreneurial Skills curriculum and to deliver the training in Baghdad. Dr. Chithir will nominate one of his women colleagues from Basra University to deliver the training for the Basra widows.

### **3. Recruiting Training Participants**



Throughout the implementation of the WEP project, IF held numerous recruitment drives to find participants in both Baghdad and Basra for each training cycle. In total, IF conducted four recruitment drives for widows in Baghdad and identified the 50 participants for each cycle for a total of 200 participants. In Basra, IF identified and recruited two groups of 135 widows to participate in each of the project's two training cycles in the two training centers in Basra.

*Recruiting for the 1<sup>st</sup> Training Cycles:*

In Baghdad, IF started recruiting for the first training cycle in Baghdad during June and July 2008. IF's Baghdad staff sent official letters to the State Ministry for Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Committee of Women, Family and Child, and the Municipal Councils of Karada, Adamia' and Al-Karkh, to request their assistance in recruiting widows for the project. Several institutions provided IF with a list of widows most of which, either did not fall within IF's recruitment criteria or were not reachable because of outdated contact information. To facilitate recruitment, IF created recruitment flyers. In Basra during the month of June, IF worked with the Municipal Councils of Al-Qurna and Al-Zubair to assist in identifying widows for the training cycle.

*Recruiting for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Training Cycles:*

From January 1 – March 31 2009, IF conducted recruitment activities to identify participants for the second training cycles in Baghdad and Basra. In Baghdad, IF WEP staff visited and contacted several CSOs and community leaders to seek their assistance in nominating widows for the 2nd cycle. IF visited several NGOs and other community organizations, and also continued working with the Committee of Women, Children and Family, as well as the Ministry of Labor and Social work, The Municipal Councils in Karrada and in Al-Shu'la.

From March 15 through March 26, IF worked to finalize the selection of 50 widows for the 2nd training cycle, and established a file for each potential widow. By the second week of April, 2009, IF staff had finalized the recruitment procedure for Baghdad.

In Basra, IF WEP staff continued to work with the Municipal Councils in Al-Qurna and Al-Zubair and CSOs and community leaders in Al-Zubair and Al-Qurna to nominate widows for the 2nd training cycle in Basra.

*Recruiting for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Training Cycle in Baghdad:*

Using similar methods identified above, IF successfully completed the recruitment of 50 widows for the third training cycle in Baghdad during the period from July 1 to September 30, 2009. In Basra where there is two training cycles, IF staff had finished identifying participants during previous recruitment drives. From October 1 to December



31<sup>st</sup>, 2009, IF's team successfully completed the recruitment of an additional 50 widows for the fourth training cycle in Baghdad. To do this, IF conducted several visits to CSOs as well as distributed recruitment flyers.

### **3. Trainings Activities**

The WEP project was implanted in two diverse communities: Baghdad and Basra. The participants from Baghdad had a higher degree of formal education and were literate as compared to the rural and semi-rural population from Basra, where participants were most likely illiterate or semiliterate. To tailor the project to the differing needs of these communities, IF created two Program Packages: the first geared to the more educated participants from Baghdad and the second better suited to the widow population of Basra. Each group received the same core unit of democracy education and women's rights.

#### *The Core Unit*

Both packages included training on the rights of women in the Iraqi constitution and their rights in international human rights conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and CEDAW. The packages included basic civic education such as the right and duty of women to vote and participate in the public life of Iraq and its democratic process. This democracy training formed the foundation of both packages on which the literacy, income-generation and job skills programs will be built. It also included raising awareness on the rights of women in relation to local and national governments, including accessing existing government benefit programs such as the monthly stipends allocated by the government to women who are single heads of households.

Beyond the core unit, the two packages were tailored to specifically address the needs of two Iraqi widow groups: the literate and the illiterate. The Vocational Skills Training (VST) will address the needs of the first group, while the Literacy Training (LT) will address the needs of the second group.

#### *Program Package #1: Vocational Skills Training (VST)*

The VST was aimed at literate widows between the ages of 20 and 40 with a minimum of a middle school education and maximum high school education. This package included computer literacy, basic professional English language skills, bookkeeping, and childcare skills. The English language skills component focused on writing business correspondence, official letters and memorandums. This package was implemented in the Baghdad governorate where there are higher levels of literate women and greater needs for office jobs in both the public and private sectors. During the first three months, the classes covered the following topics:

- Democracy



- Computer Literacy
- Basic English Business Writing
- Book-keeping or Child Care Professional Skills

During the last month of the training in Program Package 1, participants received an intensive entrepreneurial skills training component

The VST package was conducted two centers in Baghdad and enrolled a total of 200 participants over the course of this project. Each location ran 4 consecutive cycles, with each cycle training 25 widows in each center. During each cycle, IF staff administered a baseline, follow-on, and final survey to all participating women in this project in order to measure and evaluate the increase in knowledge and skills in the training areas.

IF held an opening ceremony on August 19, 2008 to launch the training program in Baghdad. The first training cycle in Baghdad began in the Rasafa center on September 16<sup>th</sup>. The following day, September 17, training began in the Karkh center. On March 9, 2009, IF held a graduation ceremony to honor the Iraqi widows participating in the Widows Empowerment Project trainings in Baghdad. During this ceremony the participating widows received certificates and small gifts to commemorate this accomplishment. The ceremony was covered by a variety of media outlets and newspapers and publicized throughout the country and region. In addition to the widows and their families, Iraqi ministry officials, including Samira Al-Musawi, head of the Committee on Women, Family and Children, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Human Rights, Baghdad Council, and the US Embassy, and IF's Executive Director, Rend Al-Rahim, attended the event.

The second training cycle in Baghdad began on April 13<sup>th</sup> 2009 in Rasafa. The following day, April 14<sup>th</sup> 2009, trainings began in the Karkh center. On October 10, 2009, IF held a graduation ceremony to honor the 50 Iraqi widows who participated in the Widows Empowerment Project's second training cycle in Baghdad. During this ceremony the participating widows received certificates and small gifts to commemorate this accomplishment. Joined by the women who completed WEP's first training cycle and an additional 50 widows, who will start the program's third training cycle in October, IF used this occasion to highlight conditions facing the widows and the urgent need for assistance and training programs. In addition to the widows and their families, representatives from the Ministry of Human Rights, Commission on Integrity, Iraq's Parliament, US Embassy, and Iraqi and International civil society organizations as well as local businesses attended the event.

The third training cycle in Baghdad began on October 6, 2009 in the Karkh center, and October 7 in the Rasafa center. The widows were evaluated by the computer skills and business English trainers and were organized in groups to be trained according to the skills and knowledge. IF WEP staff in Baghdad started delivering the democracy



education and women's rights training. As required, IF WEP staff conducted the Baseline survey.

The fourth training cycle in Baghdad started in both training centers on January 20<sup>th</sup> 2010. The WEP 4<sup>th</sup> training coincided with the Iraqi elections in Iraq. Electoral lectures were presented to the widows on February, 25, 2010. These lectures covered election options, selecting the suitable candidate that represents citizens effectively in the parliament, and political and civil participation as well as the importance of elections, means to evaluate the candidates, and how can elections make the government be accountable before citizens.

On May 12, 2010, IF held the final graduation ceremony to honor the remaining 100 Iraqi widows participating in the Widows Empowerment Project trainings in Baghdad from both cycles three and four. During this ceremony the participating widows received certificates and small gifts to commemorate this accomplishment. Joined by widows, who completed the training program in earlier, IF used this occasion to highlight conditions facing the widows and the urgent need for assistance and training programs.

#### *Program Package #2: Literacy Training*

The LT was implemented in semi-rural areas of the governorate of Basra, where many women are illiterate and suffer from extreme poverty. This package included literacy education and training on sewing and knitting. Due to the great need of these skills, this package was made available for all interested candidates and will not have an age limit.

In total, 270 illiterate widows took part in this training package in the two established centers located in Al-Zubair and Al-Qurna. Each center ran two cycles over the course of 5 months. In total this program trained 12 groups; each group will include 21/22 students. Each cycle will have 3 classes running at the same time. All classes included literacy training. To aid in the sewing training, IF equipped each center with sewing machines. IF will also provide required material for sewing and knitting training, such as fabric, yarn, and threads, as well as other necessary items. During the first four months, the classes covered the following topics:

- Democracy
- Literacy
- Sewing or Knitting

During the fifth month, participants received Entrepreneurial Skills training, based on their newly acquired skills. During each cycle, IF staff administered a baseline, follow-on, and final survey to all participating women in this project in order to measure and evaluate the increase in knowledge and skills in the training areas.



IF launched the first training cycle in Basra with an opening ceremony, which was held on September 25, 2008. Shortly after on September 27, trainings began in the Al-Zubair training center. In the Al-Qurna training center, classes began October 13<sup>th</sup>.

On April 1st, 2009, 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.

On April 17, 2009 the first day of training of the 2nd cycle started at Al-Qurna center, and on June 20, at Al-Zubair center. IF divided the widows into groups according to their basic knowledge of the Alphabet and numbers. The literacy teachers started the first lecture of literacy and basic arithmetic. The sewing trainers started the basic sewing training to the widows.

On November 24, 2009, the Iraq Foundation (IF) Office in Basra successfully celebrated the graduation of the 2nd cycle from both Basra centers, Al-Zubair and Al-Qurna. The ceremony took place at the Basra Provincial Council hall of Utba bin Ghazwan. The space was donated without charge in support to the widows. In addition to the graduated widows and their families, IF invited officials from Basra Municipal Council, government officials, several media representatives, and a number of Iraqi NGOs to the event. The Head of Women Committee in Basra Provincial Council delivered the graduation certificates to the graduating widows.

Following the completion of the two formal training cycles in Basra, IF held numerous mentoring trainings on various topics, including sewing and how to market locally prepared goods as well as political topics including the Iraqi elections (for more information, please see mentoring activities below).

#### **4. Mentoring and Income Generation Activities and Outreach**

Training in entrepreneurial skills: As part of the overall training programs, IF provided FHH in Baghdad and Basra with Career and Entrepreneurial Skills Training. The training introduced FHH to resume writing, cover letter writing, business English, networking and preparing for job interviews. FHH learned how to look for jobs via networking and information sharing. IF also worked to provide entrepreneurial and business start-up skills, including market study, business planning, marketing and basic financial skills to instruct participants on how to market locally produced goods.

Ongoing career guidance and mentoring: IF established in-house Career Counseling Centers (CCC's) at its Baghdad and Basra offices. CCC counselors/mentors, recruited from the local communities, acted as advocates for the FHHs with potential state or private sector employers. They assisted graduates in their job search, help them network,



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counsel them on longer term educational and career options, and supported them by helping them build self-esteem and confidence.

IF counselors have an intensive, one-on-one support role after graduation and provided guidance and support, helped with problem-solving, and suggested ways in which the women can further develop professionally and financially.

Assistance in job placement and career development: Leveraging our strong ties to local communities and businesses, a history of successful work with other NGOs, and good relations with government institutions at the national and provincial levels, IF actively networked, advocated, and sought employment for the trainees. In addition, IF staff helped FHH who want to start their own business navigate the process of obtaining loans and grants and facilitated these participants' ambitions by supplying donated goods, such as sewing machines and materials to support entrepreneurial widows.

Following each training course, IF has built into the project plan a period of intensive job assistance to graduates, in which IF mentors and counselors will provide one-on-one help to FHHs to launch them into professional life. Monthly follow-up visits were conducted through the course of this project to facilitate this as well as targeted mentoring trainings, especially in the rural communities of Basra, in order to assist our trainees to sell their goods in local markets.

Assistance in accessing small loans and grants: Where possible, IF will connected with international organizations or Iraqi government agencies that provide small loans and/or grants to new businesses and will make maximum use of already available resources (including U.S. funded resources) to help female heads of households who decide to start their own business. IF received support from International Relief and Development (IRD) to access their small grants program (through their USAID contract).

In an effort to start outreaching to potential work opportunities for graduate widows during the first cycles of training in both Baghdad and Basra, IF's project staff in contacted government and private sectors to seek their cooperation in finding job opportunities for WEP trained widows. IF met with the head of the NGO committee in Parliament Ms. Ala Talabani as well as representatives from the Family and Childhood Committee and the State Ministry for Women's Affairs. During the month of November, IF Iraq staff outlined a strategy for contacting various political figures including executive and legislative members of the government, as well as private sector institutions. This strategy aims at expanding the outreach and making it more effective and productive. Contact was also established with the International Relief Organization in Basra and with various private businessmen and institutions to explore job opportunities for future graduates.

Once the first training cycles were completed in Baghdad and Basra, IF began its formal mentoring program.



## 5. Meetings and Publicity for WEP

In order to conduct this project successfully, IF arranged and met with government officials, representatives from NGOs and civil society, as well as private and public employers on a regular basis throughout the duration of the project. For a detailed list of all relevant IF meetings, please refer to the project's quarterly reports.

Immediately after laying out a detailed work plan for the project's first two quarters, IF's Baghdad staff and IF's executive director Ms. Rend Al-Rahim started reaching out to various government officials and stakeholders to request their help and support. Two meetings during the month of May (May 15 and May 22, 2008) took place between IF's WEP Project Manager Ms. Suhaila Al-Asadi and the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Mr. Mahmud Al-Shaikh Radhi. IF's Executive Director Ms. Rend Al-Rahim joined the second meeting where Mr. Al-Shaikh Radhi was briefed on the project's activities in great detail. Ms. Al-Rahim requested that the Ministry provides IF with a list of widows that would be eligible to receiving the WEP training. Ms. Al-Rahim also asked Mr. Al-Shaikh Radhi if the Ministry can provide the graduate widows with a certificate after completing the Child Care and Computer Literacy trainings in the case that IF uses the Ministry's programs in the training. The minister agreed to her requests.

Strong project evaluation and monitoring is crucial to the success of the WEP project and IF held several important meetings to facilitate this. For example from February 23-26, 2009, IF COO and WEP project manager in Washington, Ms. Selwa Gailani, traveled to Iraq for an evaluation, monitoring and support meeting with IF's WEP Baghdad and Basra staff. WEP Iraq staff briefed Ms. Gailani on the project's implementation progress and the achievements accomplished by the widows in Baghdad and Basra as well as success stories. WEP Basra Staff brought with them samples of the sewn products of the Basra widows. Ms. Gailani evaluated the staff's implementation of the project according to the approved work plan. She also discussed with the WEP staff the best methods to overcome difficulties and obstacles encountered during the project's implementation. Ms. Gailani also went over the guidelines on reporting, documenting, and monitoring and evaluation of our work.

IF staff and widow trainees also met with several key officials to discuss the WEP project. For example, on April 25, IF WEP staff Ms. Suhaila Al-Assadi and Ms. Eman Abdulrahman were invited by the US Embassy in Baghdad to meet with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to present IF's WEP project. Two widows representing the widows from both training centers, widow Athir Hamza (Rasafa), and widow Khansa'a Yasin (Karkh) accompanied IF's staff. Also present at the meeting was US Ambassador Christopher Hill, Mr. Timothy Lenderking from the US Embassy, MP Samira Al-Mousawi, Chair of Women, Family and Children and Ms. Salama Jabu, the Prime Minister's Advisor for Women Affairs.



In addition, IF held meeting with local, national, and international women's rights stakeholders during the course of this project. On March 23, 2010, WEP staff and some human rights activists, along with some lawyers and businesswomen, attended a meeting held at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. Judge Edith Johns Chief judge U.S Court of Appeals discussed with all the parties some programs that support laws concerning women, enhance the rule of law, train concerned authorities to apply laws and anti corruption laws, rehabilitate judicial bodies, train lawyers and judges who currently work in courts, rehabilitate female prisoners to enable them to live in the community when they leave prison and programs to help the citizens gain greater access to justice and their rights.

On February 9, 2010, IF Basra staff met with Mr. Rick Mills from the US Embassy in Baghdad, and the PRT-Team representative in Basra Ms. Dian Green Bob. The meeting took place in Manawi Pasha Hotel, located in Basra. Two widows attended that meeting (Ms. Afifa Sabah, and Ms. Safa Habeeb – trainees in Al-Quran Center). A detailed orientation was presented about WEP activities in Basra, the success stories, and also presentation for some of the widows' productions as a result of their trainings.

In addition to these meetings, the WEP project was covered by many notable media outlets and our activities were visited by government officials and key members of civil society. Each graduation ceremony as well as the opening ceremonies in the centers received considerable media coverage and meetings with prominent officials and community members.

Below is a detailed account of media and publicity for the project:

IF held a graduation ceremony to honor the 50 Iraqi widows participating in the Widows Empowerment Project trainings in Baghdad on March 9, 2009, which was covered by a variety of media outlets and newspapers and publicized throughout the country and region.

IF's Basra graduation ceremony, held on April 1st, 2009, to honor the 135 Iraqi widows who completed the first cycle of training in Basra's two training centers received extensive media coverage.

On September 16, 2009, IF hosted an exhibition in Basra to showcase the goods that the widows have produced and allow them a chance to sell their goods in a market-style environment. The three-day exhibition began on Wednesday ran through Friday, September 18th. The exhibition featured items produced by the women from both training centers in Qurna and Zubair, and opening remarks were given by Ms. Nasser, Basra Governorate Council Member and President of the Women's Committee of the Council. The exhibition was visited by several prominent officials from various local and regional government offices as well as representatives from Iraqi media outlets. A number of local citizens and proprietors of local businesses, such as medical equipment



suppliers, attended the exhibition as well. The hall space for this exhibition was donated by the Fine Artists Association in Basra, for which the Foundation is deeply appreciative.

On November 24, 2009, the Iraq Foundation (IF) Office in Basra successfully celebrated the graduation of the 2nd cycle from both Basra centers, Al-Zubair and Al-Qurna, which also received extensive media coverage.

With the donations of several sewing machines from local businesses and private citizens as well as proceeds from the sale from some of the widows products, IF was able to give each graduating widow a sewing machine as graduation gift and as a seed for the widows to start generating their own income. In addition, an Iraqi American family from Virginia donated \$500.00 (five hundred) to be distributed to 10 of the most needy widows from the Basra program, under the supervision of WEP project manager.

At the graduation event IF's WEP project manager was interviewed by the media where she presented the project's activities and goals. Many of the graduated widows were interviewed by the media, where they expressed their gratitude to the knowledge, benefit, and support the WEP program provided them in the form of the democracy education lectures, the literacy program, and the sewing program. Some widows asked the authorities to help them in finding work opportunities.

Finally, on May 12, 2010, IF held the final graduation ceremony to honor the remaining 100 Iraqi widows participating in the Widows Empowerment Project trainings in Baghdad from both cycles 3 and 4, which also received media coverage from major Iraqi newspapers and TV stations.

## **6. Success Stories**

### *From January 1 – March 31, 2009*

- Widow Hayat Qasim Ahmed from Baghdad was hired at a daycare center in Wasa-Hospital. The hospital selected her because of her training on childcare program as part of her training at the WEP training program.
- Widow Khansa'a Yasin, a graduate of the Baghdad WEP training was hired by Al-Jani'n School as an aid. After only two weeks she was promoted to librarian because of her excellent performance.
- Widow Sura Talib, a graduate of the Baghdad WEP training was hired by Al-Hamra'a Insurance Company.
- Thanks to the work of WEP staff, 8 widows are now receiving their welfare salaries from The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.



- In Basra Hannah Kanial, a WEP participant, started a small business sewing sheets and pillow cases, which is adding much needed revenue to her impoverished family. (picture available)
- A group of widows who participated in the WEP training program in Basra have formed co-op to sell close in their neighborhood.
- After completing the WEP training, 12 widows are working together with the support of their trainers to offer sewing training to more widows. This effort is made possible by a grant from International Relief and Development (IRD).
- Widow Bushra Thruma benefited from democracy education and women's rights components of WEP, she told staff that thanks to this training; she was able to convince her teenage son the value of education in a democracy and in building a brighter future for Iraq. As a result, he chose not to drop out of school.
- Widow Noora Sao'ud from Basra, was eager to use the sewing skills she learned at the training, to produce and sell her products to help her economically. However, she didn't have the means to buy her own sewing machine. A member from the community heard of her story and donated the funds for a sewing machine for her. After selling her first products, she said proudly *"This is the biggest gain in my life because I earned this money from my own hard work and I don't owe it to anybody."*
- Samira Salah, a widow from Basra, was hired at a private doctors office as a receptionist thanks to increased literacy skills gained from participating in the WEP project. Salah, who is also married to Arab national, was able to secure Iraqi citizenship for her children because of the training on democracy and women's rights from the project. Iraqi law states that citizenship can be given to children as long as the mother is an Iraqi.
- Despite overwhelming odds against her participation, Suad Abdhulah, who lost both of her legs when a mine exploded, completed the WEP training at the Zubair training center.
- Najoud Adbhulwahid, a widow at the Zubair training center, received a contract from a local Zubair shop owner to produce bedding for children thanks to the training in sewing skills she benefited from during the WEP program.
- 16 sewing machines have been donated in Basra to support the WEP widows. Of the 16, six sewing machines were manual. IF also received in-kind donations for 6 electrical motors to fit those manual machines.



- During the WEP graduation ceremony, WEP widows participated in media interviews. The WEP programming gave many women a significant boost in self-confidence that made these interviews possible. Widows Ibtisam Khanu and Zuhoor Mohammad, for example, were interviewed and highlighted their personal achievements

From April 1 – June 30, 2009

Baghdad

- Widow Hayat Kasim was hired by a nursery at Al-Wista Hospital
- Widow Dalal Salih was hired as an assistant Al-Zainabiyat Organization for the aid of orphans and widows
- Widow Hana Abdulhussein volunteered at Al-Safeer Humanitarian and Cultural Organization that offers assistance to IDPs, widows and orphans. WEP training gave Hana the confidence and the courage to assist other people in need
- Widow Zainab from the second cycle, who is a good baker, was asked by IF WEP staff to bake pizza for the meeting.
- Widow Faiza Ibrahim was hired by the Al-Izdihar Company for Petroleum Industries
- Widow Rana Talib, reached an agreement with a bookstore to assist in printing school folders and rare books for distribution
- Widows Shatha Abduljabar, Niran Karim, Wafa Zghair, and Alliya Ramadan signed their names to work with a cosmetic company (Sina Perfume and Cosmetics) to market and promote the company's products.
- June 8, 2009 Al-Sina Cosmetic company informed IF that they are willing to hire 6 widows, 4 in sales (\$250 monthly salary), 1 as a sales manager (\$500 monthly salary), and 1 widow with computer skills (\$350 monthly salary). In addition the company is in need for several sales representatives (paid on commission bases). IF started to follow up with the widows who are interested in these positions.
- June 8, the widows in Baghdad training centers informed IF that they wanted to receive enhanced IT training, including Excel and Power Point and will be paying for this training themselves. The widows showed eagerness to seize opportunities for self-empowerment and enhancing their employment skills.



Basra

- Widows Hana Shwaish and Kawther Abdulamir were hired as sewing trainers for the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle widows.
- Widow Nujood Abdulwahid, a mother of a physically challenged daughter, reached an agreement with a shop owner in Al-Zubair to buy from her sewn products for sale in his shop. Widow Nujood said *“this is the first time I get compensated for something I am producing. I am eager and hopeful to develop myself for my sake and my daughter’s sake”*.
- June 10, Basra widow Ibtisam Lafta from Al-Qurna center, with the help of IF Basra WEP staff received the Municipal Council approval to get health benefit coverage to treat her daughter who was injured by gun shots.
- June 23, IF delivered the first batch of 50 bed sheets and pillow cases to Al-Sulatan Hotel in Basra for a total fee of 250,000.00 Iraqi dinars (\$213). Widows Fawzia Shwayis, and Kawthar Abdulamir, and Zahra Murdan sewed the sheets and pillow cases, and widows Amna Maki and Amal Ibrahim embroidered the hotel logo on the sewn items. After deducting the raw material expenses, IF distributed the remaining funds equally between the five widows.

From July 1 to September 30, 2009:

- Baghdad widow Niran Kareem, will continue her computer studies by learning MS Excel
- Baghdad widow Ina’am Abdulsahib was hired at Al-Ain Social Organization
- Baghdad widow Isra’a Hasan, who excelled in Al-Mansour Institute English training was offered to continue in the Advanced English Program without charge. After the training she was hired –with IF’s efforts to consider her as a special case – at the Ministry of Housing.
- Baghdad widow Jamila Nasri was hire as a admin assistant.
- Widow Sawsan Ibrahim was hired at the Union of Kurdistan Women UKW in their social affairs division.
- Baghdad widow Huda Hadi was hired by (UKW), after her excellent professional performance at the UKM exhibition.
- Baghdad widow Bakhshan Kamal was hired by the UKM in their events division.



- Baghdad widow Lami'a Ibrahim volunteered in a well known mosque in Bagdad to teach women about their rights and civic duties
- Baghdad widow Zainab Mohsen used what she learned in the entrepreneurial skills training to start a small baking business from her home.
- Widow Noor Abdalhaleem was hired by Al-Sina Cosmetic Company as a bookkeeper.
- Baghdad widow Dina Qasim with the knowledge of her rights that she acquired from the training was able to apply and receive her late husband's pension. She said "*I have an income now, that is mine and my son's*"
- Several Basra widows from both training areas started sewing simple clothing items and sold them to their neighbors and family members
- 114 sewn items by Basra widow were sold at the September 16 – 18 exhibition for a total price of \$575.00.

From October 1 – December 31, 2009

Baghdad

- In November IF was able to provide the graduating widows Basra with a sewing machine, to seed efforts to start generating income
- In November, Private donation of \$500 given to 10 most needy in Basra
- 7 of Baghdad WEP widows were selected by the 'Association of the Age and Time' to administer the election of the new BoD of the organization due to the knowledge the widows have acquired for their WEP training.
- Widow Ikram Rasheed Abdulwahab was advanced by the English trainer to participate in an advanced training in English due to her aptitude in English that she showed during her WEP training.
- IF negotiated with Al-Mustansiriya and Al-Mansour Training Centers to offer 9 WEP widow fees discount for an advanced Excel course
- 9 WEP widows were selected by Umatuna Organization to participate in sewing course offered by the organization. The 9 widows were awarded certificates of sewing.

Basra



- After finishing the literacy training, some widows in Basra start signing their names instead of using thumb prints  
[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/SignaturesNotThumbPrints\(Oct-Dec2009\).htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/SignaturesNotThumbPrints(Oct-Dec2009).htm)
- Some of the Basra widows wrote thank you letters to IF (with the help of their literacy teachers)  
[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/ThankYouLetterBasra%20\(Oct-Dec2009\).htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/ThankYouLetterBasra%20(Oct-Dec2009).htm)
- The workshop of the IRD grants recipients started its operation under the supervision of IF's WEP team. The widows produced several items to be sold at the local market. The production continued during this reporting period under IF's supervision.  
[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/IRDGrantWorkshop\(Nov2009\).htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/IRDGrantWorkshop(Nov2009).htm)
- Basra widows Zaman Sari, Sabria Jabur, Safa Habib, Afifa Sabah, and Wasan Adnan, all started sewing simple dresses and beddings and selling their products in their neighborhoods and to family and friends. Widow Sabria started to use the arithmetic skill she acquired from the training in managing her work and documenting her profits.
- Widow Wasan Adnan shared her feeling about the training and said: "*The training is like a verdict for freedom to prisoners who have lost hope*" she also said that the democracy and women's rights training made her aware of her rights and civic duties. She also started sewing traditional dressed and selling them in the local market for 3000 Iraqi Dinars.
- Widow Afifa Sabah, said that the sewing training gave her the knowledge to sew dressed for her and her daughter which made her save money.

From January 1 to March 31, 2010

Baghdad

During January, IF staff successfully found job opportunities for some graduated widows, as a result of the widows experiences that they got through their training in WEP. One widow won a job in the Judicial Institute / MOJ – Baghdad in IT department. Another widow was appointed in Contraction Company. Another 2 widows got a job in an NGO in Fallujah.

During February, several of the widows, who graduated from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> training cycles, were selected by Omatuna Association to be monitors during the elections



process. Relevant training was presented. In addition Ms. Sawsan Shaker and Ms. Zainab Ali (Widows of 4<sup>th</sup> workshop gradudators) who both work in Al-Mawqif Organization for Media and Culture, have been tasked by their organization to present lectures about women rights and their right to participate in the political process and elections thanks to the democracy training given by IF. IF staff provided 3 copies of the IF-Training Manual on Democracy Education and Women rights to use when delivering their lectures.

During March, IF office received a donation of 100 Iraqi dinars to support the WEP graduation ceremony for the 3th training cycle. One graduating widows, Raghad Abdullah, from the 3rd workshop said that she found a job due to the training, experience and certificates she earned from attending the workshop. Another widow, Shatha Abdul Aziz, said that she found a job at Bilal sewing factory, and then found a better job to work on a computer at the “Association of Time and Age” after she graduated from the IF workshop. Most of widows voted in the elections after they attended the training on democracy and women rights held by the IF. Some said that they could not vote because they could not find their names on voter rolls in the polling centers. Others said that they voted without pressure and they voted for female candidates.

#### Basra

During the month of January, IF staff visited Al-Quran training center, and followed up widows work, where they sewed about 70 Jellabiya (Dress) on January 18. A lot of sewed Jellabiyas were marketed, through the widows with price of IQD 2000 (cost + simple profit). The cloths were donated from a person to Al-Quran training center: 30 pieces of colored cloths, and black cloth.

During the month of March, IF WEP staff agreed with a clothes shop owner to provide him with 100 aprons and one set of skirts, and it will prepare one set of big size women shirts after receiving the material from the same shop owner.

The widow, Samira Salih, received a sewing machine from a donor to help her family that includes three children.

#### **Photo links:**

WEP 3rd and 4th Graduation / May 12, 2010

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/BaghdadGraduationCycle3-4.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/BaghdadGraduationCycle3-4.htm)

WEP in the Media: 3rd Cycle Graduation Articles/ April, 2010

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/Media-April2010.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/Media-April2010.htm)

4th Cycle Training Photos - Baghdad Rissafa Center – April 29, 2010



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[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/Baghdad-4-cycle-photos-Rissafa\(April29-2010\).htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/Baghdad-4-cycle-photos-Rissafa(April29-2010).htm)

IF Empowers Iraqi Widows During the Iraq's National Election! February and March, 2010

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/WEP-2010-Elections.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/WEP-2010-Elections.htm)

WEP in the Media / March 30, 2010

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/Media-March302010.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/Media-March302010.htm)

WEP 4th Cycle Training Photos - Baghdad / March 2010

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/Baghdad-4-cycle-photos\(March2010\).htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/Baghdad-4-cycle-photos(March2010).htm)

WEP Cycle 4 Democracy Training Photos- Baghdad February 2010

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/BaghdadCycle4DemocracyTrainingFeb2010.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/BaghdadCycle4DemocracyTrainingFeb2010.htm)

WEP Mentoring Training Photos - Basra February 2010

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/BasraCenterPhotosMentoringTrainingFeb2010.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/BasraCenterPhotosMentoringTrainingFeb2010.htm)

WEP Training Photos - Basra January 2010

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/WEPPhotosBasraJan2010.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/WEPPhotosBasraJan2010.htm)

Thank You Letters from Widows / October - December, 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/ThankYouLetterBasra \(Oct-Dec2009\).htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/ThankYouLetterBasra (Oct-Dec2009).htm)

Basra Widows Use Signatures not Thumb Prints / October - December, 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/SignaturesNotThumbPrints\(Oct-Dec2009\).htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/SignaturesNotThumbPrints(Oct-Dec2009).htm)

Photos of Basra Sewing Training: December 3, 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/BasraSewingTraining\(Dec2009\).htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/BasraSewingTraining(Dec2009).htm)

Basra Widows Participate in IRD Grant Workshop /November, 2009



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[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/IRDGrantWorkshop\(Nov2009\).htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/IRDGrantWorkshop(Nov2009).htm)

Basra Graduation: 2nd Cycle /November, 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/BasraGraduationCycle2.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/BasraGraduationCycle2.htm)

Basra Al-Zubair Training Center Photos /December, 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/ZubairTrainingCenterPhotos\(Oct2009\).htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/ZubairTrainingCenterPhotos(Oct2009).htm)

Baghdad Graduation: 2nd Cycle /October 10, 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/BaghdadGraduationCycle2.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/BaghdadGraduationCycle2.htm)

Media Coverage for Baghdad 2nd Cycle Graduation / October 10, 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/Media-BaghdadGraduation2ndCycle\(Oct2009\).htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/Media-BaghdadGraduation2ndCycle(Oct2009).htm)

Basra Exhibition of Products / September 16 - 18, 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/BasraExhibitionSept2009.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/BasraExhibitionSept2009.htm)

Zubair - Basra Training Center: 2nd Cycle Photos / September -October 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/ZubairCenterPhotosCycle2-SeptOct2009.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/ZubairCenterPhotosCycle2-SeptOct2009.htm)

Al-Quarna - Basra Training Center: 2nd Cycle Photos /September -October 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/QurnaCenterPhotosCycle2-SeptOct2009.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/QurnaCenterPhotosCycle2-SeptOct2009.htm)

Baghdad Exhibition of Products / August - September 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/BaghdadExhibitionAugSept2009.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/BaghdadExhibitionAugSept2009.htm)

Basra Training Centers: 2nd Cycle Photos /June 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/BasraCenterPhotosCycle2-June2009.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/BasraCenterPhotosCycle2-June2009.htm)

Mentoring Activity Photos / May 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/MentoringActivitiesMay2009.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/MentoringActivitiesMay2009.htm)



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Al-Qurna Training Center: 2nd Cycle Photos /May 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/QurnaCenterPhotosCycle2-May09.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/QurnaCenterPhotosCycle2-May09.htm)

Rasafa Training Center: 2nd Cycle Photos / May 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/RasafaCenterPhotosCycle2.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/RasafaCenterPhotosCycle2.htm)

Al-Qurna Training Center: 2nd Cycle Photos /April 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/QurnaCenterPhotosCycle2.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/QurnaCenterPhotosCycle2.htm)

Al-Zubair Training Center: 2nd Cycle Photos /April 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/ZubairCenterPhotosCycle2.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/ZubairCenterPhotosCycle2.htm)

Cycle One Graduation - Basra /April 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/BasraGraduationCycle1.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/BasraGraduationCycle1.htm)

Cycle One Graduation – Baghdad / March 2009

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/BaghdadGraduationCycle1.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/BaghdadGraduationCycle1.htm)

Al-Qurna Training Center: 1st Cycle Photos /October 2008

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/QurnaCenterPhotosCycle1.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/QurnaCenterPhotosCycle1.htm)

Al-Zubair Training Center: 1st Cycle Photos / September 2008

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/ZubairCenterPhotosCycle1.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/ZubairCenterPhotosCycle1.htm)

Rasafa Training Center: 1st Cycle Photos /September 2008

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/RasafaCenterPhotosCycle1.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/RasafaCenterPhotosCycle1.htm)

Karkh Training Center: 1st Cycle Photos /September 2008

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/KarkhCenterPhotos.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/KarkhCenterPhotos.htm)

WEP Opening Ceremony: Rasafa, Baghdad / August 2008

[http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects\\_new/wep/OpeningAug2008.htm](http://www.iraqfoundation.org/projects_new/wep/OpeningAug2008.htm)



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