

LOCAL GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT IN IRAQ

2018 to 2022

OVERVIEW

As part of the Swedish Government's development cooperation strategy for Iraq, the Iraqi Research Foundation for Analysis and Development (IRFAD) and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) International is implementing the Local Governance Development in Iraq (LOGDEVI) project, funded through the Swedish government agency Sida.

SALAR started its work in Iraq 12 years ago, assisting the Swedish Government with local government related input to the Swedish Cooperation strategy. Since a decade there is an established partnership with IRFAD which started with the project Governance in Social Care 2012-2017. It aimed to strengthen leadership & management in the social care sector in Iraq. The unique long-term partnerships between SALAR and IRFAD and central and local authorities in Iraq have helped build strong and trustful relations and well-established channels of dialogue with Iraq's public administration. This helps to ensure that any support is based on real needs and demands of Iraqi stakeholders, and are to be continuously adjusted if realities change.

Geographically the main areas of LOGDEVI are the governorates of Duhok, Diwaniyah and Muthanna. However, during the course of implementation all other governorates in Iraq have been engaged in different ways. Certain work is also carried out in close collaboration with regional and federal authorities in Erbil and Baghdad. These include the Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Finance, Federal Supreme Audit Bureau, and High Commission for the Coordination among Provinces, and the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the Kurdistan Region.

OBJECTIVES AND KEY PROCESSES

The overall goal of LOGDEVI is to contribute to local governance and service delivery in Iraq which is effective, people-centred and accountable. The project is built around two distinct components – one situated in the Kurdistan region with a thematic focus on inclusive education and child protections, and one in the south of Iraq where decentralisation reform is in focus. The two components share common features with a strong focus on institutional development and planning and policy development.

The specific objective for the component implemented in south and central Iraq reads as: *Policy frameworks, systems and processes are established which are conducive for effective decentralization in Diwaniyah and Muthanna – and serve as a model for the whole of Iraq.*

Decentralisation is a highly complex and long-term socio-political process which is in constant evolution. Considering the early stages of decentralisation in Iraq, LOGDEVI has chosen to focus on local administrative, financial, and planning capacities, and on gaps and ambiguities in assigned mandates and authorities. Examples of key project processes are: organisational development of the Administrative and Financial Affairs Department; strengthening the Provincial Planning and Development Councils; development of annual sectoral plans and local policies; collaborative policy development in the municipality sector; developing directories and manuals on administrative authorities; and digitalising local financial reporting systems.

The specific objective for the component implemented in the Kurdistan region reads as: *Integrated governance for improved service delivery and child protection in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.* It takes as a starting point, the progressive ambitions in place to safeguard the rights of children and other vulnerable groups, and works to develop official systems and structures in support of this. To be able to address complex child protection issues and social problems there is a need for different sectors, levels of government and civil society to collaborate and develop integrated working practices. Examples of key project processes are: activation and further institutionalisation of child protection mechanisms in Duhok; establishing a Standard programme for child protection valid for the whole of Kurdistan region; developing the internal systems of DoLSA Duhok and collaborate with MoLSA on institutional development; piloting comprehensive models of inclusive education and strengthen coordination between DoE and DoLSA; and initiating an effective personality case study office with the juvenile court in Duhok. >>

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ABOUT IMPLEMENTERS

IRFAD – Iraqi Research Foundation for Analysis and Development

In all projects implemented in Iraq over the years, SALAR has worked with its trusted partner the Iraqi Research Foundation for Analysis and Development (IRFAD). IRFAD, is a research and development organisation with headquarters in Diwaniyah, in Southern Iraq. IRFAD has an extended network of partners, volunteers, consultants, and official counterparts in most of Iraq's 18 governorates. IRFAD is registered as a civil society organisation (CSO) at the Non-governmental Organisations Directorate, attached to the General Secretariat of the Iraqi Cabinet.

The aim of IRFAD is to develop models for positive local change through research, analysis, project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation particularly in the field of local governance, decentralization and public services, and to affect improvements in the Iraqi governance structures by building from below.

SALAR




The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) is a member organisation for all of Sweden's municipalities and regions. SALAR has existed for over 100 years and strives to promote and strengthen local self-government and the development of regional and local democracy. SALAR and its members have a unique understanding of decentralisation, local governance, local service delivery, and the relationship between local and other levels of government.

SALAR is a recognised and trusted representative of local governments and has long experience from working in complex settings, such as Iraq, Colombia, Ukraine, and the broader Syria region. The management of international projects is done through SALAR International. In addition to Swedish expertise and resources, we count on a large network of national and international experts. The scope of the international projects and programmes range from interventions at the system level, i.e. support to decentralisation processes, municipal legislation and intergovernmental financing to activities at the local level, i.e. sustainable urban development in pilot municipalities, improving participation and accountability in local governance, development of municipal services, or building resilience in light of mass migration.

OBJECTIVES AND KEY PROCESSES CONTINUED

Experience from LOGDEVI implementation shows that the project's locally-focused, systems-wide, participatory and organic approach to facilitating local governance development in partnership with official partners has yielded substantial results, even in the most challenging contexts and circumstances, including the Covid pandemic, financial crises, large scale popular protests, and political turbulence.

In the attached briefs a selection of results are presented according to four themes:

-  • **Strengthening** local financial administration
-  • **Safeguarding** child rights through the introduction of Inclusive Education approaches
-  • **Institutional development** for effective and accountable governance
-  • **Planning, programming, and policy** development practices for improved services

HOW WE WORK

LOGDEVI's guiding principles provide a cohesive framework for implementation and include: a systems approach to local governance; conflict sensitivity; local ownership and demand-based interventions; adaptation and incremental planning; gender equality and environmental sustainability; human-rights based approach; and effectively building on SALAR and Swedish municipalities' experience.

Besides addressing local government capacity gaps, financial management, organizational structures and systems, and decision-making practices, any effort to strengthen local governance must also take into account the interactions and relations between and among local and central government actors, and other stakeholders in society. By having a continuous local presence in our partner governorates, important relationships across government institutions are built.

The way development processes are designed are also causal of LOGDEVI successes. This includes:

- Engaging technical teams or reference groups from within local departments to do the work as part of their ordinary duties, supported by experts and consultants.
- Organising long-term processes of recurrent meetings and workshops within a predefined plan and a clear purpose.
- Engaging in relationships-building with key stakeholders and on periodical basis calling in on partner organisations formally and informally. This matters for achieving results.
- Perhaps most importantly for the local government actors, LOGDEVI has been able to act as an honest broker and facilitator in bringing together local and national/regional government organisations to debate, discuss and agree on problems, solutions, and outputs. Creating these arenas and offering channels to key decision-makers in higher levels of government has arguable been one of LOGDEVI's most important roles.

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