

FACT SHEET

Access to Justice (A2J) Program



Iraq's disadvantaged populations include the millions of women, widows, orphans, internally displaced persons, religious and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and those who lack access to state protections and services due to a lack of formal identity. A2J helps ensure that these groups gain full access to legal representation and critical government services, resulting in more equitable access to the formal justice system and better protection for their rights.

Program Objectives

The project's main objective is to deliver legal aid on a national scale to Iraq's disadvantaged populations in a sustainable way. A2J has three, interconnected program areas:

- Improve vulnerable and disadvantaged Iraqis' knowledge of their rights/responsibilities, and the remedies under the law;
- Increase the quality and availability of legal professionals and civil society partners to assist vulnerable and disadvantaged people; and
- Help Iraqi organizations advocate for the enactment of new laws, policies and procedures affecting vulnerable populations and the improvement of existing policies.

Impact of the Program

Since the start of the Program in October 2010, nearly 20,000 vulnerable Iraqis, three-quarters of whom are women, have received legal aid and victims' assistance through 25 program-supported civil society and law school legal clinics throughout the country.

In 2014, the Government of Iraq worked to open additional legal aid centers in the Citizens' Affairs Offices of 15 governorates. These centers will serve vulnerable populations and make civil society lawyers available at "one-stop shops" in offices of the Citizens' Affairs Directorates throughout the country. Although funded by the Government of Iraq, these centers will be staffed by lawyers from legal clinics

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

- **Award amount: \$62.9 million**
- **Start/End Dates: October 2010 – September 2015**
- **Implementing Partner: TetraTech DPK Consulting (a subsidiary of ARD, Inc.)**
- **Iraqi Counterparts: Local Iraqi civil society organizations, professional legal associations, law schools, Iraqi governing institutions and the Iraqi parliament.**
- **Areas of Operation: 18 governorates**

formerly supported by the Program, which improves the prospects for sustainability of legal aid organizations while expanding the availability of professional free legal aid to vulnerable groups in Iraq. In the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, the Program has secured funding from the Kurdistan Regional Government for three CSO-operated legal clinics, with promised support for expanded funding in the future, both to CSOs and Law School Legal Clinics

The project's joint advocacy efforts with civil society have yielded impressive results in the form of three new pieces of legislation:

- A **Social Safety Net Law**, which provides for conditional cash transfers and social service benefits to female-headed households, the elderly, the infirm and other categories of vulnerable Iraqis living below the poverty line (\$2.20/day). In addition to the monthly payments, the law calls for quality healthcare, vocational training, job placement services and housing for internally displaced individuals.
- Iraq's **Law on Persons with Disabilities** is a fundamental step towards compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Iraq ratified in March 2013. In particular, the law establishes a Commission for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) to oversee reforms aimed at improving accessibility and the active participation of PWDs in political, social and economic life.
- A **Legal Aid Law** has been drafted and accepted for consideration by the new Iraqi Government. This was the product of the Legal Aid Working Group and the Legal Clinic Network, two organizations being groomed to continue the work of A2J after September 2015.

Responding To The IDP Crisis

In a demonstration of adaptability and flexibility in responding to the current situation in Iraq, the USAID Iraq Access to Justice Program is adjusting its activities to respond to the intensifying adversities of vulnerable populations, especially Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The Program's project is a prime example of how previous effective coordination with local NGOs and Government of Iraq officials is now paying dividends - A2J partners finding themselves in a position to provide immediate assistance.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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