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**BUILDING PEACE—
THE REBUILDING OF IRAQ**
Policy Initiatives Developed by NETWORK in collaboration
with members of the Iraqi Women Speak Delegation

After years of war, sanctions, occupation and nation building, the Iraqi people are eager for peace and development. Many monitors and Iraqis report that the most effective reconstruction projects are happening at the community level. They cite the need for short-term and long-term development programs that run simultaneously and build on each other. They also speak of the need for collaboration between public and private organizations in order to make a difference. To these ends, NETWORK and the Iraqi Delegation propose the following specific U.S. development programs.

Education and Training

- **Bachelors and Post-Bachelors Scholarship Programs Abroad**

Iraqis are a talented, skilled and educated people with large natural resources as a nation. Before the years of sanctions, Iraqis regularly studied abroad, returned to their country and shared their learning. Providing Iraqis with further educational development in different countries will help to educate all Iraqis and create a strong democracy. There currently are limited programs through the U.S. Embassy (Fulbright and Humphrey scholarships and other fellowships). These limited opportunities need to be expanded and new programs developed. It can also be beneficial to develop on-line education and web-based training as an alternative to travel outside of the country. The use of such technology can greatly enhance the number of participants.

- **Educational Methods/Curriculum Development**

Iraqi education methods and curriculum stalled in the 1970s and 1980s. Iraq needs to shed its historically politicized education system and create an apolitically neutral education curriculum for the entire country. There is a need for international education specialists to provide training to teachers and those developing curriculum in the new Iraq. Additionally, audiovisual equipment and programming as well as updated information and motivated teachers are the basic elements to create this change.

- **Young Adult In-Country Training and Employment**

In 2004, the United Nations estimated that 48.1% of the Iraqi population was 18 or younger. An additional 19% of the population was between 18 and 30 years old. The teenagers and young adults have grown up in a country isolated by sanctions. They have no training or experience to participate in their nation's economy, to say nothing of a world economy. Practical training in needed job skills is essential.¹

- **School and University Reconstruction**

Before the invasion of 2003, many schools were in severe disrepair. Since the invasion, many of the children's schools have been bombed. Some work has been done to rebuild the schools, but most of the work is cosmetic. In order to educate children, who number nearly half of the Iraqi population, school

¹ "Young people have been isolated. Television was controlled, newspapers were controlled, magazines, everything was controlled. Most of young people [18 to 30 years old] are illiterate, are unemployed, are desperate. They sit on the floor hours and hours to get jobs. So those people are [easily] manipulated. [We need] to give them hope, to educate them that they have the right." – Lamia Talabani. Hala Al Sarraf suggests the establishment of a motivational "scheme for the young generation, who are able to develop creative solutions based on their own skills and knowledge. Encourage afternoon education where young boys and girls can enroll in skill development and create a market where they can sell their products. This would be a grassroots initiative to move communities towards a self-sustainable economy."

and university construction must be a high priority.² It should be noted that it is not just a question of construction of buildings; there is a great need for updated equipment and programming.

Health Care and Training

- **Medical Training**

In the mid-1980s, Iraq had a premier medical system. After three wars and 13 years of sanctions, the medical system is in shambles. Additionally, Pascale Warda, former interim Minister of Migration and Displacement for Iraq, noted that medical personnel are being threatened with kidnapping and death because they are seen as wealthy targets. Therefore, many physicians have left Iraq. Those remaining need a safe environment as well as updated medical training.³ The first need in training is in the area of general health as well as emergency health services.

- **Hospital Construction and Update of Medical Equipment:**

No hospital has been built in Iraq since the early 1980s. The World Health Organization cites a severe shortage in hospital facilities and medical equipment. With a collapsed infrastructure and no new equipment since 1991 (the beginning of sanctions), health care is precarious at best. Hospital construction and medical equipment are needed in order to care for the Iraqi population.⁴

- **Care For Those With Disabilities as a Result of the Conflict:**

There are an increasing number of victims of the violence who have suffered permanent disabilities (loss of eyes, limbs, etc.). A program of community education is needed that is geared toward individual and communal acceptance and integration into the community.⁵

Civil Society

- **Electricity, Sewer, Water**

“We, the Iraqi people are worried about education, the shortage in medicine, the shortage of chemotherapy for those who are suffering from cancer, the shortage of electricity...shortage in the water, clean water, sometimes it is mixed with unsanitary water, that makes some problems, and it will also create health problems.”⁶ The shortages in civil services and municipal projects lead people to lose hope and trust in the government,⁷ thus adding to the conflict.

² Dr. Rashad Zaydan noted that those leading the U.S. reconstruction effort will say that they have rebuilt the school but if you go look, you will find that it is only painted, “nothing more, no other new furniture, no other new things added to the school.” We ask, what do the children have if they do not have schools to attend?

³ Pascale Warda founded an organization to treat the psychological health of all Iraqi women and children. “We have more than 100 doctors, who are specialists, who have been killed, in one way or another, shot and killed. Some of them receive letters saying you have to leave or be killed so thousands of those specialists leave the country.” One alternative to education abroad is to utilize the medical schools in northern Kurdistan as a buffer to absorb Iraqi doctors, specialists and other essential professionals. This way they can remain in the country, serve other Iraqis (Kurdish), get some training and serve students until better security conditions are established for them to safely return to their original locations.”

⁴ “[Since] 1991 after the embargo most of the medical instruments did not reach Iraq. We still after three years have not gotten anything new and we don’t know why. We heard that a lot of money has been arranged for medical rebuilding of Iraq but we receive nothing and we don’t see anything of it on the ground.” (Shahla Waliy worked at AGMES – a trade company that imported medical equipment and promoted new medical technology with the Ministry of Health.)

⁵ Hala Al Sarraf suggests that such a program can include parent education, vocational programs for the disabled and legislation that supports some social security program for those disadvantaged groups.

⁶ Dr. Rashad Zaydan, in an interview with the Education for Peace in Iraq Center.

⁷ Shahla Waliy, Iraqi Country Director, Counterpart International.

- **Micro Enterprise**
Post-March 2003 Iraq is transitioning from a highly centralized government, in which 90% of those employed worked for the government, to an economy that is more based on market forces. In the dislocation following the invasion and the fall of the government there was even greater unemployment. This dislocation provides the opportunity for entrepreneurial activity in small and large ways. The Iraqi delegation spoke of the opportunities for widows and others to survive through micro-enterprise loans. However, it must be noted that there is a need for training in effective business and financing practices as well as adequate government oversight.
- **Child Care**
The Iraqi children suffer from the shortages of water, electricity and food but also from the insecurity and terrors of fear brought on by the continued war. Parents are now afraid to let their children go to school or even leave their homes. This severely limits parents' ability to work or attend school. There needs to be provision of safe and secure childcare to provide safe havens for children, but also peace of mind for parents.⁸
- **Widow and Orphan Programs**
Widows and orphans in Iraq are increasing in frightening numbers. Children are losing both their parents at an alarming rate, causing psychological stress and withdrawal from society. Children without families are prime candidates to join the insurgent violence in the future, if not well taken care of now. Women, especially those left widows by the war's on-going violence, are experiencing a rapid feminization of poverty. Because of these unique problems, there is a need for specific projects that focus on the needs of widows and orphans.⁹
- **Nutrition**
On May 14, 2006, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that as many as one in three Iraqi children suffer from malnutrition and are at risk of permanently disabling their physical, mental and cognitive development, according to a UN interagency study.¹⁰ The instability within the country was reported as the main cause of food shortage. Violence and fear have disrupted food distribution networks and have seriously suppressed the presence and effectiveness of international aid organizations that provide assistance to children. Immediate attention must be given to the regular consistent distribution of food, especially to children and youth. Functioning schools can provide an effective delivery system for these nutritional programs.¹¹

⁸ “[Before 2003] 75 % of the women were working...in universities, in hospitals, in education, in factories, in agriculture, in every side of life you could find, see the women. Now...maybe just 10% are working. [Without services there are] less chances for jobs.” – Dr. Rashad Zaydan

⁹ Knowledge for Women in Iraqi Society (Dr. Rashad Zaydan's NGO) and other NGOs work at capacity-building projects, including free courses in sewing, computer use, cooking, mechanics, etc. with emphasis on using these skills in entrepreneurial ways to support the family. The NGO also sponsors kindergartens for young orphans who have lost their families. There, life skills such as writing, drawing, team building and sharing are taught to the children. Additionally a clinic is available for the women and children with volunteer doctors. Currently, there are four branches of this NGO in the cities of Baghdad, Falluja, Abu Ghraib and Andorra. At this time, about 450 widows and about 225 orphans participate in the programming at Knowledge for Women in Iraqi Society.

¹⁰ Moore, Solomon. “Iraqi Children Falling Victim to Malnutrition,” *Los Angeles Times*, 14 May 2006; <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iraq14may14,0,4889055.story?track=tohtml>.

¹¹ During the Hussein regime, the Iraqis had a nutrition program for children through their school system that provided children age 3 through 12 with adequate vitamins and minerals. In order to support child development and to lessen the

Reconciliation

The past 25 or more years have been traumatic for the Iraqi society. The Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, the experience of the Hussein Regime, the first Gulf War, 13 years of economic sanctions, the second Gulf War and 3 years of occupation have all conspired to create a society that is traumatized, fearful and often angry at past and current hurts and atrocities. Only through an effective reconciliation process in the Iraqi style will there ever be a chance of healing for this beleaguered country.¹² Conflict mitigation programs at the local level (in both urban and rural communities) can be significant assets in peacemaking and long term stability.¹³ Projects such as “de-escalation teams” trained by the United Nations could be excellent in creating true peace in Iraq.

impact of the psychological stress of war, food for children needs to be a top priority of both the United States and the international community. Dr. Rashad Zaydan

¹² Helena Cobban, a writer for the *Christian Science Monitor* and a newspaper in Lebanon, is the author of a new book on post-conflict reconciliation in Africa entitled *Amnesties After Atrocities*, Paradigm Publishers (Fall 2006). Her insights could be of assistance to Iraqis in creating a process that will improve the situation in their country while being sensitive to their own cultural experience.

¹³ Shahla Waliy, Iraqi Country Director, Counterpart International also notes: Building capacity in conflict management can play a major role in preventing and ameliorating conflict by developing individual and institutional skills that can promote a culture of constructive problem solving, cooperative negotiation, and dialogue and dispute resolution throughout society. Development programs in conflict mitigation projects should aim to develop and test instruments that can be used to build national capacity for managing diversity and conflict by transferring analytical, dispute-solving, hatred-erasing and practical skills to government and civil-society sector to:

- Analyze the structural and proximate causes of conflict.
- Anticipate potential areas of dispute and develop appropriate responses for promoting peace as well as averting violence (preventive action and response development).
- Understand and employ dispute resolution principles and practices.
- Strengthen institutional capacity for managing diversity and conflicting interests

PROPOSED SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR

EDUCATION/CHILDREN

PUBLIC SECTOR

- Support for the Iraqi Ministry of Education in creating a curriculum that does not give negative views of any ethnic, sectarian or religious difference.
- Utilize USAID programs, such as “sister cities” to provide for educational opportunities in the U.S. on the primary and high school levels.
- Bring educational experts into secure areas to work with local teachers.
- Provide scholarships for Iraqis to study in the United States and other countries.

PRIVATE SECTOR

- Establish international campuses in secure areas of Iraq, e.g. the north.
- Send experts to Iraq to work in secure areas.
- Convene international educational conferences in Iraq.
- Provide scholarships and opportunities for Iraqis to study in the United States.
- Develop on-line learning that can be utilized by Iraqis now.
- Build orphanages and develop programs for children throughout Iraq.
- Develop play yards along with other projects.

HEALTH CARE

PUBLIC SECTOR

- Support the Iraqi Ministry of Health in the development of health care delivery models that reach the entire population.
- Provide scholarships and training opportunities through NIH for doctors and nurses.
- Collaborate with the World Health Organization and other UN agencies.
- Fund new advanced hospitals in different regions of the country.

PRIVATE SECTOR

- Provide twinning opportunities for Iraqi and U.S. hospitals through visits and on-line connections.
- NGOs coordinate with the Ministry of Health to maximize service.
- Provide training for medical personnel

CIVIL SERVICES

PUBLIC SECTOR

- Fund the renovation of existing infrastructure in order to deliver electricity, water and sewer service quickly.
- Plan for long-term investment in the infrastructure after service is restored.
- Utilize the World Bank and other international organizations to create a safe banking system.
- Utilize the World Bank and other international bodies to provide effective oversight of investment in civil services.
- Collaborate with the Iraqi government and the International Monetary Fund to develop effective economic programs for Iraq, including micro enterprise.

- Assist in the reform of the economy to allow for private enterprise in a controlled open market system.

SUPPORT OF GOVERNMENT FORMATION

PUBLIC SECTOR

- Train government ministers and ministry staff in the democratic rule of law. Focus on the rights and needs of children and the obligation to care for all in the society (not just a specific section).
- In collaboration with NGOs and the international community, support conflict mitigation training, workshops and conferences that focus on co-existence and accepting others. This could be accomplished through training Iraqi trainers.

RECONCILIATION

PUBLIC SECTOR

- Support “de-escalation teams” trained by the United Nations to go into Iraqi neighborhoods and work on neighborhood reconciliation.
- Support conflict mitigation training programs and sessions to be held in various Iraqi cities.

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