

This project is funded by the Government of Finland and the European Union through the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund and implemented by UNAMI Human Rights Office and UNOPS.

ITF Project Factsheet: Support to Iraq's Preparations for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

Project Overview

The UPR project focuses on developing the capacity of the Government of Iraq (GoI) to meet its human rights treaty obligations under international law and to successfully participate in the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. The project, funded by the Government of Finland and the European Union through the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund, also aims to build capacity among Iraqi civil society organizations (CSOs) in human rights monitoring and reporting so that they can effectively contribute to the UPR stakeholder report and other human rights treaty body monitoring mechanisms.

It is implemented by the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), in coordination with the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR).

Universal Periodic Review

The UPR is a state driven process in which countries report to the UN Human Rights Council every four years on the actions they have taken to improve their human rights situation and ensure that their human rights obligations are met. Through the UPR, national human rights reports submitted by both governments and NGOs are presented for expert review in an international forum at the HRC. Iraq was examined by the UPR Working Group of the HRC on 16th February 2010 in Geneva.

Project Activities

Training on International Human Rights Obligations and the UPR

Officials from the GoI received capacity building training on the international human rights framework and the UPR mechanism during two study tours organized under the project. The first study tour took place in Geneva, where an inter-ministerial delegation was given training by representatives from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). A second study tour to Bahrain allowed the GoI to meet with counterparts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain to share their experiences and lessons learned from Bahrain's participation in the UPR. The tour served to create a dialogue on the best practices for Universal Periodic Review reporting in the region.



Technical Assistance

An international consultant based in Baghdad provided technical assistance to the GoI during the drafting of their National UPR Report. The advisor guided the government drafting committee on all technical requirements for reporting to the UPR to ensure that HRC stipulations on structure, length and basic content were met.

Civil Society Capacity Building

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25 selected civil society organizations received training on the UPR process as well as on the role of CSOs in the UN human rights system. The training was designed as part of a process to strengthen cooperation between different sections of Iraqi society working on human rights issues and trained CSOs on how to work in partnership with governmental institutions to meet Iraq's human rights reporting obligations. The group was also given technical assistance on report writing to assist them in the preparation of a joint contribution made by the 25 CSOs to the UPR Stakeholder Report. Following the UPR training, CSOs selected on the basis of capacity needs were given training on human rights monitoring and reporting skills to assist them to further improve their report writing to both national and international human rights bodies.



Networking

During the project, a CSO network was created by participants to the UPR training. A group of 15 participants agreed to establish a permanent coalition to work on UPR related issues and undertake follow up and advocacy work related to the UN Human Rights Council recommendations for Iraq. The coalition is also expected to work on shadow reporting to human rights treaty bodies.

National Conference and Information Campaigns

Once the Human Rights Council's final UPR recommendations are received, a national conference chaired by the MoHR and involving all stakeholders will be organized. The conference will review the recommendations of the Human Rights Council and discuss how the recommendations may be implemented.

Additionally, an information campaign on the UPR Mechanism will be developed and conducted in coordination with the MoHR and CSOs. The campaign will aim to raise awareness among Iraqis about the Government's commitment to Human Rights and how it is addressing the issue. It will also aim to raise the awareness on the channels available to address human rights abuses.

Training on Human Rights Treaty Bodies

The project also intends to organize further training for CSOs and the GoI on Treaty Body reporting mechanisms to build Iraq's capacity in reporting on its human rights treaty obligations. The training will build on the experience and achievements of training sessions related to the UPR.

Project Achievements

UPR report submission and review

The group of 25 CSOs trained under the project drafted a joint contribution to the UPR Stakeholder Report, which was successfully submitted to the HRC on 1st September 2009. The national UPR report prepared by the GoI was also successfully submitted to the HRC on 11th November 2009, within the given deadline for reporting. The national report and contributions to the stakeholder report form the basis of the Iraqi UPR submission alongside a report prepared by the UN.

On 16th February 2010, Iraq was examined under the UPR mechanism at the 7th session of the UPR working group. The outcome report drafted by the working group following the review was adopted on 19th February and contains details of the review and recommendations for Iraq's follow up of its human rights obligations. The final outcome of the UPR session will be adopted by the plenary of the HRC expected to take place, in June 2010.