

Under a project implemented by UNOPS and ICNL. The UNOPS project is funded by the European Union, the Government of Finland, and other donors through the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund. The ICNL project is funded by the US Department of State – Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

## **PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Helping NGOs in Iraq get to work**

**Erbil, 18 May 2011** – Without registration NGOs in Iraq face major obstacles to work, but struggling with procedures, few organisations manage to complete the registration process. A national initiative to address this and help NGOs focus on the issues they work for is now launched.

After a new Iraqi NGO law entered into force in March 2010, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) have worked in cooperation with the NGOs Directorate and NGOs themselves, to prepare a registration awareness project for NGOs.

Adam Styp-Rekowski, Civil Society Portfolio Manager at the UNOPS Iraq Office, said: “Registration is a tool, not a goal in itself, but NGOs can’t function in Iraq today without registration as they will face difficulties with the authorities, and the problem has been an insufficient understanding of the registration process. By helping NGOs navigate this, we hope they will be able to tackle the issues they are concerned about, such as improving basic services and targeting the needs of youth.”

The first priority of the project, identified by authorities and NGOs alike, has been to develop simplified and more user-friendly registration forms for NGOs. New forms are about to be endorsed by the NGOs Directorate and will soon be available on its website [www.ngoao.gov.iq](http://www.ngoao.gov.iq) confirms the Deputy Director of the NGOs Directorate, Ms. Parween Mohammed Ameen.

The project will now focus on providing training and producing a handbook to help NGOs obtain and renew their registration certificates.

Training on registration procedures will be conducted jointly by mixed teams from the NGOs Directorate and NGOs themselves and is expected to reach over 600 NGOs in all Iraqi governorates. This week in Erbil, UNOPS and ICNL began workshops to prepare trainers before they travel around the country throughout the coming months.

The handbook to guide NGOs through the registration procedures will be distributed to NGOs during training and will also be made available online.

At the first training session attended by representatives from the government, parliament and civil society, Iraqi Minister of State for Civil Society Affairs, Dikhil Qassim Hasson, said: “It is important to find ways to target obstacles and to facilitate the registration.”

The Coordinator for the NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq, Hashim Al-Assaf, said that helping NGOs in Iraq obtain legal registration is “part of the process of building trust”. Registration offers a legal endorsement of their work which Al-Assaf believes will help the communities and authorities place trust in NGOs, helping them to do more effective work.

The project to facilitate the registration process for NGOs in Iraq is made possible through funding by the European Union, the Government of Finland and other donors through the UN Development Group Iraq Trust Fund and from the US Department of State – Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

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**The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** and the **International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)** have supported the process of developing an Iraqi NGO law over several years. Support rendered included expert advisory, facilitation of participatory work on the law, raising awareness of international best practices of NGO regulations, and coordination amongst regional stakeholders from civil society, the government and the Council of Representatives.

From 2008 to 2010 all the stakeholders in the process were brought together in a series of roundtables organised to discuss the draft federal NGO law and its implementing regulations. Since the law entered into force in 2010, ICNL and UNOPS have worked with the NGOs Directorate and NGOs on preparations for a project to raise NGOs' awareness on the registration process and the principles enshrined in the NGO law. In addition, ICNL has provided support to designing new forms for registering NGOs.

ICNL and UNOPS have also supported the development of the NGO law for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, adopted by the Kurdistan Parliament in April 2011.

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