



NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID
actalliance

Capacity Building, Democracy and Human Rights Program for Iraq

**Documentation of
Meeting for the NCA Partners in Iraq
On Project Management and Finance
SAF Hotel, Erbil, 4-5 November 2010**



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Introduction to the meeting

Rachel Eapen Paul, manager of the Norwegian Church Aid's Capacity Building, Democracy and Human Rights Program for Iraq, warmly welcomed the participants from the 13 organizations present and asked for a minute's silence in remembrance of the previous day's terrible bombings in Baghdad.

Norwegian Church Aid supports the work being done, addressing the various injustices towards women, such as physical and psychological violence, traditional practices harmful to women, FGM and early marriages. As well as addressing women's struggling with both domestic work and work outside in order to earn money for the family. This, without being in power or control over their income as well as being hindered to inherit. A recent UN report has stated again that these issues should be continuously addressed.

The human rights based approach to this work speak in broad terms about the fundamental entitlement of all human beings to live in dignity, and in conditions of social justice and thereby provide a foundation on which to establish a set of demands, premised on the intrinsic worth of the individual. The human rights approach justifies legitimate claims, not because the realization of rights such as that to health or life is a means to another end, such as quality child care, environment, development or population.... but ???

Human rights not only create entitlements for rights-holders, but they also create duties for States. States are required to ensure the fulfilment of human rights by acting in a way that enables rights-holders to enjoy the rights to which they are entitled. Human rights require that actions - of a legislative, administrative, policy or programme nature - are considered in light of the obligations inherent in human rights.

As such, the 'rights-based' approach is an inherent dimension of the concept of 'people-centered sustainable development', with development constituting a comprehensive process directed towards the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Central to the rights-based approach is the norm of gender equality, which resists, rather than accommodates, relativist approaches to the interpretation of human rights.

The principle of equality forms the core of the human rights vision of the Charter, which states that human rights and fundamental freedoms should be available to all human beings 'without discrimination on the basis of race, sex, language or religion'. The principle of the equal rights of women and men is thus one of the pillars upon which the United Nations was founded.

Norwegian Church Aid's work with women aims at improving the status of women and supports the striving for strengthening and empowering of women and women's groups and organizations.

The introduction was rounded up by requesting the participants to define their reasons for having chosen to carry out development work on achieving human rights for both women and men. There were several motives and many were related to individual personal experiences and life stories, as well as moral and ethical attitudes to what is a fair and just world.

The introduction session concluded with the necessity on working for human rights, focusing especially on women's rights. While doing this, the concept must focus on the issue of power when striving for empowering women in order to present a power balance and not least, to change the approach on how to use the power achieved.

Introducing the issues of project management and finance

Dima Al-Baqain, Program Officer at Capacity Building, Democracy and Human rights Program for Iraq carried out the presentations on the issue of project management.

Dag Borgen, Finance Manager at NCA Iraq/Middle East carried out the presentations on the issues of finance.

The issues were introduced to the participants through an open group work where the participants were asked to respond to the questions below:

1. List the donors you have worked with
2. Expectations of the issue of project managing – come up with 3 areas – what do you want us to talk about?
3. Expectations of the issue of financing – come up with 3 areas

The three groups listed the following donors: Various US agencies (UNFPA, PRT), NCA, Mama Cash, Palma Centre, RTI and other permanent donors unmentioned by name.

Regarding project management the participants suggested the following issues to be discussed: Distribution of ???, follow up and evaluation, writing reports /documentation, coordination with other areas and institutions, handling time table/frame for projects, handling beneficiaries and stakeholders, how to identify the general goal and specific objectives.

Regarding the issue of finance the participants mentioned the following: How to identify a committee specialized in finance, how often and how to write financial reports, how to agree with donors, financial policy in general, auditing mechanisms, how to balance between budget and expenses, how to deal with unexpected expenses.

Below is a summing up of the presentations on management, project management and finance. The complete power point presentations are attached as supplements, the one on project management mainly in Arabic and the one on finance in English.

The issue of project management

The starting point of this presentation argued for employing the project cycle management model which includes the important principles from start to end of a project, implying the need for defining the project's specific period of time. As well as involving the stakeholders and letting the partners take part in the planning of the project, for implementing the logical framework approach, LFA, monitoring and adjusting according to the development of the project and for evaluating the concerted effort. The participants were urged to find more information on the LFA approach on the internet. Projects can be part of a program which are always carried out within a limited time table aiming at specific goals, with results to be eventually implemented in an organization or institution.

The different roles and positions of the various agents, the sponsor, the project manager, the diverse team members, the stakeholders and the project suppliers were explained. Moreover, the importance of being

aware of and obtaining the capacity on how to evaluate the successes was stressed, as well as the fulfilment of expected demands and needs.

The capacity and competences for general management was presented in a model and led to summing up three core items to be aware of when managing projects: responsibility, authority and accountability. The first part of the session on the issue of project management was rounded up with an exercise on the role of the project manager. The participants were asked in groups to discuss what the three core items meant to each of them.

The participants set out what the three items meant to them as follows:

Responsibility:

The project manager must be morally committed to the project and the staff, be prepared to handle the results, be able to distribute tasks and missions, be able to sort out problems among the staff and be able to keep focus on improvement of the team and of the accomplishments.

As well as the importance of the project manager being aware of the difference between his/her role and position was emphasised. The role as leader cannot be delegated, and when delegating tasks it is necessary to monitor that things are handled in a responsible way.

Authority:

The project manager must take on the leadership, have the ability to make decisions, including issues of economy, must have the ability to work with the staff, to delegate tasks properly and to defend the team when needed, as well as be able to establish relations with stakeholders, to make contracts and to network. Apart from this, the importance of the manager's ability and right to make decisions was emphasised.

Accountability:

The project manager must have the ability to monitor and carry out transparency evaluation, must be able to identify and manage differences between input and expected output, be able to maintain transparency within the team and motivate the team members to maintain the focus on what works.

The issue of accountability brought up the substance of quality which requires the need for acknowledging specific standards, for keeping the determined time frame and for being in control of the balance between the actual costs and the budget. Adjusting time and costs can be unavoidable, but never to deviate from the defined standards.

The ideal model for carrying out a project within its life cycle is to spend 50% on examining the needs of what the donor expects in order to grant the project and carry out the planning. As well as including the donor's investigation of the organization's conditions for carrying out the project and developing an overall strategy for the project. 40% should be used for implementing the planned activities and 10% for evaluating the efforts and results.

The participants discussed this ideal model in the light of their experiences on the fact that donors often change their focus during the given time frame. This leaves the projects with problems, for instance with regard to establish the capacity essential among the staff. It was stressed that the projects need to have and stand by a clear vision to make sure that it is compatible with the vision of the donors.

Various examples on how to retain a continuous overview on the project activities presenting different levels of details were discussed. The importance of effective monitoring in all stages of the project was stressed, as well as the need for an efficient system for this purpose. Ongoing monitoring and systematic

documentation are the basis for carrying through both an internal evaluation and the donor's evaluation. Finally, examples on helpful grids for evaluation were presented.

The issue of finance

The presentation on the issue of finance stated up front the objectives for this part of the meeting: To offer practical approaches for planning reliable budgets, to show how to use a budget monitoring report, how to deal with donor reporting, how to understand the figures, how to get better organized, how to improve quality of documents and how to create a simple book-keeping system. This presentation was structured in seven lessons.

The practical approach was illustrated through the importance of having a road map, no matter whether running a marathon or running a project. The budget is crucial for the project manager as a tool for being in control. It is the manager's way to be responsible and accountable. In this respect, the finance manager is a service supplier for the project manager. And apart from the project and finance managers, the donor, the management and board need to have a budget. A good budget is simple and straight forward, it is clear, easy to follow, can be read at a glance and it provides a summary.

This first lesson generated a useful discussion on how to deal with contingencies. It was emphasised that unexpected costs probably will appear when dealing with development projects. It is important to be able to prove what caused these contingencies in order to communicate with the donor on how to handle them. It was illustrated how to use and work in a master budget in order to adjust it to the specific project. The participants were asked in three groups to work out a budget in the following exercise:

The donor Sara foundation will donate a water purification project in the village Rachel. The river running through the village is called Dima. A unit can be bought in Kuwait for 100.000\$. The time frame can be assumed. What kinds of costs are relevant to put into a budget?

The groups' presented suggestions caused a constructive discussion illustrating the need for dealing with unexpected incidents and costs. The importance of serious planning and continuously informing the donor about changes was stressed.

Lesson two presented four different examples of book-keeping and stressed the need for a thorough and continuous follow up on costs relating to the budgeted. Every deviation should be examined and explained by notes and used for estimating how to ensure a strategy for maintaining a long-term responsible account.

The third lesson emphasised the call for analyzing differences between the budget and actual costs, seen both in a short and long term perspective. Moreover, the necessity of keeping the donor informed about divergences and being careful about documenting what is informed. The fourth lesson focused on how to explain differences. The core message is that there is always an explanation to be had and it is important to find it, deal with it and document it.

Lesson five focused on the value of having read the contract carefully and being aware of the fact that there are different ways of interpreting a contract, depending on the partners' various interests. Sometimes contracts have to be amended in order to deal with these conditions. In the sixth lesson once again, the need for proper and valid documentation was pointed out and examples on what are good and bad documentation was given. A donor audit will not cause problems when the quality of documentation is high was the lesson learnt from the presentation's last lesson.

Closing the meeting

The expectations expressed by the participants at the beginning of the meeting were commented on by Dima Al-Baqain and Dag Borgen, who proved that they had addressed the suggested items and given examples and exercises to increase understanding.

Rachel Eapen Paul rounded up the meeting by expressing appreciation to the organizations' work for empowering women and raising women's opportunities to enjoy equal participation in society. Moreover, an approval of the presentations given was expressed. Project management and dealing with financial issues are to be handled with responsibility, authority and accountability. If this is combined with a clear vision and ideas of what to do with the allies, it is easier to find donors with similar visions in order to support the projects.

Finally, the participants were informed about the future plans of Norwegian Church Aid which are to phase out of Iraq during the next year. This is due to many reasons, among them Iraq being no longer considered in an emergency situation. Other funding options but emergency funding was pointed out. The Norwegian government has a policy on equality in development work, and Norway's program on UN SC Resolution 1325 is still going on. Other Norwegian NGOs are going to work in Iraq, and the Swedish NGO Kvinna till Kvinna will establish a branch in Baghdad or in Erbil. Eventually, Norwegian oil companies were mentioned as optional donors.



Supplements

Program

Day (1): 4th November, 2010

- 9:30-9:40 Welcome by Rachel Eapen Paul, Regional Program Manager
- 9:40-10:00 Introduction of participants
- 10:00-11:00 Working on Women's Projects: Strategies and Perspectives, Rachel Eapen Paul
- 11:00-11:15 Coffee/tea break
- 11:15-12:00 Expectations of the participants – Group Work, Dag Borgen, Finance Manager
- 12:00-12:30 Feedback from the groups
- 12:30-13:30 Project Management: Introductory session, Dima Al Baqain, Program Officer
- 13:30-14:30 Lunch
- 14:30-15:15 Project Management (contd.)
- 15:15-16:15 Project Finances, Dag Borgen
- 16:15-16:30 Coffee/Tea
- 16:30-17:30 Project Finances (contd.)

Day (2): 5th November, 2010

- 9:00-10:45 Project Management : Models for proposal development, Dima Al Baqain
- 10:45-11:30 Project Finances, Dag Borgen
- 11:30-11:45 Coffee/Tea
- 11:45- 13:30 Project Finances (contd.) Dag Borgen
- 13:30-14:30 Lunch
- 14:30-15:15 Concluding session on Project Management and Finances, Dag and Dima
- 15:15-16:00 A report from NCA, Rachel
- 16:00 End of Meeting, Free time

Participants' list