

The Olof Palme International Centre's support to Civil Society Organisations in Iraq

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**Department for Cooperation with
Non-Governmental Organisations,
Humanitarian Assistance
and Conflict Management**

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Sida Evaluation 07/25

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Acronyms

CS–	Civil Society Organisation
CSSI	Centre for Civil Society in Iraq
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
LFA	Logical Framework Analysis
NCCI	NGO Coordination Centre in Iraq
NG–	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPC	The Olof Palme International Centre
OPC Erbil	The Olof Palme International Centre in Erbil
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
SEK	Swedish Crowns
SEKA	Department for Cooperation with NGOs, Humanitarian Assistance & Conflict Management (at Sida)
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UN	United Nations
USD	United States Dollars

Executive Summary

This report evaluates support to civil society organisations in Iraq, which has been provided since the second half of 2005 through the Olof Palme International Centre. The purpose of the evaluation is to establish and analyse the outcomes in relation to the objectives set by the Iraq Programme (hereafter “Programme”).

The long-term objective of the Programme is to contribute to the development of a democratic Iraq through focussing on capacity and organisational strengthening of Iraqi NGOs/CSOs and through supporting their activities on democracy, human rights (incl. gender), and conflict management and dialogue issues. The Programme works through and with the Swedish-Iraqi resource base in Sweden as one modality for providing support, and also provides direct support to Iraqi NGOs/CSOs.

The Programme works under circumstances which can only be described as very difficult. The civil society has only just begun to assume its form following the fall of a repressive regime. Further, the worsening security situation and the generally inexperienced NGOs and their often very limited understanding of democratic work methods together contribute to complicating the work in Iraq. The ET also noted that virtually all NGOs in Iraq are politically linked in some way or other, whereas the Programme specifically refers to “politically independent” organisations to be supported.

The Programme, as described in the Programme Strategy, remains relevant. There are, however, weaknesses when it comes to Programme implementation. The Programme provides training about rights (including gender) perspectives and about conflict sensitivity, but these perspectives still remain to be translated into implementation when it comes to the activities implemented in Iraq through the Iraqi NGOs/CSOs. Many Swedish-Iraqi organisations have further proven to be less experienced in undertaking development cooperation than initially expected, and are thus not in a position to provide the intended support to the Iraqi partners.

The Evaluation Team’s (ET) main finding is that there is no clear and logical Programme strategy. The lack of a clear and logical intervention strategy is emphasised in that the ET frequently, and from many perspectives, needs to refer back to the lack of logical Programme intervention. This, in turn, has meant that methods, procedures and processes in the Programme have largely been the result of ad-hoc decisions, often resulting in non-systematic or too flexible approaches, such as unclear audit trail surrounding the criteria and decision-making. Decisions on approvals and rejections are based on very little information and are thus making the Programme vulnerable to criticism from applicants.

The Programme does further not successfully demonstrate transparency, neither internally among Programme staff nor towards the NGOs in Sweden and Iraq. The lack of transparency is particularly unfortunate when it comes to the Iraqi NGOs, which do for instance not receive constructive written feedback following monitoring missions. They thereby miss out on a capacity-building opportunity.

Given that the Programme intervention logic is not well elaborated, the following up on results is consequently also very weak. Objectives as summarised in the action plan mainly constitute outputs from activities. They are predominantly quantitative and do not capture the vital qualitative aspects of the Programme. There is further weak consistency between the objectives as summarised in the action plan and the contents of the Programme Strategy. In particular, the Programme Strategy does not identify goals for projects to be funded, and thus does also not provide a basis for following the extent to which outcomes are achieved through the development cooperation projects funded by the Programme and undertaken through the NGOs/CSOs in Iraq. In summary, there is no basis for measuring outcomes in the Programme.

The Programme Strategy acknowledges that there are considerable risks in the Programme environment. There is, however, no consolidated risk analysis, and consequently there is no reflection on how to manage the identified risks. This is of particular concern given the process-oriented approach taken, emphasising a need for a high degree of flexibility in implementation. In order for such a process-oriented approach to be useful, it is an indispensable requirement to rely on clear a-priori strategic approaches to risk management in order to avoid ending up in a situation of ad-hoc damage control behaviour. The overall effectiveness of the Programme is thus questionable and no measures have been taken to ensure sustainability of the Programme.

The Evaluation Team's recommendations are included at the end of each section. In summary, the findings point to a need for an in-depth revision of the Programme, starting with reviewing intervention logic. Some of the recommendations are rather fundamental and will be feasible only in a longer-term Programme. There are, however, also many recommendations, relating to on-going projects, which could (and should) be implemented without delay.

1. The Olof Palme International Centre's Support to Civil Society Organisations in Iraq

1.1. Background

Fragile states, such as Iraq, in either post-conflict or conflict situations create special challenges for support to NGOs/CSOs. There is a need to strengthen civil society in partner countries on its own terms, keeping in mind that CSOs/NGOs can both block and stimulate development.

Within Sweden's overall commitment to provide assistance to Iraq (the Swedish Country strategy for Iraq 2004–06, extended until June 2008), Sida and its NGO Division (within the Department for Cooperation with NGOs, Humanitarian Assistance & Conflict Management (SEKA) has been assigned the task to contribute to a long-term development of a democratic Iraq – through strengthening the civil society organisations in Iraq. Funds for supporting civil society in Iraq were, however, not made available until spring 2005, thus half way into the strategy period and therefore not leaving much time to prepare a programme.

To develop, implement and administer a programme for support to civil society organisations in Iraq (hereinafter referred to as the “Programme”) Sida/SEKA-NGO Division approached its Swedish frame organisations which all represent the Swedish civil society.¹ Sida/SEKA-NGO Division sent a letter of invitation which included information on what was expected from the planned Programme. An information meeting was also arranged to further clarify on expectations and requirements.

Five organisations attended the information meeting and subsequently three of these submitted proposals. Following a review and assessment of the received proposals,² Sida/SEKA entered into an agreement with the Olof Palme International Centre (OPC) in mid-2005. OPC and its partner organisations have since the second half of 2005 taken on the task to operationalise the aim set for the Iraq Programme.

The Programme is implemented in circumstances which may at best be described as difficult and it is acknowledged by both Sida and OPC that the Programme is a high risk intervention.

1.2. The OPC Iraq Programme – Objectives and Strategy

OPC describes its objectives and strategy of the Programme in the expression of interest for the Iraq Programme submitted to Sida.³ The OPC expression of interest thus constitutes the Programme Strategy for the Iraq Programme.

The long-term objective of the Iraq Programme is to contribute to the development of a democratic Iraq – through strengthening the civil society in the country.

The main objective is to be achieved through focussing on two interconnected pillars, namely 1) capacity and organisational strengthening of the NGOs/CSOs and 2) supporting their activities on democracy, human rights (incl. gender aspects and economic, social and cultural rights), and conflict management and dialogue issues. The work within the Programme is to contribute to laying a basis for political, economic and social changes which will contribute to sustainable changes in power structures and thereby contribute to securing the equal rights of all to a reasonable standard of life.⁴

¹ The frame organisations are well established and Sida has a long experience in cooperating with them. The criteria for selection of frame organisations are found in: Sida (February 2005): *Criteria for the selection of frame organisations*, Stockholm.

² Sida, SEKA/EO (2005-06-17): *Gransknings-PROMEMORIA*.

³ Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006-04-08): *Intresseanmälan för Irak-program 2005–2007*, (Red. version), Stockholm.

⁴ Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006-04-08): *Intresseanmälan för Irak-program*, (Red. version), Stockholm, (p13).

The Programme was developed from the outset to support projects nationwide in Iraq, given its relevance and own merits as well as taking account of pending and changing security and conflict aspects (do-no-harm). The Programme Strategy stresses the need for flexibility in implementation and project planning to capture opportunities and/or adapt to constraints in the Iraqi development context as they emerge. It is further emphasised that it is important for all actors to have a solid understanding of conflict management and that all actors are offered the opportunity to discuss various scenarios and potential consequences of the proposed project.⁵ OPC refers to its conflict handbook as a tool.⁶ In addition, a gender analysis will be required for all projects.⁷

A Programme Manager will be full-time employed at the OPC in Stockholm. A reference group is to be consulted and to provide advice to improve the quality of proposed projects in Sweden and Iraq.⁸ In addition, a Centre for Civil Society in Iraq (Centre in Erbil) is to be established in Iraq to ensure the quality of the projects supported by the Iraq Programme. Initially the Centre was to be established in Baghdad, but given the worsening security situation it has been established in Erbil (Northern Iraq). It is foreseen to engage three persons in Iraq for monitoring the projects supported. The staff of the Centre in Erbil is to monitor projects in the Northern part of the country, one staff member is to monitor projects in Baghdad while a third staff member is to monitor the Southern region of the country. The two staff members covering Baghdad and Southern Iraq are to work from home.⁹

The Programme proposes a dual track for providing support. One important requirement laid down by the previous Swedish government was to use and work with and through the Swedish-Iraqi resource base in Sweden. The experiences and acquired value systems gained by this group are seen as important to share with local Iraqi civil society organisations. Working through these Swedish-Iraqi organisations thus constitutes the immediate and main modality for providing support. In addition to this required modality, direct support to Iraqi CSOs/NGOs is also to be provided as implementation progresses.¹⁰ The Centre in Erbil is to take on a main responsibility for identifying organisations in Iraq working on democracy, human rights and peace and conflict, initially providing direct support and thereafter guiding these to a direct partnership with Swedish or Swedish-Iraqi actors.¹¹

The Programme is further to arrange network meetings to provide an opportunity for alliances to develop between various rights-based projects and to provide a forum for exchange of ideas and culture.

1.3. The NGO and Civil Society Development Context in Iraq

The Programme is being implemented under circumstances which can only be described as difficult. Prior to 2003, i.e. during Saddam Hussein's rule, civil society in Iraq was impeded and NGOs were virtually non-existing. The allowed unions (women, youth, students, professional, etc.) could not conduct any activities that were not under the full control of the regime.

After the 1991 uprising against Saddam Hussein's government many Iraqis fled the country. This led to many Iraqis starting NGOs outside Iraq. Many of these organisations were not politically affiliated and were mainly advocating the interests of the Iraqi people as a whole. However, some politicians used NGOs as cover-up for their political activities.

⁵ Ibid, (p12).

⁶ Ibid, (p10). (The conflict handbook: Olof Palme International Centre (2002): *A Handbook for working with Conflict, Democracy and Social Change*, Stockholm.)

⁷ Ibid (p16).

⁸ Ibid, (p8–9). The Reference Group members are: Forum Syd, Rädda Barnen, Diakonia, LO-TCO Biståndsnämnd and Irakiska Riksföreningen Sverige (IRS).

⁹ Ibid, (p8).

¹⁰ Ibid, (p5).

¹¹ Ibid, (p8)

From 1991 and onwards Kurdistan developed differently than the rest of Iraq since the Kurds by then were almost independent from Saddam Hussein's rule. This is when NGOs started to appear in Northern Iraq. The majority of these organisations were linked to the two Kurd parties, the PUK and the KDP. The NGO activities were financed through the UN (the Oil for Food programme) and from several other donors. The government of Kurdistan issued the first Civil Society Law in 2001.

After the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime many NGOs were formed in Central and Southern Iraq. These NGOs were mostly loosely organised and mainly dealing with issues such as mass graves, prisoners, etc. Despite limitations in organisational capacity many NGOs managed to achieve improvements and changes to the Iraqi society. The Iraqi Diaspora NGOs were better organized and well connected and they started to establish offices in Baghdad.

The UN and The EU and many embassies didn't want to link themselves with the occupation. Therefore the UN started its own registration process for NGOs, but this was stopped after the bombing of the headquarters of the UN in Baghdad in August 2003. The EU also started its own registration of Iraqi NGOs through an umbrella organisation called NGOs Coordination Centre in Iraq (NCCI).¹² The ICRC continued working through their Iraqi partner (The Iraqi Red Crescent). Other donors were working through their embassies or their Red Cross or Red Crescent. The Japanese worked mostly in the places where they used to have troops (Muthanna Governorate in Southern Iraq).

In general, since 2003 the international donors have not coordinated well with each other and the method for selecting Iraqi partners has depended largely on discretionary decisions by their Iraqi staff. Also, there has been little coordination between the Iraqi NGOs. Many of the Iraqi NGOs cooperate only when international organisations arranged the match-making. Each international donor has had its own "coordination plan" for Iraqi NGOs, and thereby its own group of NGOs.

In 2004 the NGOs became targets for the terrorists and many of them lost their members due to the threatening situation, e.g. the NGOs were considered collaborators by the insurgents although many of them did not work with American or British donors. The Sammarra bombing in February 2006 raised the sectarian violence to its highest level and made it very difficult for NGOs to work, especially in Baghdad.

To sum up, NGOs and civil society in Iraq need lots of time and efforts in order to reach something close to "normality". The current government itself is not deeply familiar with the civil society concept. The worsening security situation poses a great challenge to any programme activity in Iraq and complicates monitoring and security of the projects. This includes, of course, the projects that receive funding from the Programme.¹³

¹² See NCCI website at www.ncciraq.org

¹³ In January and March 2007 bombs were placed next to project "Baba Gurgur's" offices in Kirkuk. According to the project representatives in Kirkuk the first bomb was not necessarily aimed at destroying their office while they believe that the second (outside a new office) was directly targeting their organisation and project.

2. The Evaluation Assignment

2.1. Purpose and Scope

The main objective of the evaluation, as identified by Sida/SEKA-NGO division, is to establish and analyse the outcomes in relation to the objectives set by the Programme. As part of that task the evaluation is to assess the quality and outcomes of the model used for support, while taking account of the full chain of actors down to Swedish NGOs and their Iraqi local counterparts, on an organisational level. Information obtained will form part of Sida's future considerations as regards support to civil society in Iraq. For specific objectives see full Terms of Reference in Appendix 1.

The scope of the evaluation is to get a generic picture of the programme and of projects which have been implemented in North, Central and Southern part of Iraq. The evaluation shall draw general conclusions and make recommendations to Sida by looking at a sample of projects, selected to constitute a fair representation of the country. The evaluation shall cover the years 2005–2006.

2.2. Approach and Methodology

The Evaluation Team (ET) consisted of a gender balanced mix of Swedish and Iraqi consultants for the work in Iraq. The work in Sweden was undertaken by the two Swedish consultants.¹⁴

The evaluation was initiated in Sweden through a meeting with Sida and a meeting with the OPC Programme Manager. The ET met with all members of the Reference group and representatives of most projects. Some meetings in Sweden were conducted prior to departing for field work in Iraq and other meetings were conducted upon return from field work.

The mission to Iraq was prepared through an exchange of e-mails with the OPC representatives in Erbil and Baghdad. The ET also benefited from a meeting in Stockholm with the OPC representative from Erbil to discuss details on requirements for project meetings in Iraq. Due to security reasons, the international consultants were not able to travel outside Northern Iraq. Instead, one representative of most project organisations in Southern and Central Iraq was invited to meetings in Erbil for discussions with the ET. The international consultants together with one of the Iraqi consultants visited some projects in Northern Iraq and in addition, one of the Iraqi consultants visited some projects in Southern and Central Iraq. Details on organisations and representatives met are found in the work and meeting schedule (Appendix 2).

Out of the total number of projects (22) that had been approved for funding in 2005–2006, the ET decided to meet with representatives from 18. The remaining 4 projects had either been postponed or cancelled. The meeting with one project was, however, postponed and later not resumed due to reporting deadline. In effect, the ET thus met with representatives from 17 out of the total of 18 projects. As a basis for project selection a summary of all projects supported during 2005–2006 was prepared (Appendix 3). The matrix also provides a summary overview of which contacts that have been taken with each project (in Sweden, in Erbil, and on project location respectively).

Documents consulted during the evaluation process are seen from Appendix 4. Documents from the Iraq Programme were gathered primarily during a series of meetings with OPC in Stockholm but some monitoring reports were gathered only during the field work in Iraq (from the Erbil Centre).

¹⁴ The Evaluation Team members were (in alphabetical order): Ms Henny Andersen (Team Leader), Ms Razaw Fauzi M. Noori (Local Advisor/Team Assistant), Mr Ali Sada (Local Advisor/Field Researcher), and Mr Filip Vikström (Assistant Team Leader).

A semi-structured questionnaire was used as a guiding tool for structuring discussions during the various meetings (attached in Appendix 5).

2.3. A Note on Delimitations and Constraints

It has not been possible for the Swedish ET members to visit many of the project locations, except for a few in Northern Iraq (Kurdistan). This has posed a challenge from an independent evaluation perspective. The ET to a large extent has had to rely on “indirect” information, without being able to verify activities on the spot to the extent preferred. The limitations for travel and access to projects has had implications on the ability to creating a full picture of the NGO context in Iraq, and these circumstances are similar to the work context of the OPC Programme Manager.

The absolute majority of meetings were conducted in accordance with pre-set meeting arrangements. However, one meeting in Sweden was rescheduled and subsequently conducted via telephone, and two meetings in Iraq did not follow the pre-set request of the ET to meet with beneficiaries. Also, two of the pre-set meetings in Baghdad by the ET’s local team member were not possible to achieve due to security reasons. The difficulty in meeting with beneficiaries in Iraq was, according to the ET, the greatest setback as far as the evaluation work is concerned.

The assignment has not addressed in-depth financial review of the programme. This was not part of the ToR. However, the total programme budget and individual project budgets were reviewed when this was necessary due to project efficiency and transparency reasons.

2.4. Acknowledgement

As members of the Evaluation Team we would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all who helped us put this report together. We appreciate the efforts made in providing information, supporting in the arrangement of meetings, and answering our endless questions. We recognise missions of this kind require much preparation by many people, and take up a lot of valuable time, which might be better spent getting on with the real work of helping the beneficiaries of the programme and projects. We were impressed with the high level of commitment, enthusiasm and courtesy shown to us by all concerned, particularly project representatives and the Programme staff at all levels.

All of us on the evaluation team learned a lot from our visit. We sincerely hope we have accurately interpreted current issues relating to the Iraq Programme, and that all concerned will find our ideas and recommendations useful in thinking about how to proceed in a potential continuation of the Iraq Programme.

2.5. The Report

The evaluation findings are presented in the following chapter (Chapter 3). Recommendations that follow from the analysis are included at the end of each sub-section for easy reference. Overall conclusions, together with a consolidation of recommendations, are presented in Chapter 4. The report concludes by pointing to a few generic lessons to be learned (Chapter 5).

3. Findings and Assessment

3.1. Relevance and Justification

3.1.1. Swedish Policies and Strategies

The Programme as outlined in the Programme Strategy is well in line with the Swedish country strategy for development cooperation with Iraq 2004–06 (extended until June 2008), which sets out three priorities:

- i) to promote a peaceful development towards a democratic state governed by law and respecting human rights,
- ii) to support economic recovery aiming at pro-poor growth, and
- iii) to lay the basis of a broader cooperation between Sweden and Iraq.

The Programme will support only initiatives and organisations which in different ways contribute to strengthening poor people's opportunities to move out of poverty and maintain control over their lives.¹⁵ The Programme Strategy is thus in line with Sweden's policy for global development, which lays down *one goal* for Swedish development cooperation: to contribute to an environment supportive of poor people's own efforts to improve their quality of life. Sweden's development cooperation is to be based on *two perspectives*: a rights perspective and on the perspectives of poor people. The purpose of the goal formulation is to identify poor women, men, girls and boys as active subjects and agents of change, rather than as passive objects. This means that people's rights will be the starting-point for activities and that the main focus will be on poor people's needs, interest, capacity and conditions.¹⁶

The Programme Strategy is also well in line with Sida's policy on peace and security.¹⁷ The policy puts emphasis on three basic approaches: i) risk awareness and ii) conflict sensitivity when working *in* conflicts and situations of insecurity, and iii) promoting peace and security when working *on* conflicts – approaches which are crucial also in the design of the Iraq Programme.

The Programme Strategy further places emphasis on crucial cross-cutting aspects such as gender equality and HIV/AIDS.

Overall, it is assessed that the Iraq Programme Strategy remains relevant and well justified from the perspective of applicable Swedish policies and strategies. However, the extent to which any programme or project is *truly* relevant will ultimately depend on how it is implemented in practise. Findings on actual implementation, including conflict sensitivity, rights perspectives, gender, and HIV/AIDS are discussed further in various sections below.

3.1.2. The Iraqi Development Context

The security situation in Iraq will in practise determine the viability and detailed design of the Programme as implementation progresses. This is also emphasised in the Programme Strategy which calls for a high degree of flexibility (see further on process-oriented approach in section 3.1.3 below).

Information from various sources consistently confirms that the prospects for stable development have worsened considerably since the inception of the programme, in all areas of the country except for the Northern part. The security situation is most difficult in Central Iraq but also in the Southern parts

¹⁵ Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006-04-08): *Intresseanmälan för Irak-program*, (Red. version), Stockholm, (p12).

¹⁶ Swedish Government (May 2003): *Shared Responsibility. Sweden's Policy for Global Development*. Government Bill 2002/03:122.

¹⁷ Sida (October 2005): *Promoting Peace and Security through Development Cooperation*, Stockholm.

there are indications that tension is on the rise, at least temporarily. The worsened security situation may directly influence the prospects for implementation of the Programme. In some areas it is for instance reported that beneficiaries' opportunities to physically travel to take part in project activities is constrained. Further, OPC's own monitoring of projects is also negatively influenced, which makes it difficult to follow up on how projects progress. This difficulty in turn constitutes a high risk particularly in a development environment which is characterised by a very high degree of corruption. The Programme Strategy does not include a discussion on how to handle this situation of worsened security. In the view of the ET it is therefore necessary to periodically explicitly assess whether the changing security situation in parts of Iraq calls for amendments to the Programme Strategy, i.e. to take advantage of the intended flexibility (see further on risk management, section 3.3 below).

Recommendations:

- Assess whether changing security situation in parts of Iraq calls for amendments of the Programme Strategy

3.1.3. Process-Oriented Approach

In effect, the Programme Strategy assumes a process-oriented approach, as it stresses the need for a high degree of flexibility.

The ET finds a process-oriented approach relevant for the Programme, given that the Programme is to be implemented in an environment which is both complex and with a comparatively high degree of uncertainty. A process-oriented approach would allow OPC and its partners to capture opportunities as they emerge and to adapt to unforeseen constraints. It would thus in effect open up for a learning-by-doing process, which seems appropriate when entering into this new type of cooperation in a country which only recently initiated its democratisation process.

To be relevant in practice, a process-oriented approach, however, requires a high degree of preparedness to be able to actually handle emerging situations and/or risks, i.e. to execute the flexibility in a strategic way rather than in an ad-hoc-damage-control way.

Ideally, there should be a documented strategy on how to manage the process. Further, actions taken and changes made should also be documented. Such documentation would guarantee institutional memory, and thus allow for all involved parties to be able to follow which strategic considerations led to which decisions when in time.

The ET, unfortunately, finds that there is no documented risk management plan within the Iraq Programme, which is of some concern given the process-oriented approach taken (see also under learning process, section 3.3.7 below).

3.1.4. From a Rights Perspective

A rights perspective is at the core for all Swedish development cooperation. A rights-based approach to development puts strong emphasis on features such as accountability, participation and empowerment, and non-discrimination (including gender) and attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. In other words, a rights-based approach puts emphasis on *how* interventions are undertaken (i.e. the process) in addition to what the intervention does.

A rights-based approach takes the view that people have rights to equal access to political, economic and social processes and services. People become "rights-holders" and those who hold the duty to provide services become "duty-bearers". However, right holders and duty bearers are roles and func-

tions and nothing fixed. One individual may be both a duty bearer and a right holder.¹⁸ This implies a need to strengthen the capacity of the duty bearers to deliver essential services, whilst assisting communities and individuals (the right holders) to empower themselves and demand greater accountability. In essence, strengthening capacity for development from above and below (as opposed to focusing more on strengthening the capacities of duty bearers alone or only assisting right holders to demand what they are entitled to). A rights-based approach, with its emphasis on accountability, participation and empowerment, and non-discrimination, is applicable not only to government structures but also to support provided through civil society organisations.

Applying the concepts of “duty bearer” and “rights holder” to the chain of actors within the Iraq Programme, would mean that: the OPC is a duty bearer towards the organisations receiving funding for projects. The Swedish-Iraqi project organisations are thus right holders towards OPC, but are duty bearers towards their Iraqi partner organisations. In turn, while the Iraqi partner organisations are rights holders in their relation to the Swedish-Iraqi organisation from which they are to receive support, they are themselves duty bearers towards the ultimate beneficiaries of the project. In essence, each lower level has the right to require participation, and transparency and accountability from a higher level, while in turn having the duty to allow participation and to be transparent and accountable downwards.

Applying a rights-based approach thus puts emphasis on empowering the end beneficiaries. They are entitled to active participation in the planning of project activities, and should not be reduced to passive recipients of services provided by the CSOs/NGOs. They have the right to claim accountability from the organisations receiving funds for activities to benefit them. These perspectives are not addressed in the implementation of the Programme.

The Programme provides training about rights features but the rights features are, unfortunately, not yet very visible in the implementation of the Iraq Programme, even though a “participant perspective” is mentioned in the Programme Strategy.¹⁹ To the understanding of the ET most Iraqi CSOs/NGOs are not member-based. Their activities are planned by the leader of the organisation and then implemented as funding comes on line. With no member base there is no mechanism to put pressure from below within the organisations themselves. The inherited authoritarian structures in Iraq are further not conducive to such an approach. It therefore requires deliberate and persistent efforts on behalf of those holding the power within implementing organisations to move in the direction of a rights-based approach when working through civil society organisations in Iraq.

Recommendations:

- Assess how to strengthen the perspectives of the beneficiaries in the projects, and thus the accountability downwards in each step of the chain of actors

3.1.5. Thematic Areas for Support

The thematic areas chosen for the Iraq Programme coincide with the core themes of all OPC development cooperation. The selected themes are broad and one may decide to focus on an abstract level or on a more hands-on level. An abstract level would entail e.g. training about the meaning of concepts, while a more hands-on level would entail e.g. support to form groups to become agents of change.

There is no discussion in the Programme Strategy to indicate whether the themes will be implemented in accordance with OPC generic interpretation of the themes or whether there will be any adaptation

¹⁸ A teacher, for instance, has the duty to provide good quality teaching (duty bearer) but s/he also has a right to receive agreed salary (right holder).

¹⁹ Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006-04-08): *Intresseanmälan för Irak-program*, (Red. version), Stockholm, (p13).

to the specific Iraqi situation. The Programme Strategy does, however, specifically mention that human rights include economic, social and cultural rights. This seems important given the difficult situation for vulnerable and poor groups in Iraq. It is likely that poor people, who are to be the end beneficiaries of the Programme, struggle very hard with immediate problems of day-to-day survival and experience limited opportunity to participate in decision-making processes, and thus to influence their daily problems.

In the view of the ET it is important to ensure that more hands-on rights are paid due attention in the various projects. Access to information on one's right is no doubt a necessary precondition for being in a position to influence decision making and demand accountability. It is, however, not a sufficient condition. Access to information must be accompanied by access to mechanisms to translate the knowledge into practise. This may be done either within the projects themselves, or through explicitly cooperating with other projects or institutions.

It is thus in the view of the ET important for OPC to ensure that there is a clearly defined view on how to interpret e.g. democratisation projects within the Iraq Programme – is it e.g. best done “top-down” (such as offering/supplying/providing short-term training courses on a topic selected by the provider) or is it best done “bottom up” (i.e. based on the views of the true beneficiaries)? Or equally, what constitutes a “study circle”? Does it have to involve a formal trainer talking to a listening group of participants, or are facilitated peer discussions around a selected topic (e.g. talking to illiterate women on their own terms) equally important? How can it be assured that the interpretation of the themes do reflect the perspectives of the poor people themselves? Guidance on what will and will not be accepted by the OPC as falling within the selected themes would be helpful for the organisations who wish to apply for funding. As will be discussed further below, interpretations of these aspects do come out as important when assessing OPC project monitoring and decisions on continued support.

Recommendations:

- Provide clear guidance on how the selected themes are to be interpreted in practise within the Iraq Programme.

3.1.6. Cross-cutting Aspects in Projects

The Programme Strategy envisions that a “do-no-harm” analysis will be an integral part of the Programme.²⁰ OPC has also conducted training courses on the topic inviting project representatives from the Iraqi NGOs that have received funding from the Programme. However, when it comes to the projects being implemented, it seems to the ET that this conflict sensitivity analysis is in reality reduced to focussing on ensuring an ethnic mix of participants. There is no discussion on various scenarios or on whether such a mix is always possible to achieve for each project given the security situation and given where the individual project is located.²¹

The Programme Strategy further says that a gender analysis will be required from the projects.²² In reality, however, it seems to the ET that gender analysis has been reduced to ensuring a certain share of female participants. While it is important that women are participating, this perspective cannot replace a genuine gender analysis. There is a checklist on gender in the OPC handbook for the Iraq Programme²³ but to be seen from the project applications and the project catalogues this analysis has in reality not been required from the applicants.²⁴

²⁰ Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006-04-08): *Intresseanmälan för Irak-program*, (Red. version), Stockholm, (e.g. p12).

²¹ Application Forms and Project Catalogues for the various projects.

²² Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006-04-08): *Intresseanmälan för Irak-program*, (Red. version), Stockholm, (p16).

²³ Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006): *Projekthandboken. Irakprogrammet*, Stockholm.

²⁴ Application Forms and Project Catalogues for the various projects.

HIV/AIDS is a third issue which is to be paid attention to.²⁵ The ET did not come across any project which actually includes information on HIV/AIDS. It may be that the extreme sensitivity of the topic makes it impossible to include HIV/AIDS at this point in time. This should be carefully analysed in order to arrive at a realistic strategy, particularly given that it is part of the Programme Strategy, which builds on OPC own in-depth knowledge about the situation in Iraq and points to the high risk of a increasing spread of the epidemic given experiences from other post-conflict countries.

Recommendations:

- Assess how to ensure genuine conflict management (do-no-harm analysis) and gender analysis in the projects.
- Assess whether it is at all possible to get HIV/AIDS on the agenda.

3.1.7. Modality of Support

The main modality for providing support to the Iraqi civil society is through the Swedish-Iraqi organisations. This was a requirement laid down by the previous Swedish government and it was thus a “given” when designing the Programme.

The Iraqi diaspora in Sweden no doubt constitutes a resource base when it comes to building good relations with Iraq. However, all Swedish-Iraqi organisations do not by definition have solid experience from development cooperation and from transferring capacity and knowledge. While it was thus relevant to work with and through the Iraqi diaspora, it has also at least in the more immediate term, implied certain trade-off between aims of the Programme. More resources than initially foreseen have had to be devoted to strengthening the capacity of Swedish-Iraqi organisations in order for them to function well in their cooperation with their Iraqi partners. This may have implications for effectiveness, at least in the more immediate term, unless one views the strengthening of Swedish-Iraqi organisations as an overriding aim of the Programme (see further section 3.5 below).

An additional point is that while the Iraqi diaspora in Sweden may help avoid mistakes through their understanding of the Iraqi society, the Iraqi diaspora is also part of the problem when it comes to the predominant strong family and clan structures which are mentioned as a complicating factor. The complexity of interests within the Iraqi diaspora was also recognised as a risk by Sida at the inception of the Programme.²⁶ With these complexities, it becomes even more important for the Programme to take firmer steps to ensure that conflict management in the projects becomes more than a focusing on ethnic mix of participants (see discussion and recommendations in section 3.1.6 above).

The ET has not seen any strategy or reasoning on how to handle the above issues within the Programme and has also not seen any discussion on capacity requirements when it comes to Swedish-Iraqi organisations. The ceiling on amounts to be granted implicitly points to an emphasis on involving as many Swedish-Iraqi organisations as possible. In light of the weaknesses and risks, this may in the view of the ET not be the most appropriate approach. Rather, a more realistic approach would seem to be to involve fewer organisations which can fulfil the Programme requirements of analysis of vital aspects such as conflict sensitivity (“do-no-harm”) and gender (discussed in section 3.1.6 above).

Through training courses competence would then continuously be built among more Swedish/Iraqi organisations which would at a later stage be able to formulate project applications of an adequate quality, i.e. being able to adhere to the analytical requirements of the Programme.

²⁵ Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006-04-08): *Intresseanmälan för Irak-program*, (Red. version), Stockholm, (p16).

²⁶ Sida, SEKA/EO (2005-06-17): *Gransknings-PROMEMORIA*, (p7).

Given that the Programme is soon to end, there may not be any more application round before the Programme ends. It may therefore not be possible to take a different approach within the current Programme. However, if a continuation of the Programme is considered, it is recommended to review the approach to involving the Iraqi diaspora. More emphasis should be placed on the qualitative aspects of the cooperation through appropriate criteria (see also section 3.2.1 below).

Recommendations:

- Formulate a strategy on how to ensure that the Iraqi diaspora becomes a positive factor and does not contribute to further “cementing” the identified predominant family and clan structures.
- Formulate criteria on what is required from a Swedish-Iraqi organisation in terms of capacity to undertake development cooperation.

3.2. Planning, Monitoring and Reporting

Programme Criteria

The OPC uses 12 criteria for applications to the Programme.²⁷ The criteria include aspects of project planning, competence from democracy work, minimum years of operation. Local Iraqi organisations also are required to have by-laws stating that they strive towards a democratic and pluralistic Iraq based on respect for human rights. All NGOs in Sweden are eligible to apply as long as they are politically independent, transparent and pursue continuous and documented activities and do not have any profit-driven ambitions or activities. Further, the list of criteria used in the Programme informs that one important aspect of project selection is the representation of a broad geographical spectrum in Iraq. According to another criterion, the applicant organisations shall have participated in a Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) course and project management course. The criteria also include some information on the role of the Reference group, stating that it should be “consultative” (see further Reference group in section 3.2.4).

Firstly, the reality in Iraq (as for many of the lead partner organisations in Sweden) is that most NGOs in one way or another are affiliated with party politics. This was emphasised during the field work in Northern Iraq, where it was noted that NGOs politically belong to either PUK or KDP, the two main parties in Kurdistan. This connection to party politics was also confirmed during visits to projects in Central and Southern Iraq, where many of the Iraqi organisations stem from political organisations. The political affiliation is manifested in different ways, ranging from explicit affiliation in the organisation’s by-laws, receiving core-funding from political parties to authorizing NGOs to hire or borrow meeting rooms and halls for meetings. One example: during an interview with beneficiaries of one project the ET were told that the selection of training participants was partly based on the belonging to a specific party. However, despite this breach of the independence criterion it should be said that the ET has not found that the Programme has been used by NGOs to finance explicit political activities. The main point here is that if one is to support the NGOs in Iraq it is important to be aware of the fact that to a great extent they are politically affiliated. This in turn means that there is a need for a very precise definition of the meaning of “politically independent” – what nature of and to what extent is political affiliation acceptable? If complete political independence is required from all NGOs, few organisations out of the existing grantees in Sweden and Iraq would be eligible. It is also of utmost importance that such criteria are subsequently interpreted and applied consistently across all organisations.

²⁷ Olof Palme International Center: *Criteria for project applications with the Iraq Program*

Secondly, one criterion states that applicants “shall have participated in a logical Framework Analysis project management course.” This, in reality however, was not a condition in order to be approved for project funding in the first place. Further, the delivery of the LFA training has not been in conjunction with the start of project activities. This means that the training in LFA has not been timely delivered in order to have any impact on the planning of project activities. Also, in order for this training to prove fruitful it is also important to modify the application forms so that these reflect the LFA (further discussed in section 3.2.3 below).

Thirdly, three criteria were said to be used by the Erbil Centre staff for OPC assessment of the proposed Iraqi NGOs – the organisations should be serious (have done work during at least one year), be independent and be democratic. In the written criteria from the OPC it is also stated that the work should be based on respect for human rights and work for a pluralistic Iraq. These criteria are thus rather general and leave considerable scope for subjective interpretation. This may have been needed to maintain flexibility initially but as experiences are gained criteria should be elaborated and made more constructive.

Fourthly, based on the list of projects that received funding in 2005 and 2006, the ET confirms that there is considerable diversity as regards geographical representation of projects in Iraq. However, this also makes it relevant to question whether the approval of all projects are based primarily on actual needs – or whether the programme has tried to (which is implied in the criteria) to reach as many regions as possible in Iraq. If the geographical “criterion” has been an important basis for decisions on funding this should be reviewed and perhaps cancelled. This would possibly increase the allocation of funds to projects which show better “demand-driven” qualities, i.e. in line with a rights-based approach (see section 3.1.4 above).

Clear, objective, and easy-to-interpret criteria is a necessary prerequisite for a transparent programme. The ET did come across cases where it was not easy to understand why one organisation had been rejected while another had been accepted. To exemplify: In one case of acceptance it was an organisation that did not fulfil the criteria of having worked during one year before receiving funding, it was obviously not functioning in a democratic way (volunteers were reportedly denied to become members in the organisation they worked for). Also, the organisation was most likely closely related to a party since there were statements saying that party connections partly influenced how participants were selected for some of the project activities. In one case of rejection, the organisation was also most likely closely related to a party, but it had been working for many years, and it did have a great number of members. The rejected organisation thus fulfilled two of the three criteria while the accepted organisation fulfilled none. This exemplifies the argument above that the criteria need to be elaborated to be functional.

Recommendations:

- Review and update the criteria based on experiences gained in the Programme.
- Clarify the meaning of geographical representation of the projects in order to make sure that the quality of project proposals is more important than the geographical location of projects.
- Clarify the meaning of “politically independent” and use this criterion consistently when appraising project applications.
- Plan for a timely delivery of LFA training.

Application Procedures and Processes

In order to describe the application procedures, the following is a chronological account of the procedure when working through Swedish-Iraqi organisations:

Project proposals are submitted by the lead partner in Sweden to the OPC in Stockholm. When project proposals are received by the Programme Manager the applications are given an identification number. Thereafter an initial scanning of the project applications follows. At this stage there is also communication with the Erbil office for background check of organisations in Iraq. Following the background check the Programme Manager requests any missing information from the applicant.

Thereafter the Programme Manager meets with three colleagues to make a preliminary appraisal of the applications after which the applications are summarized in the so-called “project catalogue”. The project catalogue serves as background information for the Reference group members, who receive this information two weeks in advance of Reference group meetings. The information in the project catalogue includes contact data of the applicant organisations, the sector which is addressed and a very brief summary of the project. It also includes the OPC’s recommendation on whether to approve or reject the proposal. If approved the project most often is allocated a revised (lower) budget.

During the Reference group meeting the Programme Manager presents each individual project and provides information on OPC’s recommendation. If the Reference group has no objections to this recommendation²⁸ the project applicant receives a decision letter about the decision together with the agreement and conditions for payment. The approved applicant is at this stage usually required to send complementary information in order for payment to be made. The agreement is signed by the project manager of the Swedish lead partner, and the Head of Development Cooperation (Biståndschefen) at OPC signs on OPC’s behalf. Once the agreements have been signed and in order to activate the first payment the project manager then submits the payment order. A first instalment of (usually) 50% of the total sum is then released to the Swedish lead applicant’s account.

The ET noted that there is no formally adopted appraisal system existing within the Programme, apart for the criteria described in section 3.2.1. Thus, there is no grading system, based on e.g. sustainability and relevance, effectiveness and cost-efficiency, and clarity of work-plan. The programme management does not require project applications to be in line with established methods for development cooperation (such as LFA), except for some parts. Therefore, the decision on approvals and rejections becomes a rather subjective appraisal process, which has implications also on the budget allocation. The lack of clear criteria and the absence of consistency when applying the rather broad criteria during project appraisals open up for criticism from organisations, and particularly those who have had their applications rejected.

General administrative routines: The ET’s gathering of project documentation has been rather time consuming. It seems that the administrative routines of the Programme are evolving and thus are not yet solidly established which causes problems in retrieving specific documentation. E.g. the project identification numbers of the projects change when projects are “upgraded” from application to approved project. The introduction of a uniform identification system would facilitate auditing and reference to project documents. This identification system should be applied to the filing of all documentation relating to a specific project. It was e.g. not possible for the ET to easily follow the progress of one specific project from application, through implementation and to termination within the current filing system. Also, there are indications that the routines for how meetings are arranged and documented should be reviewed and made more transparent. The aforementioned relates to planning, announcement as well as actual meeting procedures.

²⁸ According to interviews with the Reference group members there have only been a few cases where the views of the Reference group members have actually affected the approval/rejection decisions by the OPC. However, the question on how decisions were made by the OPC has been raised many times during these meetings.

Recommendations:

- Introduce a more transparent system for project appraisals in order to better justify decisions on approved and rejected project applications.
- Consider the introduction of formalised and accepted meeting procedures, including chairman, secretary and a preparatory part.

The Application Forms and Guiding Documents

The applicants are supported by a number of guiding documents and application forms in the application process. The guiding documents include the Project handbook and Handbook for working with Conflict, Democracy and Social change, the Code of conduct (OPC), Anvisningar för stöd från anslagsposten enskilda organisationer and other Sida publications.²⁹ These guiding documents are used in other funding programmes administered by the OPC. The application forms for the indirect support are available in Swedish and English (only the Swedish version has been used by applicants), however the guiding documents are to a large extent available only in Swedish.

In order to apply for project grants the (Swedish) applicant organisation submits a proposal that provides contact information of the applicant (Swedish) and local organisation (Iraqi), official registration number and information on past cooperation. Other information to be provided relate to “regional analysis”, project objectives, target groups, activities, risk analysis & management as well as time-plan for implementation. In addition to the narrative project application, the applicant is also to provide a budget (in Excel) describing total project budget and budget items.

Since the applicants have used Swedish in their applications there is no use of a language that can be used consistently throughout the project cycle. This has implications both for the Programme staff and the NGOs. The ET suggests English as the mandatory project language, with translation of documents into a second mandatory language – Arabic or Kurdish – depending on geographical area for implementation and target group(s). The use of a consistent language must be a priority in order to ensure quality and transparency.

The application form used by applicants is not in line with the LFA method. The consequences due to lack of logical intervention and comprehensive planning aside – e.g. there is no problem analysis section in the application form – it is also somewhat contradictory since the project partners are not invited to take part in LFA training until after approval of project applications. Therefore the newly acquired LFA knowledge is not of any use during the identification, planning and formulation phases of the project cycle.

The ET understands that Projekthandboken and the English guiding document – Guidelines for project applications – also are used in other programmes administered by the OPC. These publications contain many examples that are explicitly political in their content. This is contradictory to the criteria which state that organisations (and projects) shall be both politically and religiously independent.

Recommendations:

- Introduce a mandatory project documentation language: English, followed by a second mandatory language – Arabic or Kurdish – depending on geographical area and target group(s).
- Modify the application documents so that these fully reflect the LFA.
- Modify the guiding documents so that no political change projects serve as examples (which are contradictory to the programme objectives).

²⁹ Sida's policy for the civil society (Sida, 2004), Sida's support to Swedish non-governmental organisations (Sida, 2003).

The Role and Responsibilities of the Reference Group

The Reference group consists of five Swedish NGOs.³⁰ The organisations were selected at an early stage of initiation of the Programme. The role of the Reference group members is defined in the Programme Strategy. The Reference Group attends meetings where they are to play a consultative role in the process of deciding which projects that are approved and rejected, respectively. Further, the Reference Group is to suggest focus, priorities and geographical variety of the projects in Iraq. Also, the Reference Group is to work as natural partners (to the OPC) during training events inside Iraq, as well as to be natural partners for Iraqi organisations.³¹

As described above in section 3.2.2, the members of the Reference Group are informed prior to the Reference group meetings through invitations accompanied by the project catalogue, which contains brief information based on project applications. In order to work professionally the Reference Group must have access to accurate and relevant information prior to meetings. The information provided in the project catalogue informs only very briefly on the projects and activities and vaguely motivates the proposals by the OPC staff. The brevity in the project catalogue (and subsequently the inconsistent decision-making) has made the programme vulnerable to criticism related to the decision-making. Some organisations have questioned the decision-making, e.g. as a response to arguments of the Programme Manager that there were political connections that made the NGO non-eligible for funding.

It was confirmed during several meetings with Reference Group members that the current information does not provide the members with a basis for understanding the strengths/weaknesses of the respective projects. In order to introduce possibilities to assess these strengths/weaknesses the summaries in the “project catalogue” would need to contain complementary information on e.g. problem analysis, feasibility, dissemination, poverty alleviation, reciprocity, equality and other that is relevant for the programme (and for LFA). This is particularly important since the information in the project catalogue forms the input data for the monitoring (see further sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.5).

The ET also found that one of the Reference Group member organisations had never participated in any of the Reference Group meetings. Also, not many members were e.g. familiar with the Programme Strategy, which outlines the work of the Reference group. It is the ET’s view that the commitment to the Reference Group meetings would improve if there was a joint understanding of the Programme Strategy and how to interpret the work of the Reference Group.

Another issue relates to the extent to which the Reference Group members (and their organisations) should be allowed to apply for funding from a programme in which they themselves have a “consultative” role. This must be thoroughly assessed by the OPC and there must be a clear understanding of the “consultative” role, in order to avoid e.g. biased decision-making. Further, there is no real mandate of the Reference group, but to some extent they collectively are accountable (although not formally or legally responsible) for the quality of decisions made on approvals and rejections. It is the ET’s view that the instalment of a Reference group mandate, e.g. through a steering committee and majority vote system, would significantly improve the credibility of the decisions on approvals and rejections. The decisions would thus be easily justified towards the NGOs that apply to the Programme.

Another issue concerns the added value of the Reference group. The organisations that together constitute the Reference group are a rich resource for contributing to the programme and its development. It is the ET’s view that involving the Reference group organisations’ members and their NGO networks would benefit the strengthening of NGOs in Iraq. Also, it is the ET’s view that it is important that Reference group meetings address e.g. joint strategies for the strengthening of the Iraqi civil society.

³⁰ The members of the Reference group are: Forum Syd, Rädda Barnen, Diakonia, LO-TCO Biståndsnämnd and IRS (Irakiska Riksföreningen Sverige)

³¹ Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006-04-08): *Intresseanmälan för Irak-program*, (Red. version), Stockholm, (p8–9).

Finally, despite the findings above the ET also noted that there were unanimous statements by the Reference Group members that there had recently been improvements in the work of the Reference group which are gradually leading to more formalised meeting structures and decision procedures.

Recommendations:

- Clarify the role and responsibilities of the Reference group members and to consider the idea of formalizing a voting system and a steering committee.
- Provide more detail in the project catalogue – partly by the introduction of a system for appraisals – in order to provide transparent and clear arguments for recommendations by the programme management.
- Involve the Reference group members in the development of the programme.

Communication in the Iraq Programme

Communication between programme staff

The programme staff communicates with each other regularly via email and telephone. However, as regards project monitoring the Programme Manager communicates predominantly with the staff member at the Erbil office who (in addition to her own monitoring) also is in charge of editing reports coming from the staff member in Baghdad.

The ET noted that the communication between the staff members has developed through practice and not through pre-set structures. Further, the ET found that communication lines and formats used for reporting between the staff members in the programme fails to keep everyone informed and updated on all documents needed for relevant monitoring of projects (further developed in section 3.2.7).

Communication with the NGOs

In order to reach the relevant target groups in Sweden the OPC headquarter uses a list of Swedish NGOs (mostly Iraqi diaspora) which has been developed gradually during the Programme. Further, the way in which the contact network has evolved (particularly among Iraqi NGOs) is to a large extent the result of the personal networks of the staff working in the Programme. This kind of set-up potentially excludes a large number of organisations that could be efficient and effective project implementers. This setup also opens up for criticism of the Programme by organisations that have not received the invitations to attend meetings or seminars, alternatively are not made aware of project funding opportunities. In order to extend the reach on information about the programme to a larger NGO community – irrespective of personal network with the Programme staff – there should be a comprehensive communication strategy in place.

The ET has noted that pertinent information from the Programme staff usually reaches the Swedish organisation long in advance of the Iraqi organisation, e.g. information on approval decisions. This should be remedied, and Iraqi NGOs incorporated in the communication loop in order to ensure that there are democratic dissemination routines. This is especially important since the Programme aims to promote democracy.

When it comes to the direct support to Iraqi NGOs which was initiated in 2007, the ET recognises that this falls outside the scope of this evaluation. However, the direct support involves OPC to directly identify Iraqi organisations on a larger scale. This underlines the necessity to improve on criteria for selection as well as on process for disseminating information. In the future it should not be enough to rely on OPC staff personal networks but methods should be found to disseminate information about the funding opportunities in a more transparent fashion.

Communication between lead partner (in Sweden) and local partner (in Iraq)

From discussions with project owners in Sweden and Iraq, it seems rather clear that personal contacts have been the most common way for Swedish organisations to identify their Iraqi partner organisation, including the personal contacts of the OPC Programme Manager (in at least one case).

The intensity and regularity of communication between lead partner organisation and local partner organisation is to a large extent depending on the history of cooperation and the involvement of Swedish organisations in activities in Iraq. Also, communication between organisations differs substantially based on amount and nature of project activities. Further, visits to Iraq by the Swedish organisations depend a lot on the security situation. This means that the projects in Central and Southern Iraq receive substantially fewer visits than those in Northern Iraq.

Recommendations:

- Plan and implement a transparent identification and communication strategy for how to approach the NGO community in Sweden and Iraq.
- Make sure that the communication to Swedish organisations also reaches the Iraqi organisations.

Monitoring of Projects

Monitoring of projects is conducted through on-site visits by the Iraqi Programme staff. The visits often take place in conjunction with project activities, usually training events. The 2005–2006 projects, both finished and ongoing, have been visited on 1 – 4 occasions. The difference in number of visits is due to geographical location as well as security situation. Only one project (in Najaf) has never been visited due to difficulties of communication with Iraqi and Swedish partners and subsequent difficulties to arrange meetings with the project stakeholders in Iraq.

It was found that the monitoring should typically be based on the information in the project applications and or the project catalogue summaries. The visits to the projects have been reported according to the following structure: 1. Introduction, 2. Summary of the project, 3. Additional comments, and 4. Lessons learned and recommendations. The monitoring is often conducted without access to sufficient background information on specific activities and work-plans since translations (into English) of applications often are missing, and sometimes even the project catalogue summaries. The ET did for instance come across statements in a monitoring report on what was referred to as missing activities. These so called unfulfilled activities were, however, not included in the project application in the first place.

Moreover, there is no information on the break-down of the project budget (based on application approval). This makes it difficult if not impossible for the Programme staff in Iraq to understand the relation between budget items and activities. Altogether, the lack of vital documents and background information results in reports that do not take full account of the original applications and work-plans.

Following the monitoring missions, reports are submitted to the programme manager in Stockholm. The report from the Baghdad-based staff member is sent to the Erbil office (in Arabic), which after some editing is forwarded to the Programme Manager (also in Arabic). The Programme Manager translates and edits the information and sends this to the Swedish lead partner organisation. However, the organisations in Iraq do not receive any written feedback. Their entire reporting feedback is provided orally directly during the field visits. Further, the ET has clear indications from numerous Swedish-Iraqi project owners that they do not automatically receive the monitoring reports, e.g. some have only received e-mails with selected information from the Programme Manager. The Iraqi NGOs depend entirely on their Swedish cooperation partner for receiving written feedback from the monitor-

ing visits. This entire set-up of reporting is in the view of the ET an unfortunate state of the arts and it does not promote transparency or ownership on part of the Iraqi partner. The introduction of written feedback to all organisations would significantly increase their possibilities to improve their activities and build capacity. The ET proposes that whenever a monitoring visit has been paid, the final written report should be circulated to both the Swedish-Iraqi and the Iraqi partners.

The ET has not been able to access reports submitted by the project organisations following completion of project activities. The format for this does exist and follows the same structure as the application documents.

Recommendations:

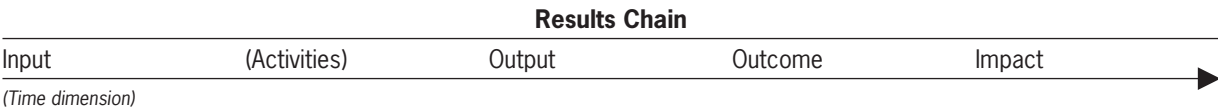
- Circulate information between programme staff on every project, particularly the application and break-down of approved budgets.
- Introduce an efficient and relevant format for monitoring reports.
- Make sure both Swedish and Iraqi organisations receive written monitoring reports as feedback from monitoring missions.

3.3. Results and Risk Management

Measuring Results

Each intervention (programme and/or project) follows certain logic. The intervention logic can be described as a *results chain* – a chain of events which is relatively uncomplicated and which can be applied to all forms of development co-operation. The chain comprises: a) supplied resources, b) implemented activities, c) immediate results of the activities (outputs), d) consequences of the results for the target group (outcomes) and e) long term development effects that can be derived from these results and other influencing factors.

The *results chain* is described by DAC in the terminology input-(activities)-output-outcome-impact.



The chain stems from a results oriented approach to development co-operation, meaning that *outcome results* rather than activities and outputs are *in focus*.³²

The associations between the different levels in the results chain, e.g. why certain activities lead up to certain results, is key in results management. The associations can also determine the context of the intervention, for example how it relates to other operations and stakeholders. For this to be fully possible, knowledge of external factors – political, economic, social, and cultural – is required. In addition to the contributions of projects or programmes, external factors affect the associations between the different levels in the results chain. LFA is an example of a method which helps understand the causal relationships and helps identify inputs-outputs-outcomes-impact.

³² Outcomes are also the standard focus of evaluations, including this evaluation (see Terms of Reference in appendix 1).

Iraq Programme Objectives

The Programme Strategy includes an action plan with objectives to be reached during 2005–2007. The objectives set for 2005 and 2006 are:³³

2005:

- That seven organisations have started development cooperation within the thematic areas: democracy, human rights, gender equality and work on dialogue following education in Sweden.
- That a detailed study has been undertaken and preparatory work started to establish a centre “Centre for Civil Society in Iraq (CCSI)” in Baghdad.
- That 200 persons have been trained in topics such as: democracy, human rights, gender equality and conflict and dialogue work departing from Swedish experience in collaboration between the Palmeacentret, Rätts Barnen and LO/TCOs biståndsnämnd and Swedish-Iraqi organisations, either in Iraq or its neighbouring areas, e.g. Iraqi Kurdistan.

2006:

- That 20 Swedish and Swedish-Iraqi organisations undertake development cooperation within the areas: democracy, human rights, gender equality and conflict and dialogue work.
- That the Centre CCSI is established in Baghdad actively providing training, network meetings and functioning as a basis for exchange of knowledge/experience between Europe/Nordic countries and Iraq.
- That 3500 persons have been in contact with CCSI.
- That 35 Iraqi civil organisations have undergone deepened and systematic training in democratic processes, democratic organisation, conflict management, project administration, communication and advocacy work.
- That five Iraqi organisations have started development cooperation within the areas: democracy, human rights and European integration.
- That the training activities have produced 10 trainers within the above mentioned thematic areas.
- That four training opportunities in project management, democratic organisation and methodological work have been undertaken in Sweden.
- That at least one network meeting has taken place in Sweden for active NGOs as well as one in Iraq or in a neighbouring country.

As seen above, objectives as summarised in the action plan mainly constitute outputs from activities. They are predominantly quantitative and do not capture qualitative aspects. They do thus not serve for measuring Programme outcomes (see section 3.3.1 above).

There is further weak consistency between the objectives as summarised in the action plan and the text in the Programme Strategy. In particular, none of the objectives in the action plan relate to the work to be done within the various projects. None of the objectives do therefore provide a clear basis for following the extent to which outcomes (results) are achieved through the development cooperation projects funded by the Programme and undertaken through the CSOs/NGOs in Iraq.

This is in the view of the ET not satisfactory for a programme which aims at providing capacity and organisational building combined with resources to strengthen civil society organisations and enable them to undertake projects to the benefit of poor and vulnerable groups. As acknowledged, civil society organisations may both block and stimulate development. It is thus not automatically a good result to have a certain number of organisations undertaking development cooperation unless one knows that they are stimulating development (and not blocking it). Another example: if the objective is to create democratic civil society organisations, then there needs to be a measure to follow up to what extent the

³³ Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006-04-08): *Intresseanmälan för Irak-program*, (Red. version), Stockholm, (p14–15). The Programme Strategy is written in Swedish. The translation of the objectives to English is an informal/unauthorised translation by the ET.

organisations are increasingly becoming democratic. There is thus a need to clarify the Programme intervention logic, to sort out causal relationships and identify what does indeed constitute appropriate outcome indicators for the Programme.

Recommendations:

- Clarify Programme intervention logic in line with a results-based logic.

Fulfilment of Programme Objectives

When it comes to fulfilment of the objectives, as summarised in the action plan, there are two deviations. Firstly, as also discussed elsewhere in this report, the Centre for Civil Society has not been established in Baghdad but in Erbil (due to security reasons and thus adapting to changing circumstances in line with the envisioned Programme flexibility). Secondly, the ten envisioned trainers have not yet been trained. This in turn will probably negatively influence the possibility for sustainability when the Programme ends. The ET has not been able to clearly understand the reason why these trainers were not trained.

The number of organisations to start up development cooperation was met both in 2005 and 2006. Iraqi organisations started development cooperation during 2007, thus slightly delayed as compared to the objective. Network meetings have been arranged as planned.

When it comes to numbers participating in training activities, the ET has not reviewed administrative files to verify the number of Iraqi organisations participating and also not reviewed lists of participant to verify the total number of trained persons. Neither has it been possible to verify the number of persons who have had contact with the Centre in Erbil, but the ET did get the impression that they may be considerably fewer than 3 500. It seems that those who have had contact are those who have directly participated in training and/or information activities.

The ET notes that one objective is to have Iraqi organisations work on European integration (2006). We assume this is a mistake possibly from using objectives formulated within other programmes administered by OPC.

Project Outcomes

The regular process of monitoring of projects through the OPC staff members in Erbil and Baghdad was described above (section 3.2.6). During the monitoring visit, the fulfilment of activities is checked. This does thus not constitute monitoring of project outcomes (see section 3.3.1 above). It is particularly worrying that no attention is paid to the vital qualitative aspects. Thus, if a Swedish-Iraqi organisation places emphasis on ensuring that their Iraqi partner functions in a democratic way also when undertaking activities, then it is likely that the fulfilment of activities may take longer time. This then comes out as negative in the monitoring reports, while it may in fact be very positive in relation to the overall objectives of the Programme.

The Programme Strategy does not include clearly identified goals for projects to be funded, and thus does also not include a discussion on how to measure results from the projects (also refer to discussion in section 3.3.1 above). As more and more projects are funded this weakness becomes more and more severe and should be addressed without further delay – particularly if a second phase of the Programme is to be considered. Overall effectiveness is discussed further in section 3.5 below.

The ET would like to emphasise that both OPC staff members, in Erbil and Baghdad respectively, do make strong efforts to undertake appropriate monitoring. They have, however, not had access to a full set of project documentation (including no access to the Programme Strategy which is in Swedish)³⁴. Further, they do not have prior experience of monitoring results and to the understanding of the ET have also not been provided any training on the subject (except for a one-day training course on LFA).

The role of monitoring should also be clarified. In the view of the ET monitoring should be seen as part of a learning process for improved results management. To be an effective tool for learning the conclusions from the monitoring visit must be made available to all involved parties (which is not the case now as discussed above, section 3.2.6).

Recommendations:

- Develop outcome indicators for the projects.
- Review dissemination procedures and use of monitoring reports.

Use of Established Methods/Tools

To be able to follow the fulfilment of set objectives a clear logic is required from the outset of a programme or project. If indicators are weakly or badly defined in the initial overall document then it is likely that it will be even weaker further down in a chain of actors – such as in the Iraq Programme.

The Programme Strategy itself does not include a LFA matrix. This is in the view of the ET rather unfortunate. We believe that a LFA exercise would have helped to clarify on the intervention logic of the Programme. It would have helped sort out objectives and the issues of outputs vs. outcomes (as discussed in section 3.3.1 above). It would most probably also have helped arrive at more specific and workable programme criteria for selection of projects.

In particular, if the overall Programme Strategy does not convey a clear logic from the outset then it is not likely that individual projects will do so. It is mentioned in the Programme Strategy that LFA is an important tool for the projects to be funded. The individual small projects would thus be expected to make use of a tool which has not been applied at the Programme level. The Application Form to be used does also not encourage stringent intervention logic. The Project Catalogue sheet does, for instance, not distinguish between activities and results.³⁵ In one heading activities and results are mixed in such a way that it gives the impressions that they are interchangeable.

As discussed above, the objectives set are all quantitative output indicators mainly relating to the training and activities provided by the OPC itself to the Swedish, Swedish-Iraqi and Iraqi organisations. There are no indicators to measure the outcome of the training and activities provided by the OPC. There are further no objectives set, or indicators identified to measure outcomes, when it comes to contents of the projects to be funded. This is in the view of the ET of great concern and should be addressed if any continuation of the Programme is planned.

To measure results outcome indicators have to be identified. There is a need to review how objectives are formulated and how to capture outcomes of the work of the civil society organisations as well as of the work to build organisations. Indicators for following outcomes should be identified. The results chain described above (section 3.3.1) combined with a LFA exercise provide useful tools for this.

³⁴ There is an English translation of an earlier version of the Programme Strategy available within OPC (dated 2005-06-15). The current Programme Strategy (dated 2006-04-08) does, however, for instance include revised and expanded objectives in the action plan for 2005–2007.

³⁵ This evaluation is limited to the Iraq Programme. It is, however, noted that the Project Catalogue used within the Iraq Programme is the same as used for all OPC programmes.

In addition, an analytical model to capture both support to build organisations and support to work undertaken by organisations is found in the recent instructions for NGO financial support from Sida.³⁶

Recommendations:

- Undertake an appropriate LFA exercise in order to review how to measure results of work with and through organisations (including identifying outcome indicators) at both Programme and Project levels.

External Factors and Risks

The Programme Strategy mentions that there are considerable risks and reference is made to specific risks in various parts of the document. There is, however, no consolidated risk analysis. Consequently, there is also no reflection on how to counteract materialising risks. This is of concern particularly given that the Programme Strategy stresses the need for flexibility in detailed planning to be able to adapt to reality as it evolves (i.e. a process-oriented approach). In order for such a process-oriented approach to be useful, it is an indispensable requirement to rely on clear a-priori strategic approach to risk management in order to avoid ending up in a situation of ad-hoc damage control behaviour.

The Programme Strategy thus clearly acknowledges that the risks are very high. However, instead of making use of available tools to perform a consolidated risk analysis, and thus to arrive at realistic actions to counteract risks, the Programme Strategy refers to the numerous risks as a reason for not undertaking a LFA analysis. This is, in the view of the ET, an unfortunate approach.

A consolidated risk analysis, accompanied by a risk management strategy, should be undertaken, particularly in light of the worsening security situation in Iraq, which puts the implementation of projects in risk and prohibits an appropriate monitoring of projects. This would also be an opportunity to take advantage of the experiences gained to date and should be seen as an indispensable requirement in the preparation for a potential continuation of the Programme. It has to be assessed whether the Programme in its current format remains feasible and sustainable in the evolving context in Iraq.

Recommendations:

- Prepare a risk management strategy building on a consolidation of risks identified in the Programme Strategy.

Learning Process

To the understanding of the ET changes have taken place within the Programme since its inception. One example is establishing a Centre in Erbil and not as initially intended in Baghdad. During discussions with representatives from OPC and Sida it has also been clarified to the ET that a dialogue has continuously taken place between OPC and Sida regarding emerging issues. The ET has, however, not been able to make an assessment of such changes as there is no documentation on decisions taken and reasons behind decisions. Thereby, there is no source for establishing institutional memory. As soon as a key individual within either Sida or OPC moves to another position the knowledge of why changes were made will disappear. This is, of course rather unfortunate particularly within a Programme which takes a process-oriented approach, and thus foresees changes as Programme implementation progresses.

³⁶ Sida (February 2007): *Anvisningar. För bidrag från anslagsposten enskilda organisationer*, Avdelningen för samverkan med enskilda organisationer, humanitärt bistånd och konflikthantering, Stockholm.

The lack of written documentation to verify agreements on various issues and decisions taken also prohibits a transparent evaluation of results. It is, therefore, recommended to start documenting discussions to be able to follow reasoning behind decisions taken. These should be filed in such a way that it is easy to retrieve the documents at a later stage (on the weakness of the OPC filing system, see also section 3.2.2 above).

Recommendations:

- Document discussions and decisions taken which relate to changes in the Programme.

3.4. Utilization of Sida Funds

It was noted that the experience from financial reporting differ, both between NGOs in Sweden and between NGOs in Iraq. Financial management is also a matter of staff capacity and commitment of the project teams. The ET found that the projects in Northern Iraq seem more used to handling international donor funds than those in Central and Southern Iraq. This may be due to the longer history of operation of the NGO community in the Northern parts of Iraq, but does not necessarily mean that they are better prepared for preventing corruption than NGOs in Central and Southern Iraq.

In order to avoid misuse of funds and to ensure correct reporting OPC organises training in financial reporting (in conjunction with training in project management). The ET noted that not all projects had participated in this training due to various reasons. Another measure by the Programme to avoid misuse of project funds is the condition that all Swedish lead partners must authorize the expenditures of their Iraqi partners by having an authorised auditor to sign the financial reports.

It is a problem from a control and financial auditing perspective that some projects are located in areas that cannot be visited regularly unless visits are preceded by long communication and planning. This mostly relates to projects in Central and Southern Iraq. Moreover the security situation also (should it be misused) can serve as an excuse for project partners in Iraq not to letting monitoring missions come to visit activities. The ET also found that budget follow-up is made even more difficult since there is a no strong tradition to use receipts. In Central and Southern Iraq this is partly also due to the fact that receipts indicate activities requiring foreign support is going on, which could be a security problem for those out in the field.

The Swedish organisations are responsible also for reporting towards the programme on the funds used by the local partners in Iraq. Thus Swedish organisations cooperating with organisations in Northern Iraq experience less difficulties related to follow up of budgets. Cooperation with partners in Central and Southern Iraq means more uncertainty and general lack of control, mainly due to the security situation and changing situation of the project context.

The ET also found that most projects had experienced money transfer problems. These problems meant delay of project activities and consequently individuals in some projects had borrowed money to cover planned activities, while some had postponed activities (since they did not want to risk not meeting work-plans stated in applications). While the aforementioned does not necessarily constitute a risk for corruption, it meant that some project costs were higher than necessary due to deviation in work plans. The best practice routines for money transfers therefore need to be assessed and the conclusion circulated to the NGOs in Sweden and Iraq.

Furthermore, as discussed in chapter 3.2, the fact that the Programme staff in Iraq does not always have full access to neither the total budget allocated to each project, nor the itemized break-down, makes it very difficult if not impossible for the OPC staff to follow up the activities of many projects

and put these in relation to actual costs. Further, the fact that the Programme staff in Iraq expresses great concern with the current work-load makes it even less likely believe that they would be able to assume control of the projects' budgets and expenditures.

As regards the project budgets, the Programme has used a principle that allows a maximum of 300.000 SEK per project and year (although there have been exceptions to this "rule", allowing larger amounts to some projects). The 300.000 SEK amount means that there are lots of projects receiving financing. Thus, a lot of monitoring and follow-up is required, especially since i) the majority of NGOs in both Sweden and Iraq are still developing in terms of experience and organisational capacity, and ii) the Iraqi NGOs are poorly advanced in terms of internal democracy. Given these two main hindrances, perhaps it would have been better to channel the project funding to fewer NGOs in Iraq (and Sweden), and in parallel to this project funding build organisational capacity in other, less experienced organisations not yet familiar with democratic principles, e.g. through arranging more events in the centre in Erbil. This approach would have released Programme staff members to work more with capacity-building and less with monitoring. Less projects (to qualitatively assessed NGOs) would logically mean less risk for corruption.

Based on its evaluation the ET is not in a position to state that there *has been* or *not been* corruptive behaviour involved in the use Sida's funds.

Recommendations:

- Make an assessment of the financial reports from the various organisations. Are they satisfactory, or should measures be taken to improve reporting? Are there differences between the regions?
- Review and recommend viable money transfer methods.
- Install a uniform system for following up on financial expenditures (see also in chapter 3.2.6 and chapter 3.6.1.
- Review the maximum budget allocated to projects.

3.5. Effectiveness and Cost Efficiency

While the Programme is assessed to be relevant as described in the Programme Strategy (see section 3.1 above), its effectiveness is more questionable.

As discussed above (section 3.3) there is no clear intervention logic in place. There is no clear understanding of what is an objective, what is an output, what is an outcome (result). There is no clear strategy for how to manage risks if and when they materialise. These two basic aspects constitute severe weaknesses within the Programme and undermine the prospects for effectiveness. Further, criteria set are not used in a consistent manner (section 3.2.1 above).

The project actors, both in Sweden and in Iraq, are in turn in many cases un-experienced when it comes to development cooperation. Participation in for instance LFA or other adequate training is, however, not required as a prerequisite for submitting a project application. It is further unclear from the Programme Strategy which cooperating partner is the most important for supporting within the Programme. From some text it seems that the most important issue is to develop the capacity of Swedish-Iraqi organisations and their capability to undertake development cooperation. In other parts of the document the Iraqi partners and the end beneficiaries are pointed to. This ambiguity does, of course, relate back to the overall lack of clear intervention logic.

The Programme Manager in Sweden has, according to the information provided to the ET, only visited projects the Northern part of Iraq (which is considered secure). The same was the situation for the ET. The monitoring reports from the OPC staff in Erbil and Baghdad thus become a crucial instrument for assessing effectiveness within OPC. The monitoring reports, however, reflect only fulfilment of activities (for instance looking at number of certificate issued for a specific training) without access to full information as a basis for identifying which activities should be undertaken. The OPC monitoring does thus not constitute a sufficient (or reliable) mechanism for assessing effectiveness.

The Programme Strategy points to the importance of transferring Swedish knowledge and experiences of democracy, human rights, conflict and dialogue work. These perspectives are new in the Iraqi context, and it does therefore seem necessary to have intense contacts in order to transfer them. This would, in the view of the ET, require presence in Iraq of someone with own experience from these Swedish values. This is not the case, at neither Programme nor Project level. Some of the Swedish-Iraqi project owners seem to have daily contact by e-mail to exchange views and discuss on day-to-day matters. Many others, however, stress that they are using their own free time and thus cannot devote any amount of time to the project.

The ET has to frankly say that it is in our view extremely difficult to judge the effectiveness of the Programme when it is not possible to pay visits to individual projects. In a few cases the ET had the opportunity to discuss both with project managers travelling to Erbil and thereafter pay a visit to the project. These cases clearly demonstrated to the ET that the impression from reading available monitoring reports and other project documentation is not a sufficient substitute for a visit to the project site. The visits to projects did make the ET question its assessment based on prior review of available documentation and discussions with project managers.

This evaluation does not include a financial review. The issue of whether the implementation strategy is a cost-efficient way of achieving the objectives thus falls outside the scope of this evaluation. Sida has in its assessment of the Programme indicated that the budgeted overheads are viewed as reasonable.³⁷ To the understanding of the ET no consolidated financial evaluation of actual overheads has, however, been undertaken. The comparatively long chain of actors implies that overhead costs are incurred at a number of levels and for a number of reasons. The OPC has overhead costs in both Stockholm and the Centre in Erbil, the Swedish-Iraqi organisations have overhead for their participation in the projects, the Iraqi partner organisations have overhead for their participation. The required participation in network meetings is also financed from project funds. It would be merited to get a picture of how large a share of the funds are used for activities to the benefit of the poor and vulnerable groups in Iraq.

Recommendations:

- Clarify intervention logic and develop reliable mechanisms for continuous follow up on effectiveness.
- Review the maxi Undertake a financial evaluation of the Programme to asses its cost-efficiency, particularly if a continuation of the programme is considered. mum budget allocated to projects.

³⁷ Sida, SEKA/EO (2005-06-17): *Gransknings-PROMEMORIA*,

3.6. Technical and Institutional Feasibility

3.6.1. Institutional Arrangements

The Programme Strategy speaks of the establishment of a Centre for Civil Society in Iraq (CCSI). The role of such an office is to operate as the “hub” for activities in Iraq. More specifically the Programme Strategy outlines the CCSI as to have mainly a coordinating role: to identify organisations in Iraq that work on democracy, human rights and peace/conflict and to support these (via direct support, without Swedish intermediary) and thereafter match these with Swedish organisations and Swedish-Iraqi organisations.³⁸

The CCSI was originally supposed to be located in Baghdad (Central Iraq), but was due to the worsening security situation instead established in Erbil (Northern Iraq).

The ET found that to date the office in Erbil has the following main responsibilities:

- To identify NGOs in Iraq that are eligible for funding from the Programme.
- To monitor projects in Northern Iraq (Kurdistan) and communicate these with the programme manager.
- To arrange events in Erbil and elsewhere in the Middle East region.
- To manage the input of the OPC staff member in Baghdad and communicate these monitoring reports with the Programme Manager.

The office in Erbil is used for meetings and training events, especially with focus on local partners (project managers/project staff from the Iraqi organisations). The office can house training for 30–40 participants simultaneously and can accommodate up to 8 persons overnight. The ET learned that the office in Erbil still has great over-capacity in terms of seminar rooms and training halls. This does indicate that the centre in Erbil is not yet used in a cost efficient way. The hindrance for using the centre in Erbil more frequently is mainly due to lack of administrative capacity (man-power). This has been further elaborated in a recent travel report by the Programme Manager.³⁹ This also relates to the Programme strategy in which the OPC envisioned three staff members in Iraq, but so far only two are working full-time in Iraq.

As regards the programme staff and the build-up of their functional capacity, training has mainly been provided in the form of a one-day LFA training course and through coaching by the Programme Manager. Coaching has mainly meant introduction to the project portfolio. The staff also has participated (and arranged) in many of the training events organized by the Erbil centre. The ET find that although the LFA training has provided a highly relevant starting point for the understanding of monitoring the staff will need more training on how to organise and conduct the monitoring in accordance with established methods. This is especially important in order to be able to measure results.

It seems the staff members in Iraq are already fully occupied with their monitoring, which is also increasing in 2007. In addition to the monitoring work-load the staff member in Baghdad also operates in a significantly more insecure setting which makes it very difficult to travel safely to many areas. The Erbil office has many responsibilities connected to arrangement of logistics in conjunction to training seminars and network meetings. Based on the number of ongoing projects and the significant increase in 2007 it is evident that the current number of staff is not sufficient. The Strategy speaks of 3 staff members in Iraq which would be sufficient to monitor the projects. However, the increase of staff in Iraq, from 2–3 persons has not taken place.

³⁸ Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006-04-08): *Intresseanmälan för Irak-program*, (Red. version), Stockholm, (p8).

³⁹ Travel report, Thair Ismail 19–22 January, 2007

Apart from the Programme Strategy there is no document describing the work of staff members in Iraq. Further, there is no work contract signed with the staff member in Baghdad. It is the ET's view that the lack of formalised work roles and functions complicate the management of the Programme by adding confusion to what is expected, by when and by whom – this leads to ad-hoc management.

The ET's view is that the staff in Iraq needs to be introduced to established monitoring standards which also need to be modified in accordance with programme objectives. Such capacity building would increase the efficiency of monitoring in Iraq as well as provide relevant and accurate feedback to project stakeholders and programme management. In order for this to be fruitful there must consistency in how project documents are designed and used.

During the meetings with staff members there were suggestions that there should be involvement of other organisations to find synergies of working through the centre in Iraq. It is in the ET's view important that such synergies are discussed, e.g. in the Reference group, in order to plan for how other organisations or actors could be involved in the Programme phasing out process.

Recommendations:

- Formalise the division of roles and functions of the OPC staff working with the Iraq programme and to consider employing another staff member in Iraq in order to make monitoring and follow-up more manageable.
- Plan and undertake training in monitoring methodology accompanied by reporting method adapted to the programme's objectives.
- Plan for the future of the Erbil office, possibly with inclusion of other organisations outside the OPC's network.

3.6.2. Institutional Capacity

The Programme strategy speaks of organisational strengthening of NGOs as one of the main pillars. The ET confirmed that the capacity-building in the Programme was through:

- i) Training and network meetings in Iraq and Sweden arranged by the Programme staff. Most of these training and networking events have been appreciated and are relevant and in line with the Programme strategy, and
- ii) Project activities, e.g. through interaction with or training conducted by the Swedish lead partner. This capacity-building has mainly meant transfer of organisational planning (e.g. build-up of democratic structures) and methods and day-to-day project management.

The Programme has delivered training addressing project stakeholders in both Sweden and Iraq. Training topics have been LFA, project management & reporting, Conflict management, Democracy and human rights and Gender equality. The training has addressed both Sweden-based and Iraq-based NGOs. As regards the capacity-building in Iraq as a result of the cooperation with Swedish lead partners, the Iraqi organisations expressed capacity improvements in terms of greater understanding of international donor-funded cooperation and development work as well as better ability to manage administrative work. In some cases there were indications that the organisations were able now to manage their own projects through the assistance from local authorities (although this is highly politically affiliated). However, the ET also found that some of the organisations did not see any clear connection between cooperation and the strengthening of their organisational capacity.

Many project stakeholders expressed concerns with locating training to countries outside Iraq. This was mostly related to the animosity towards Iraqis during a network meeting held in Amman, March 2007. It is the ET's view that all future training should take place in Iraq, which also would be a more logical approach to the build-up of Iraqi capacity and consolidation of Iraqi NGOs.

As regards the capacity of the Swedish lead partners, the ET found that their ability to manage international cooperation was initially overestimated. Like the local partners in Iraq they are more of learners than teachers in the development cooperation and are thus gradually building their capacity. Many Swedish NGOs expressed, similarly to their local partners in Iraq, that the Programme has meant learning about administrative work in international cooperation and eye-openers in the form of e.g. LFA training.

Recommendations:

- Review the relevance of the respective training modules and how they match the overall objectives, project implementation, and long-term capacity-building.
- Arrange and hold training in Iraq when addressing local (Iraqi) organisations.
- Review how capacity-building is measured through the projects and to make sure there is a plan for phase-out and take-over of activities when projects end.

3.6.3. Transparency

As discussed above (see e.g. sections 3.2.1, 3.2.2. and 3.3.3), there is substantial evidence to state that the programme has not succeeded in practising full transparency on any of the levels of decision-making or execution levels: i) starting with an ambiguous Programme Strategy, which was then ii) interpreted into programme criteria which result in inconsistent and non-transparent appraisal of proposals; iii) which in turn was further continued in the brevity and vague project catalogue provided which served as input to the Reference group and their (limited) understanding of the projects; iv) and finally resulting in confusion on transparency among staff members (what information is available?) and difficulties to monitor and measure the projects in the field.

The transparency issue goes back also to i) The problem with the lack of common language and documents: e.g. the financing is ensured even though no English summary exists, the problem of using Swedish in the application (should be in English), ii) Lack of proof that all partners have the necessary documents in order to implement the project in accordance with plan.

The lack of transparency is particularly critical during monitoring, since the Programme misses the opportunity to provide crucial feedback to project stakeholders. This has major implications for the Iraqi organisations' ability to build capacity, since it relates to instalment of routines for ownership and learning. Also, the same reports are not always shared with the Swedish organisations, although some are channelled via the programme manager in Stockholm not all receive important feedback on the activities in Iraq.

The ET's view is that the OPC should install clear lines of communication between the Stockholm OPC headquarters, the office in Erbil and the Baghdad representative and that the reports are routinely shared with the project stakeholders.

Recommendations:

- Review the entire chain of events and introduce a transparent system for each phase, from criteria-setting to monitoring.

3.6.4. Ownership

Sida points at the importance of ensuring ownership beyond the ownership of the Iraqi diaspora in Sweden in its assessment of the Programme.⁴⁰

As simple as it may seem, the choice of a project language has far-reaching consequences when it comes to project ownership. Documents such as “Ansökan om projektstöd” (for projects with Swedish lead partners) and “Projekthandboken Irakprogrammet”, available only in Swedish do by definition exclude the Iraqi partners from access to full information from the very beginning of initiating projects. The ET has not yet been able to get full information on what is and what is not available in English and/or Arabic/Kurdish. It may be that the move towards direct support to Iraqi organisations through the Erbil Centre will imply improvements on guiding documents as well as formats for applications.

Apart from the language issue discussed above, the ET’s view is that the general lack of information resting with the partner organisations in Sweden and Iraq has made local ownership more difficult to achieve. E.g. the fact that approved budgets generally are significantly lower than those originally applied for, create difficulties in how activities – and hence funds – are to be shared between the Swedish and Iraqi organisations. Many Iraqi organisations did not know of the actual budget available to the project and did sometimes not even know the exact budget available for activities in Iraq. Also, the decreased budgets have created difficulties in implementing projects in accordance with original plans (project application) and in many cases this has led to disappointment among the organisations. In some cases, this has also put a strain on the relationship between the organisations.

As the Sida funds are channelled to the local organisations in Iraq through Swedish-Iraqi organisations, it rests with these Swedish-Iraqi organisations to ensure ownership among the respective partners. It is, indeed, a challenge for the lead partner to ensure true ownership (and not dependency) of local partners. And, as mentioned above, transparency in the sharing of information and communication are prerequisites for enhancing local ownership. Genuine participation in planning processes and implementation is another. None of these two factors are yet well developed within the Programme.

As seen above the ET stresses the need for distinct criteria, guidelines and methods in order to shape the conditions for fruitful and long-term development of the Iraqi organisations.

Recommendations:

- Make sure that all projects are using common language – and make this a requirement before applications are approved.
- Make sure that all documents, not least approved itemised budget, are shared between participants after project approval – and make this a requirement for project funding.

3.6.5. Participation and Empowerment

To be empowered one would have to be able to exert influence over processes and decisions that will affect one’s situation. Thus, to empower Iraqi civil society organisations the Swedish-Iraqi organisations would have to ensure they are properly involved from the outset of the planning, in turn requiring access to full information. To empower the end beneficiaries each project would in turn have to take its point of departure in these beneficiaries and their views on their situation and needs. Focus should be on them first, to enable them to be in a position to “demand” their rights (as opposed to planning activities first and then approach the end beneficiaries).

⁴⁰ Sida, SEKA/EO (2005-06-17): *Gransknings-PROMEMORIA*, (p9)

Control of resources is a very strong basis for empowerment. In the projects in the Iraq Programme this control remains far from the end beneficiaries. Initial control of funds rests with the Swedish-Iraqi partner. The Iraqi organisation gains some control over funds when it has received its share of the budget. The control over funds, however, never reaches the end beneficiaries. Those who provide services within the chosen thematic area possess the right to decide who will receive what from the projects. Their contacts with the end beneficiaries seem to the understanding of the ET to start when they have received funding and thus wish to find participants for their activities. While the end beneficiaries do benefit from access to the knowledge and information provided, accompanied by possible incentive payments, they are not yet empowered in the sense that they can influence the contents of the projects.

The ET is not in a position to say whether a more bottom-up way of working would be possible or not in today's Iraq. However, views expressed during various discussions indicate that this may be possible, although it would put different demand on the CSOs/NGOs and require them to use a different process when conducting a problem analysis before applying for project funds. A bottom –up process, which starts from working with the subsequent end beneficiaries, to support them to express their needs would in the view of the ET seem to be one way to start rooting an understanding of truly democratic processes and be in line with a rights approach.

Recommendations:

- Explore whether it would be suitable to work also in a bottom-up fashion to more directly benefit the poor and vulnerable groups in Iraq.

3.7. Sustainability

The Programme Strategy mentions two sustainable aspects: i) competence development of Swedish-Iraqi organisations and ii) the establishment of the Centre in Erbil. Unfortunately, there is no explicit discussion on what may be required to achieve this.

Local ownership is a prerequisite for sustainability but as discussed elsewhere in this report, the conditions for achieving local ownership are not strong. Experience shows that the active involvement of the target groups and their potential to influence are important aspects for sustainability. In the Iraq Programme the end beneficiaries are not actively involved to any larger extent in planning. The active involvement of Iraqi partners in planning varies considerably between the projects.

Besides the language barrier discussed above there are other programme-specific barriers to achieving sustainability. One such barrier relates to the mode of operations of most projects supported by the Programme. The Iraqi organisations are generally not member-based but supply certain activities when they receive funding to do so. End of funding may thus also mean end of activities. Given this approach it is also not surprising that so many of the activities are to deliver stand-alone training sessions through hiring a trainer for each training activity. While these courses will contribute to disseminating information about the selected topics they do not contribute to a sustainable development of Iraqi civil society. They do also not necessarily lead to empowerment of the end-beneficiaries.

Another barrier to sustainability relates to the short planning horizon. Projects are granted funding for one year a time. A short planning frame, particularly in combination with small size of funding, sets limitations to what is possible to do within the projects. The ET also notes that some project applications clearly build on a longer-term perspective. For such projects it may be that a shorter funding period does mean that the project is no longer feasible and it should required that the project owners indicate how they intend to carry out the project with this more limited funding. This does, however, not seem to have been an issue for any discussion within the Programme. Is it for instance reasonable to fund a project to set up an office for a one year funding?

The direct interventions which are initiated only in 2007 also give cause for concern from a sustainability perspective. Within the current Programme these interventions will receive funding of a maximum of one year, while the objective is more long-term. Direct support is to be provided to build capacity and the supported Iraqi organisations are then to be guided to a direct partnership with Swedish or Swedish-Iraqi organisations. It does not seem likely that this process of capacity building and matching will be possible within a year – or less for many direct projects.

The time horizon for disbursement of funds is even shorter than the planning horizon (the allocated funds are disbursed twice a year). If there is a solid basis of trust between the two cooperating partners (and between the Swedish-Iraqi organisation and the OPC) this does not need to be a hampering factor. This was also clearly the case in some projects. However, in quite a few of the projects there was not yet any solid basis of trust between the Swedish-Iraqi organisation and its Iraqi partner. Thus, as disbursements take place twice a year, the actual planning horizon for the project is 6 months. If the transfer of funds is delayed, then the activities may be disrupted and re-started only when the funds arrive. There was no “risk-taking” on behalf of any involved partner.

Short time horizon combined with small size of funding constitutes an impediment to taking a longer-term and more sustainable perspective on project activities. Projects thus easily risk being limited to providing “stand-alone” training courses, which are delivered/supplied to beneficiaries in a blue-print fashion and will be repeated until funds are finished but will not be sustained thereafter. Weak sustainability is further compromised as there is a lack of democratic organisations based on certain degree of voluntary work.

During the current Programme period, a temporary exemption from the traditional 90/10 rule has been made. It is, however, clearly said by Sida that this exemption will not be extended beyond end of 2007.⁴¹ To the knowledge of the ET there has, however, not been any strategic discussion within the OPC on how this will affect the Programme and the individual projects. This message does also not seem to have been conveyed to project owners, i.e. the Swedish-Iraqi organisations and their Iraqi partners. When the issue was raised by the ET, most of them were thus taken by surprise. Spontaneously some said that they would try to find “other ways” while others say they cannot find other ways. “Other ways” for most seemed to mean either to find financing from other donor sources or to contact the local government to request support. None mentioned the option of membership fees and voluntary work.

In addition, sustainability is also an issue of concern at the Programme management level and its operations at the Centre in Erbil. It is assumed in the Programme Strategy that Sida will continue to fund the Centre also post 2007 when it is to be handed over to a predetermined Swedish-Iraqi organisation (there are no arguments in the Programme Strategy to explain on which grounds this specific organisation was selected).⁴² In its assessment of the Programme, Sida also pointed to the potential of the Centre to support increased local ownership, and thus implicitly to improve the prospects for sustainability of the Programme.⁴³ No commitments were, however, made by Sida regarding continued financing.

It would in the view of the ET need to be discussed further what is a reasonable role of such a centre in Erbil. It merits to be remembered that the training of trainers has not yet been successful. Will it be successful within the near future with the current set-up? Further, should the Centre be run by one Swedish-Iraqi organisation or by a group of such organisations to have a broader base in the Swedish-Iraqi diaspora? Or should it be run by a group of experienced Swedish NGOs? Or in collaboration between experienced Swedish NGOs and representatives from the Iraqi diaspora? And how was that particular organisation identified?

⁴¹ Sida, SEKA/EO, (2005-02-15): *Program för stärkande av det civila samhället i Irak*, Stockholm, (invitation to frame organisations to express interest in the Programme), (p2).

⁴² Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006-04-08): *Intresseanmälan för Irak-program*, (Red. version), Stockholm, (p15).

⁴³ Sida, SEKA/EO (2005-06-17): *Gransknings-PROMEMORIA*, (p9).

Recommendations:

- Prepare a phasing-out strategy soonest possible with options for continued handling of initiated projects.

3.8. Coordination and Consultation

OPC uses personal networks for identification and coordination with NGOs. A few of the NGOs in this network have informal “node” roles, meaning that they are able to communicate with NGOs that are fulfilling the programme criteria.

The potential of using established NGO networks are difficult to assess, but do exist and are organised in various networks. The Programme has not conducted any mapping of these networks. Networks organised by international donors and the Iraqi Government do exist, e.g. the NGO Coordination Centre in Iraq (NCCI).⁴⁴

As for Northern Iraq (Kurdistan) the ET found that NGOs have access to regular core financing through the Ministry of development. Those NGOs that are registered at the Ministry of development can receive a monthly support starting at USD 2000 per month.⁴⁵ The ET does not know how widespread this funding is, but it seems that many of the large and established NGOs have access to this funding. Also, it was noted that to become eligible for this funding requires a good personal network with politicians or other connections to the Ministry of development.

Most NGOs interviewed in Iraq clearly have connections to the local governments. The ET has found that the Iraqi NGOs cooperate with the local authorities in different ways. Sometimes the cooperation is based on awareness-raising, e.g. to create awareness around project activities. Another example of interaction with local governments is the need to generate active support from local authorities, e.g. for ensuring that security measures are taken in order to be able to work in a certain area of the city. Another example was NGOs trying to ensure that there was a public interest in the project and that long-term financing would be available when the funding through the Iraq programme ends.

As stated also above (section 3.2.1), the linkage between NGOs and party politics cannot be neglected, and the linkage between party politics and local governments is evident. The linkage between projects and local governments is often also a precondition for projects to conduct activities efficiently. The linkage with local governments is the reason why some NGOs have better conditions for reaching sustainability and some do not, this was especially noted during the field visit to Northern Iraq (Kurdistan).

Recommendations:

- Investigate the possibility of cooperating with established NGO networks in Iraq.
- Make sure that the connections between NGOs and local governments are assessed and review how this is to be considered in the criterion of political “independence”.

⁴⁴ See website at www.ncciraq.org

⁴⁵ According to meeting with project representative in Erbil.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The ET finds that the Programme as described in the Programme Strategy remains relevant and well justified from the perspective of applicable Swedish policies and strategies. However, the ET also finds that the relevance of the Programme is considerably weaker when it comes to actual implementation. The ET's view on steps that need to be taken within the Programme is expressed in the recommendations included at the end of each sub-section above. In summary, the findings point to a need for an in-depth revision of the Programme, starting with reviewing intervention logic.

Some of the recommendations are rather far-reaching and will be feasible only in a longer-term Programme. According to initial plans, the Programme is to end in only seven month's time (i.e. end of 2007). It is, however, also the understanding of the ET that an extension is being discussed. It is also the understanding of the ET that it may be that the experiences gained through this Programme will be used as a stepping stone for continued support to civil society in Iraq.

It thus needs to be carefully discussed which recommendations can actually be operationalised, which in turn depends on the time frame of the Programme. Any potential extension of the Programme should in the view of the ET be matched by additional revisions as feasible given the extension period. If it is decided to make use of the experiences of this Programme as input to the planning of continued support, a longer-term perspective should be taken also when it comes to which recommendations to operationalise.

Some recommendations relate to on-going projects and should all be implemented without delay within the current Programme period (i.e. until end 2007). These are summarised below. The below selection of recommendations is based on an assumption that there will be no more application rounds within the current Programme. Should this assumption not be true, then it is recommended to also implement recommendations on criteria (as per section 3.2.1).

Communication in the Iraq Programme (section 3.2.5):

- Make sure that the communication to Swedish organisations also reaches the Iraqi organisations.

Monitoring of Projects (section 3.2.6):

- Circulate information between programme staff on every project, particularly the application and break-down of approved budgets.
- Introduce an efficient and relevant format for monitoring reports.
- Make sure both Swedish and Iraqi organisations receive written monitoring reports as feedback from monitoring missions.

Project Outcomes (section 3.3.4):

- Review dissemination procedures and use of monitoring reports.

Learning Process (section 3.3.7):

- Document discussions and decisions taken which relate to changes in the Programme.

Utilization of Sida funds (section 3.4):

- Make an assessment of the financial reports from the various organisations. Are they satisfactory, or should measures be taken to improve reporting? Are there differences between the regions?
- Review and recommend viable money transfer methods.
- Install a uniform system for following up on financial expenditures (see also in chapter 3.2.6. and chapter 3.6.1.

Institutional arrangements (section 3.6.1):

- Formalise the division of roles and functions of the OPC staff working with the Iraq programme.
- Plan and undertake training in monitoring methodology accompanied by reporting method adapted to the programme's objectives.
- Plan for the future of the Erbil office, possibly with inclusion of other organisations outside the OPC's network.

Institutional capacity:

- Review the relevance of the respective training modules and how they match the overall objectives, project implementation, and long-term capacity building.
- Arrange and hold training in Iraq when addressing local (Iraqi) organisations.

Ownership (section 3.6.4):

- Make sure that all documents, not least approved itemised budget, are shared between participants after project approval – and make this a requirement for project funding.

Sustainability (section 3.7):

- Prepare a phasing-out strategy soonest possible with options for continued handling of initiated projects.

5. Lessons Learned

There are two basic generic lessons which follow from this evaluation.

Good Intentions – Necessary but not Sufficient

An un-clear intervention logic (or badly designed programme/project) is likely to have implications for the entire programme/project period. Introducing changes which affect mode of operation and the use of funds is a cumbersome process once the programme/project has started. Therefore, no matter how appealing and relevant the programme/project objectives may seem, Sida should be very cautious in accepting a poorly and/or un-clearly formulated or incomplete proposal. Either the relevance is so high that it is worth the efforts to support the programme/project owners to improve the proposal, or the relevance is not high enough for using resources on this, and thus the programme/project shall not be supported.

It has to be acknowledged that the Iraq Programme was developed under pressure to get a “quick start”. Thus the Programme was accepted without assessing its intervention logic although both Sida and OPC realised that it was a high-risk programme. Unfortunately, no arrangements were made to improve on the weak intervention logic during the initial phase of the Programme to compensate for the initially recognised weaknesses.

Time gained at the outset of the Programme, through not challenging unclear intervention logic, has seemingly implied high costs during the course of the Programme – in terms of ineffectiveness and cost-inefficiency.

Identifying Risks – Necessary but not Sufficient

Sida should in general trust the competence and capacity of its partners and thus be able to limit its own following-up and monitoring to planned annual and/or mid-term and/or end of programme reviews. However, if weaknesses are identified in the assessment process underlying a decision to support the programme/project, there should be a preparedness or strategy to counteract such weaknesses, i.e. a Sida risk management strategy for the programme/project.

In the case of the Iraq Programme, both Sida and OPC acknowledged that the Programme was a high-risk programme. Nevertheless, OPC did not take steps to develop a consolidated risk management strategy – and Sida did not require one.

Appendix 1 Term of Reference

Evaluation of Olof Palmes International Centre's (hereinafter referred to as "The Palme centre") support to Civil Society organisations in Iraq

1 Background

Fragile states, such as Iraq, in either post-conflict and conflict situations create special challenges for support to NGOs/CSOs. There is a need to strengthen civil society in partner countries on its own terms, keeping in mind that CSOs/NGOs can both block and stimulate development. Sida is trying to support different ways to support civil society groups as effectively as possible in Iraq since 2005, under circumstances which can only be best described as very difficult. Improvements need also to be better harmonised both in terms of different goals with the support to civil society as well as the modalities for the support.

Within Sweden's overall commitment to provide assistance to Iraq (the Swedish Country strategy for Iraq 2004–06, extended until June 2008), Sida and its NGO Division has been assigned the task to; contribute to a long-term development of a democratic Iraq – through strengthening the civil society organisations in Iraq. Sida entered into an agreement with the Palme centre⁴⁶ in 2005, and where the organisation based on the programme they developed has taken on the difficult task to operationalise the aim set. The Palme centre was given the assignment by Sida, after a thorough process in springtime 2005⁴⁷. One important requirement laid down by the previous Swedish government was to use and work with and through the Swedish-Iraqi resource base based in Sweden⁴⁸. The experiences and acquired value systems, gained by this group, have been seen as important to share with local Iraqi civil society organisations.

The main objective of the Iraq programme is to contribute to a long-term development of a democratic Iraq – through strengthening the civil society in the country. The programme aims to primarily focus on two interconnected pillars namely; 1) capacity and organisational strengthening of the NGOs/CSOs and 2) supporting their activities on; democracy, human rights (incl. gender aspects) and conflict management and dialogue issues. Furthermore, the programme was developed from the outset to support projects nationwide in Iraq, given its relevance and own merits as well as taking account of pending and changing security and conflict aspects (do-no-harm)⁴⁹.

2 Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The main objective for the evaluation as identified by Sida/SEKA-NGO division is to establish and analyse the outcomes in relations to the objectives set by the programme. The programme is administered and implemented by the Palme centre and its partner organisations⁵⁰. As part of that task the evaluation is to assess the quality and outcomes of the model used for support; and taking account of the full chain of actors down to Swedish funded NGOs and their local counterparts, on an organisational level. Information obtained will form part of Sida's future considerations as regards support to civil society in Iraq.

⁴⁶ Olof Palmes International Centre (Palme centre) was established in 1992 and is one of the fifteen framework organisations, which receive funding from Sida/SEKA.

⁴⁷ Enclosed is a working paper, which describes more in detail the model for support used in Iraq.

⁴⁸ Approximately 75–100.000 people of Iraqi origin live in Sweden, and where the influx of people begun in the 1970s and escalated in the 80s and 90s.

⁴⁹ Sida "Policy – Promoting peace and security through development cooperation" (2005)

⁵⁰ Partnerorganisations; encompass both partner organisations in Sweden as well as in Iraq.

Specific Objectives of the Evaluation

In Iraq

Direct outcome/output

- 1) To assess and analyse outcomes of projects funded by the Palme centre, in relation to the existing Programme Strategy⁵¹.
- 2) To assess the relevance of the programme and the level of fulfilment of objectives. (To comment on the specific thematic areas chosen for support).
- 3) To assess the outcomes of the Palme Centre support (directly or indirectly provided by Swedish intermediaries) to strengthen the internal capacity of the local partner organisations. What organisational development has taken place as a result of training etc. provided?
- 4) To review and comment on the specific role and responsibility of the Palme Centre office established in Erbil (Iraq/Kurdistan).
- 5) To assess how local NGOs have been chosen, how has targeting of partner organisation come about? Has the process been transparent, and is the criteria applied clear?
- 6) To assess overall ownership aspects, with focus on the local Iraqi organisations in relation to their Swedish-Iraqi/Swedish organisations.
- 7) Examine general aspects of coordination; between NGOs/networks and with government institutions, to what extent do they exist – and what observations and conclusions can be made.

Crosscutting issues

- 8) To assess to what extent partner organisations have been conflict sensitive (criteria used/applied?) in planning and implementing their interventions in Iraq. See the existing Programme Strategy for references on conflict sensitivity. To assess how security issues influences overall programme activities (risk assessment) and in relation to this, the ability to do actual follow up of projects implemented.
- 9) Examine to what extent partner organisations have systems for minimising the risk of corruption or misuse of funds and its effectiveness.
- 10) To assess how the programme have handled gender equality. The women's situation in Iraq has worsened, to what extent has gender issues been mainstreamed into the programme/projects?

Future actions

- 11) What are the lessons learnt from the present programme? To provide general observations and recommendation to Sida on future actions; with specific recommendations to the issues rose above and including an overall conclusion.

In Sweden

- 1) To assess the process whereby organisations receive funding; in terms of criteria set and the Palme centre's own assessments/selection? i.e.;
 - operational mechanism/structure of the funding process
 - plans, application forms
 - communication, reporting system(s)
 - internal decision making system, agreements
 - role of the reference group⁵² (roles & responsibilities), experiences

⁵¹ Palme centre, "Intresseanmälan för Irak-program 2005–2007 (rev. version April 2006)

⁵² Reference group was established in late 2005; consists of the following organisations: Forum Syd, Rädda Barnen, Diakonia, LO-TCO Biståndsnämnd and IRS (Iraq Riksföreningen Sverige).

- 2) To assess overall stability factors of the projects (achieve long-term targets).
- 3) To specifically reflect and assess the wider implications of a potential 90/10% funding situation from 2008⁵³ and the effects such a change would have on the Swedish partner organisations.

The scope of the evaluation

The scope of the evaluation is to get a generic picture of the programme and of projects which has been implemented in North, Central and Southern part of Iraq. To draw general conclusions of, and make recommendations to Sida's by looking at the *sample of projects*. The sample should represent a fair representation of the country. The evaluation shall cover the years 2005–2006.

3 Method, Evaluation Team and Time Schedule

The evaluation is commissioned by the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency, the Division for Co-operation with NGOs, (Sida/SEKA). Sida/SEKA is responsible for drawing up the terms of reference for the evaluation. Representatives from both Sida and the Palme centre will be accessible to the Consultant throughout the evaluation process.

The evaluation team shall contact the Palme centre both in Sweden (Stockholm) as well with their local representatives in Iraq. Furthermore contacts, as deemed relevant and necessary will be made with Swedish-Iraqi organisations in Sweden and, likewise with local Iraqi organisations in Iraq.

An independent consultant will be contracted by Sida to undertake the evaluation. The approach should involve key actors at various levels. The consultant will be required to submit a proposal showing the method, manpower plan and tools that will be used to undertake this evaluation. The consultant shall also submit a time schedule for the assignment. The Consultant shall review necessary background documentation (see annex) and visit a sample of partner organisations and projects. The partner organisations and projects shall be selected in order to ensure a fair representation for the purpose of this evaluation.

After the commencement of the mission an inception report should be presented to

Sida/SEKA not later than after 10 days. The inception report shall not exceed 3 pages and outline the planned work, and methods. The inception report will be discussed with Sida and agreed upon.

The consultant should be independent and have qualification, knowledge and experience appropriate to the purpose and scope of the evaluation. Including;

- Documented experience of partnership in international development cooperation through civil society organisation and knowledge about civil society issues as well as the challenges facing civil society organisations. Documented experience on working with conflict management issues and specific experience on the context of Iraq/Middle East is considered an additional qualification. (Language ability in English and in Arabic/Kurdish language will be required as part of the team set up).
- The Consultant should seek to have a gender balanced team. The work has to be performed in a conducive manner and in a good dialogue with the organisations under review. The Consultant shall ensure that appropriate knowledge about local contexts forms a part of the evaluation, e.g. the use of local consultant/s.

⁵³ The programme has been funded 100% since its inception, in order to stimulate and encourage organisation to commence work in Iraq.

The total time needed for the assignment is estimated not to exceed *10 person weeks*, including the time required to prepare the inception report and complete the final report. To respect the time limits indicated in the Terms of reference will be of utmost importance. The mission need to start *not later than by 1st April 2007*. The consultant is requested to specify total financial costs in order to fulfil the task given.

4. Reporting

The evaluation shall be send to Sida (NGO-Division; attn: Johan Norqvist). The evaluation shall be written in programme Word 6.0 or later version as attached file and copy on CD. An introductory meeting will be held in the beginning of the mission where the consultants meet with Sida and agrees with the plan of action of the assignment. When the final report has been submitted a presentation of the report will be held at Sida.

A draft final report shall be presented to *Sida not later than by 10 May 2007*. The draft report/findings shall be disseminated in Iraq, to the Palme Centre and to its partner organisations, before the team departure and a subsequent meeting held at Sida with relevant partners. Sida will then comment the report and after which the evaluator shall prepare the final report. The final report has to be presented to Sida no later than one week from received comments on the draft report. The report shall be written in English.

The content of the report shall include:

- List of acronyms, tables and figures
- Executive Summary
- Evaluation purpose and scope
- Methodology
- Findings, conclusion and recommendations

5. Other

Sida's strategy for the internal development of capacities implies that Sida personnel should have a possibility to participate in the ongoing work of the Consultant when appropriate.

Reference at The Palme centre; Birgitta Silén and Thair Ismail as well other relevant programme officers relating to the Sida funded Iraq programme, both in Sweden as well as in Iraq, will be requested to assist the evaluators.

Encl.

1) Support to Civil Society in Iraq – A Swedish funding model and experience gained during the period 2005–07

Annex:

Part of the methodology shall include: Study and review of relevant documents including Sida and Palme centre strategies and policies:

UD;

* Country Strategy for Iraq 2004–2008

Sida;

- * Sidas policy för det civila samhället (2004)
- * Allmänna villkor och Anvisningar för Sida:s bidrag till enskilda organisationer
- * Mandate from Sida (ASIA); 39/05 (2005) and 2006-000697 (2006-01-07).
- * Sidas brev 2005-02-15, ”*Program för stärkandet av det civila samhället i Irak*”.
- * Decision SEKA 2005-001975 (and Memo 2005-06-17) & SEKA 2006-003215.
- * Travel reports (SEKA 2005 and 2006).

Palme centre;

- * Palme centre, Programme document (revised version April 2006)
- * Handbook for working with Conflict, Democracy and Social change (2002)
- * Guideline; written or webb-based information (how to apply for funding)
- * Palme centre “Criteria for assessing project proposals”
- * Any other documents deemed necessary and relevant to the evaluators

Appendix 2 Meeting and Work Schedule

Date and Time	Name	Position/Function
Tuesday 27/3		
14.00–16.00	Johan Norqvist Carl-Johan Smedeby Fredrik Westerholm	Programme Officer, Programme Officer, Sida/SEKA/EO Desk Officer, Sida/ASIEN
Wednesday 28/3		
09.30–11.30	Thair K. Ismail	Programme Manager The Olof Palme International Centre
13.00–14.00	Birgitta Silén	Deputy Secretary-General, The Olof Palme International Centre
Friday 30/3		
09.45–12.15	Lennart Karlsson Abir Alsahlani	Officer, Centerpartiets Internationella Stiftelse Irakisk Projektledare, Centerpartiets Internationella Stiftelse
15.00–17.00	Shorsh Rahem Emma Ölmebäck	Kurdists Studentförbund i Sverige
Monday 2/4		
09.00–10.30	Thair K. Ismail	Programme Manager, Iraq program The Olof Palme International Centre
Tuesday 3/4		
10.00	Monica Hallberg	Region manager, Asia LO/TCO Bistånd
Thursday 5/4		
	Inception meeting:	
09.00	Johan Norqvist Carl-Johan Smedeby	Programme Officers, Sida SEKA
Tuesday 10/4		
10.30	Aase Fosshaug-Palme	Reference Group Member from Forum Syd
Wednesday 11/4		
14.00	Thair Ismail	Programme Manager, The Olof Palme International Centre
Friday 13/4		
11.00	Eva Widén	Reference Group Member from Diakonia
Monday 16/4		
10.00	Lars Ekeberg Mohammed Enoz Fuad Saleh	Nätverk för nytt Irak
12.00	Hutham Alhajaj	Folkbildningsföreningen i Malmö
14.00	Bakir Ajlan	Irakiska kulturföreningen i Malmö
16.00	Jan Wallinder	Red Cross Centre for Tortured Refugees, Stockholm
Tuesday 17/4		
11.30	Ala Ali	Local Coordinator Olof Palme Centre, Erbil (in Stockholm)

Date and Time	Name	Position/Function
Wednesday 18/4		
13.00	Haidar Ahmad	Irakiska kulturhuset (Stallmästarevägen 8, 3tr., Göteborg)
16.40	Djoan Cardoi	Kurdiska kvinnoföreningen i Göteborg (Postgatan 16, Göteborg)
Thursday 19/4		
	In Basra, Iraq (Ali Sada)	
	Wasfi Savmad	Iraqi Democratic Youth Federation
	Muna	The Iraqi Woman League in Basra
Friday 20/4		
	Departure for Erbil, Iraq	
Saturday 21/4		
	In Erbil, Iraq	
10.00	Hassan Naji	Local Coordinator, Baghdad
Sunday 22/4		
09.00–15.00	Wasfi Savmad	Iraqi Democratic Youth Federation
	Fardos Tarish	Women's association Nasariya
	Qabas Naife	Future association
	Karim Hamzah	General federation of Iraqi workers
	Wiashe Thmie	Tammuz (Erbil branch)
Monday 23/4		
09.30	Falin Rashed Mohamed	Kurdistan women centre
13.00	Najiba Hamad Amin Aziz	Kurdistan Save Children Rights Organization KSCRO
15.30	Ala Ali	OPC Local coordinator in Iraq
Tuesday 24/4		
09.30–14.30	Chiay Mohammed	Zerin organisation
	Sadeeq Hassan	Syndicate Union of Kurdistan Workers
	Bryar Raafazahmed	Kurdistan student organisation
	Shear zad Abdulah Umar	KOMAK
15.00	Ala Ali	OPC Local coordinator in Iraq
	Hassan Naji	OPC coordinator in Central and Southern Iraq
Wednesday 25/4		
	Travel to Sulimanya to meet with project management and beneficiaries	
10.00	Shawbon Askari, Public Relations Co-ordinator Janida Chro	Women's union of Kurdistan, Zhinan Note: The evaluation team also had requested meetings with beneficiaries through OPC. These were not arranged. The reason given was that Programme staff had not been notified about this request.
Thursday 26/4		
	Travel to Sersink, Iraq to meet with beneficiaries	
14.00	Samira Taha (unmarried), 35 yrs old Suha Ahmed (unmarried), 28 yrs old Sera Hussein (student), 19 yrs old Chiman Eskander (unmarried), 26 yrs old Sekunan Hamisaed (unmarried), 27 yrs old	Female beneficiaries of the Zerin organisation's "Family centre" – participated in training and were thereafter visiting poor families and informing them on health issues.
15.00	Samir Mustafa (engaged), 28 yrs old Reber Abdullah (unmarried), 22 yrs old Masrot Assan (unmarried), 28 yrs old Abdullah Mosa (unmarried), 27 yrs old	Male beneficiaries of the Zerin organisation's "Family centre" – participated in training and were thereafter visiting poor families and informing them on health issues.

Date and Time	Name	Position/Function
Friday 27/4		
13.00	Ala Ali	OPC Local coordinator in Iraq
Sunday 29/4		
	In Baghdad (Ali Sada)	
	Dr. Khayal Al-Jawahiri, the Library Supervisor.	Iraqi Woman League (Children Library)
	Afifa Thabet, the Library Director	
	Suhaila Abdul Hussein, Employee	
	Anisa Fakher, Employee	
	Widad Zaki Khairi, Accountant with the Swedish Partner (The Sweden Iraqi Solidarity Committee)	
	Qabas Naife	Future society
	Athir Majed	Future society
Thursday 3/5		
10.00	Ove Eriksson	Kista FC KFUK-KFUM/Akalla by
17.00	Hikmet Hussain	Irakiska Riksförbundet i Sverige (SKL)
Friday 4/5		
09.30	Shahla Hafid	Mänskliga rättigheter för Kurdistans kvinnor och barn
Tuesday 8/5		
17.00	Aycan Sermin Bozarslan (phone interview)	Kurdiska riksförbundet
Friday 11/5		
13.30–15.30	Johan Norqvist	Programme Officer, SIDA/EO
	Carl-Johan Smedeby	Programme Officer, Sida/SEKA/EO
	Fredrik Westerholm	Desk Officer, Sida/ASIEN
	Thair Ismail	Programme Manager The Olof Palme International Centre
	Joakim Johansson	The Olof Palme International Centre

Appendix 3 Approved Projects Iraq Programme 2005–2006

(Does not include: i) only pre-study approved and ii) Olof Palme International Centre's own activities reported as projects)

OPC No.	Project name ⁵⁴	Swedish lead organisation and its location ⁵⁵	Iraqi partner organisation and its location ⁵⁶	Main Theme (as per Project Catalogue)	Geographical focus	Target group(s)	Approved funds (SEK)	Evaluation Team meetings		
								SE ⁵⁷	E ⁵⁸	P ⁵⁹
004	Violence prevention and conflict management in gender equality forum	Irakiska Kommittén för Försvar av Kvinnors Rättigheter (Bro)	Organisationen för Kvinnor i Irak (Baghdad)	General Education and Citizen Rights (2006) Peace and dialogue (2007)	Baghdad	Mainly women in age group 15–45	2006: 300.000 2007: 220 000	(cancelled)		
005	Development of free and independent trade unions in Iraq	LO-TCO Biståndsnämnd (Stockholm)	1. Iraqi Federation of Workers; 2. Federation of Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq; 3. Syndicate Union of Kurdistan Workers; 4. Sectoral Unions which are affiliated to the above three federations, non-affiliated Sectoral Unions and the Professional Unions (e.g. teachers, journalists)	Trade Union Rights	All of Iraq – activities carried out outside Iraq ??	Trade Union Leaders at national, branch and local levels. of which 30% women and special selection criteria to involve young trade union members	2006: 590.000 2007: 200 000	X	X	(2)
006	NUR, Irak	Nätverk för ett nytt Irak-NINI (Malmö)	1. National förening för att skydda mänskliga rättigheter: 2. Självständigt förening för mödrar och barn: 3. Förening/klubb för fredsvänner (Nadja)	General Education and Citizen Rights	Nadja	Women and men with varying level of education	2006: 200.000	X		

⁵⁴ Translated by the Evaluation Team.

⁵⁵ Name of organisation as in project application.

⁵⁶ Name of organisation as in project application.

⁵⁷ SE = Swedish Lead in Sweden

⁵⁸ E = Representative from Iraqi organization traveled to Erbil to meet with the Evaluation Team.

⁵⁹ P = Member(s) from the Evaluation Team visited the project location.

OPC No.	Project name ⁵⁴	Swedish lead organisation and its location ⁵⁵	Iraqi partner organisation and its location ⁵⁶	Main Theme (as per Project Catalogue)	Geographical focus	Target group(s)	Approved funds (SEK)	Evaluation Team meetings	
								SE ⁵⁷	E ⁵⁸ P ⁵⁹
007	The role of mass media and responsibility in the democratisation process in Iraq (MOVED TO 2007)	Svenska Irakiska Institutet för Demokrati och Utveckling i Irak (Helsingborg)	The Iraqi Journalists Rights Defence (Baghdad)	Political and Citizen Rights	Baghdad	Iraqi journalists	2006 (moved to 2007): 295.000 2007: 60 000		
008	Women Center in Diwania – a jumping board for women in a new democratic country (STOPPED)	Svensk-irakisk förening för försvaret av kvinnors och barns rättigheter, i Skåne (Lund)		General Education and Citizen Rights	Diwania		2006: 150 000 (Stopped – disbursed to cover adm, rent, phone)		
011	Democracy and equality through sports	Kista FC KFUK-KFUM (Kista)	1. Democracy and Development Organisation; 2. Alfaiej Culture and Sports (Baghdad)	Organisational and Capacity Building	Sadr City	Local level trainers of youths	2006: 250.000	X	
023	Hapsa Khan – solidarity network woman to woman in Iraq	Mänskliga rättigheter för Kurdistans kvinnor och barn (MR-KKB) (Uppsala)	Hapsa Khan Solidaritetssnätverk i Irak	Political and Citizen Rights	Erbil och Kasnazan, Mala Aumar, Bastora in Sulaimaniya	Women and children	2005: 25 000 2006: 250.000 2007: 170 000	X	X X
024	First step towards a "folkhögskola" for women in Basra	Folkbildningsföreningen i Malmö (Malmö)	Iraqi Women League in Basra	Gender equality	Basra	Unemployed women aged 20–30 who have reached passed upper school ("gymnasieutbildning")	2005–2006: 221.000	X	X
028	Reaching torture victims in Post-war Iraq	Red Cross Centre for Tortured Refugees (Stockholm)	International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)	Democracy	Basra	Torture victims in Iraq, Iraqi NGOs, Iraqi police and security personnel, Basra University, Iraqi Ministry of Health	2005–2006: 200.000	X	

OPC No.	Project name ⁵⁴	Swedish lead organisation and its location ⁵⁵	Iraqi partner organisation and its location ⁵⁶	Main Theme (as per Project Catalogue)	Geographical focus	Target group(s)	Approved funds (SEK)	Evaluation Team meetings		
								SE ⁵⁷	E ⁵⁸	P ⁵⁹
029	Education for women in Kurdistan/Iraq	Kurdiska Kvinnoföreningen i Göteborg (KKFIG)	Women's Union of Kurdistan Zhinan Secretariat Bureau	General Education	Sulaimaniya		2005: 25 000 2006: 300.000	X	X	X
033	Children's Library in Baghdad – a jumping board for democracy	Svensk-Irakiska solidaritetskommittén (Stockholm)	Irakiska kvinnoförbundet	Democracy	Bagdad	Women, children, and youth	2005: 250.000 2006: 250 000 2007: 150 000			X
034	Project Baba Gurgur	Kurdistan's Studentförbundet i Sverige (Stockholm)	Komeley Xwendkaran Kirkuks section Universitet (Kirkud)	Organisational and Capacity Building	Kirkuk	Youth and student groups which include all minorities, and in particular women	2005-2006 534.000 2007: 150 000	X		
037	Babylon – Popular Movement and General Education in Southern Iraq	Irakiska Kulturhuset i (Göteborg)	Organisation of Tammuz For Social Development	Education, popular movement, and private sector	Bagdad, Sadr City and Babylon	Women and men	2005: 150.000 2006: 500.000 2007: 400 000	X	X	
041	Womens' Centre in Kirkuk	Kirkuks vänner (Stockholm)	Kirkuksvänner och KOMAK i Kirkik	Gender Equality Human Rights (as per OPC list 07-03-27)	Kirkuk	Women in age group 16–55 years	2006: 150.000 2007: 270 000		X	
051	Iraqi Centre for Democracy – Meeting point for dialogue and participation	Centerpartiets Internationella Stiftelse (Stockholm)	Iraqi United Nation Association (Baghdad)	Developing Democracy	Bagdad	Political active persons with emphasis on women, youth and young adults.	2005: 237 130 2006: 112 870 2007: 220 000	X		
052	Elections Monitoring in Iraq/2005-12-31 (FINISHED)	Irakiska Riksförbundet i Sverige, IRS	Tammuz Organisation for Social Development	Developing Democracy	Arbil, Dohuk, Sulaymania, Mosul and Kirkuk	1150 election observers	2005: 500.000 (Mid Oct-Mid Dec 2005)			

OPC No.	Project name ⁵⁴	Swedish lead organisation and its location ⁵⁵	Iraqi partner organisation and its location ⁵⁶	Main Theme (as per Project Catalogue)	Geographical focus	Target group(s)	Approved funds (SEK)	Evaluation Team meetings	
								SE ⁵⁷	E ⁵⁸ P ⁵⁹
054	Courses on Gender Equality and Democracy among and for women in Iraq	Föreningen Forum för demokrati (Stockholm)	LEO, Kurdiska kvinnoförbundet Zenan	Democracy and Gender Equality	Sulaymania	Women	2005: 117 500 2006: 117 500		
055	Family Centre – knowledge and development in the local community	Kurdiska riksförbundet (Nacka)	Zêrin	Developing Democracy and Conflict Management	Amediye (Sersink)	Families outside the city of Amediye, focus on the area of Sersink (many widows with children)	2005: 35 000 2006: 353.000 2007: 220 000	X	X X
063	To increase the participation of young people in the democratic process in today's Iraq	Irakiska kulturföreningen i (Malmö)	Iraqi Democratic Youth Federation (Baghdad)	Capacity and Organisational Development and Developing Democracy	Basra	Iraqi youth in the ages 16–25 years. Girls and young women will be given priority	2005: 25 000 2006: 300.000 2007: 220 000	X	X X
066	Empowerment of young Iraqis, Iraq	Svensk Irakiska vänskapsföreningen (Stockholm)	Future Society (Baghdad)	Folkbildning och Demokratutveckling	Baghdad	Unga vuxna arbetslösa i åldern 16–30 år, jämnast möjliga fördelning mellan könen	2005: 25 000 2006: 354.000 2007: 220 000	X	X
069 (same as 041?)	Tjejer med särskilda behov i demokratin	Irakiska kvinnoföreningen i södra Sverige (Malmö)	Irakiska kvinnoförbundet (Baghdad)	General Education and Citizen Rights	Nasiria	Girls with special needs in the age group 12–25 years and their families	2006: 300.000 2007: 220 000		X
100	The future of the public sector in Iraq	Svenska Kommunalarbetarförbundet	(??)				2006 (moved to 2007): 120 000		

Appendix 4 Documents Consulted

Ali, Ala (various dates): *Project Reports and Monitoring Reports*, for projects in Northern Iraq which have received funding during 2005-2006 (available in English) (for names please refer to Appendix 3), Olof Palme International Centre, Erbil.

Ansökan om Projektstöd (“Application Forms”), from all Swedish/Iraqi Organisations which have received project funding during 2005-2006 (for names please refer to Appendix 3).

Ismail, Thair (various dates): *Travel Reports*, Olof Palme International Centre, Stockholm.

Norqvist, Johan (2005-07-14, 2006-11-28): *Travel reports* from visit to Iraq (Kurdistan), Sida, SEKA/EO.

Norqvist, Johan (2006-04-25): Comments on the revised Programme proposal of 21 April 2006, Sida, SEKA/EO.

Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2005-2007): *Projektkatalog* (“Project Catalogue”) on approved projects for funding during 2005-2006 (for names of projects and project organisations please refer to Appendix 3).

Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006): *Projekthandboken. Irakprogrammet*, Stockholm.

Olof Palme International Centre: *Criteria for project applications with the Iraq Program*

Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (2006-04-08): *Intresseanmälan för Irak-program 2005-2007*, (Red. version), Stockholm.

Olof Palme International Centre (2005-06-15): *Application for Iraq-Programme 2005-2007*, (edited version), Stockholm.

Regeringskansliet, Utrikesdepartementet (Maj 2004): *Landstrategi Irak. Förenklad landstrategi för svenskt bistånd till Irak*, januari 2004–december 2006, Stockholm.

Sida, SEKA/EO (2005-02-15): *Program för stärkande av det civila samhället i Irak*, Stockholm, (invitation to frame organisations to express interest in the Programme).

Sida (February 2005): *Criteria for the selection of frame organisations*, Stockholm.

Sida, SEKA/EO (2005-06-17): *Gransknings-PROMEMORIA*, Stockholm.

Swedish Government (May 2003): *Shared Responsibility. Sweden's Policy for Global Development*. Government Bill 2002/03:122.

Appendix 5 Semi-structured Questionnaires

Questionnaire/checklist for interviews

Topic: OPC Iraq programme

Respondents: 1) OPC programme headquarter, 2) Reference group members, and 3) OPC representatives at local offices in Erbil and Baghdad

In Iraq and Sweden:

Objective 1:

- Is there an OPC internal assessment of outcomes in relation to the Project Strategy?
- Which methods/tools are used by OPC to monitor outcomes in relation to set objectives?

Objective 2:

- Which indicators does the OPC use to assess that the thematic areas chosen fulfil the set objectives?

Objective 3:

- What were the criteria when you searched for cooperation partners in Iraq?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses, respectively, with the local cooperation partners that you identified in Iraq?
- Was there ever a training needs assessment made of the local office staffs? In such case, what did it indicate?
- Who was responsible for the training of staff and which methods were used? Where did this take place?
- Has any training materials or manuals been produced for Iraqi staff and/or projects within the Iraqi programme?
- Has there been training of trainers? If so, have they/how were they used during the course of the programme?

Objective 4:

- How would you describe the establishment of the Erbil office (eller center?) to this date?
- Which is the division of role and responsibility between OPC management in Stockholm and at Erbil centre? Which role does the Erbil office (or center?) have in planning of new projects? Identifying and establishing contact with suitable Iraqi CBOs/NGOs? In regular follow-up and monitoring of projects? In more in-depth evaluations? In training?
- How are the communication lines set up and which routines exist for regular communication and communication in conjunction with application rounds.
- Which training is provided to the staff at the Erbil centre? The OPC representative in Baghdad?
- Is the centre adequately dimensioned – is it e.g. cost-effective?

Objective 5:

- How were the potential Iraqi partner organisations identified? By whom?
- Which criteria were used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed Iraqi partner organisations before entering into cooperation?
- How is the selection of NGOs being made? As a partner organisation to the OPC?
As a partner organisation of the OPC? As a partner organisation to lead partner in Sweden?
- Does OPC offer any support in the form of matchmaking?
- Which criteria exist for applying organisations in Sweden and for partner organisations in Iraq?
How do you control that the organisations fulfil the criteria in Sweden and Iraq, respectively?
- Communication:
 - Who has the reporting responsibility to OPC? Is there a joint responsibility? How is this divided?
 - Who is accountable for reporting change in the project plan (change management) and crisis (crisis management)?

Objective 6:

- Does the Swedish or the Iraqi partner decide activities?
- Is all project documentation available in English? In Arabic and Kurdish?
- Is relevant background material (such as “Projekthandboken Irakprogrammet” available in English?
In Arabic and Kurdish?

Objective 7:

- How does the coordination between NGOs and Government function? Which channels exist?
- How is the NGO working environment? Changes over time?

Objective 8:

- Which groups of population are targeted? Which criteria are used when selecting target populations?
- Which criteria are used when selecting individuals in activities?
- Are there any risks you need to take into account when selecting participants?
- How are projects followed up?

Objective 9:

- Who handles the project funds?
- Who decides which costs to cover from the project funds?
- How are payments registered?
- Which routines do you have to follow up on use of funds? Who does that?

Objective 10:

- What does gender mainstreaming mean in the context of the programme/projects?
- How do you ensure that your activities are gender sensitive?

Objective 11:

- What have you learned that Sida should know about in the future?

Only in Sweden

Objective 1:

- Describe the programme in terms of;
 - Marketing of the programme: how and to whom
 - Application: invitation to tenders, guidelines for applicants, deadlines and procedures
 - Appraisal process and procedures
- Describe the Reference group (Referensgruppen)
 - Appointment and division of organisations and individuals
 - Preparations by the programme management prior to reference group meetings
- Describe the method used by the Reference group in the counselling meeting
- Describe the work of the Reference group after the counselling meeting
- Describe the work of the programme management after the meeting with the Reference group
- How are project results reported and to whom (narrative/financial)
- How are transfers made and to whom? (Swedish and/or Iraqi organisation)
- What have been the main administrative changes during the duration of the programme?
- Describe the introduction of direct support to Iraqi organisations. What opportunities/challenges has this entailed? What does it mean to follow-up of project results?

Objective 2:

- Which are the main threats to the stability of the projects?
- What can OPC do to counteract these threats (crisis management)?
 - What can the Swedish partner organisations do?
 - What can the Iraqi partner organisations do?

Objective 3:

- What will your organisation do if the 100% funding changes?

Questionnaire/checklist for interviews

Topic: Projects financed by the OPC programme

Respondents: 1) Iraqi project partner organisations, and 2) Swedish lead partner organisations

In Iraq and Sweden

- Project chronology and activities:
 - How was the project initiated and who made the problem analysis?
 - Who developed the project proposal? When was your project approved and when did you get the first round of financing?
 - What is the main project objective? Do you have more than one objective?
 - What is/was the duration of the project?
 - Describe the project activities. What does the Iraqi partner do and what does the Swedish partner do? Who decides which activities to carry out? Who is responsible that activities are carried out in time?
- The organisation:
 - When was the organisation founded?
 - By whom was the organisation founded?
 - How many persons are employed by the organisation?
 - What is the ethnic set-up of your organisation?
 - What were the recruitment criteria for staff employed for the project?
 - How many members does the organisation have? Do they pay member fees?
 - Which activities were carried out by your organisation prior to the OPC-funding?
Which activities of your organisation are currently non-dependent of OPC-funding?
 - Which activities are dependent on OPC-funding?
 - Which other donor organizations/funding sources have you identified that would be able to fund your organization?
 - Describe the financing of activities and the share of costs.
 - Was there any training needs assessment carried out of the staff of your organisation?
Have anyone from your organisation participated in training through OPC? Where did this training take place? What was the training about? Has the training been useful? How has it been useful? Why has it not been useful?
 - What do you do differently now than before the project started? Which improvements in your way of working have you identified?
 - How will the organisation continue working if there is no more project financing?
- Target group(s):
 - Which is your target group?

- What was the rationale for choosing the target group?
- What do you do to reach your target group with your activities?
- Have you been able to reach the set objectives for activities and number of participants?
- How do you plan for and make sure that there is a mix of ethnic groups in activities and management of the project?
- What is the gender and age mix of the target group(s)?
- How do you measure this? What documents can you provide us with?
- Budget and financial flow:
 - How much money has been approved by OPC for the project ?
 - How much money has been transferred from Sweden to Iraq?
 - How is money transferred from Sweden to Iraq? When was the money transferred? Were there any problems related to transfers? If so, what were they?
 - How much money has been spent on activities?
 - Who authorises which activities money can be used for?
 - Who is responsible for economic reporting?
- Communication:
 - Describe how often and how (means: telephone, email, other) that you are communicating with the Swedish partner organisation.
 - What is the policy for communication between you and the Swedish partner organisation?
- Reporting:
 - Describe your reporting to the OPC local offices. (E.g. when, how and by who to whom.) What is the content of these reports? Do they follow a particular format? Which format?
 - Describe your reporting to the OPC headquarters in Sweden. (E.g. when, how and by who to whom.) What is the content of these reports? Do they follow a particular format? Which format?
 - Describe how you reporting within the project team in Iraq and with your Swedish partner organisation. (E.g. when, how and by who to whom.) What is the content of these reports? Do they follow a particular format? Which format?
- Results (short- and long term):
 - What have been the most evident results from the project so far?
 - How will the results be made sustainable?
 - What happens to the results if the financing from OPC stops?
 - How has the build-up of capacity of the organisation helped in ensuring sustainability?
- Monitoring and evaluation:
 - Can you describe the internal monitoring of the project?

- What conclusions have been made from this monitoring? (Can we have this report?)
- OPC visits and feedback:
 - Describe your relation with OPC – e.g. how often and under which circumstances that you meet with them.
 - Have you been visited by representatives of the OPC local office in Baghdad and/or Erbil? When and by whom?
 - Did you receive their monitoring report after this visit? Did you agree with its content? Did you comment on it? Did it make you change anything within the project?
- Poverty alleviation:
 - How would you explain the poverty alleviation impact of your project? (E.g. how vulnerable groups of the society improve their situation, not necessarily economically, through or as a consequence of the project activities.)
- How do you plan to continue with the cooperation with your Swedish partner organisation when the project is over?
- How do you plan to finance the organisation and its activities when the current project is over? E.g. what other financing possibilities do you foresee and have you approached any other donor organisations?

Only for Swedish organisations

- Describe your communication with the OPC programme management prior to and during the application process.
- Describe your communication with the OPC programme management after the decision of the OPC programme management.

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