

Annual Report 2024



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Cover illustration: Wadi's partner Nwe launched an exhibition titled "The Role of Women in Environmental Protection" in celebration of March 8. The event showcased a variety of recycled and eco-friendly handicrafts, highlighting the significant contributions of women to environmental conservation.

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Overview 2024

Exciting months lie behind us. We launched a new campaign for the rights of children and adolescents in Northern Iraq, as unfortunately, many people - including adults! - are not aware that children have rights and are entitled to claim them. This awareness is crucial in combating domestic violence and violence against children; it also contributes to a deeper understanding of equality, individual rights, and the concept of citizenship in general.

Such work is designed for the long term, yet it often yields immediately visible results. We repeatedly see that emancipatory ideas, no matter how distant they may initially seem to people, garner broad interest and lead to lively discussions in schools and families. This also gives our staff the energy to keep going.

This rights campaign is part of a new multifaceted, overarching project called "Active Citizenship", implemented by Wadi and several partner organizations in Northern Iraq. The project focuses on empowering local communities through active participation and collaboration with government entities, organizations, and individuals. It addresses child rights and youth empowerment, environment protection, media activism, active citizenship training, schools projects, public health and awareness on FGM and gender-based violence.

We have also once again supported local refugee initiatives on Lesbos, which, as part of the refugees' self-organization, address numerous concerns of the camp residents - from electricity distribution and waste disposal to makeshift education and various courses. In December, we also began to support emergency aid in Syria, including for an orphanage in Idlib and a hospital in Damascus.

We thank our committed private and institutional donors for making our democratization and human rights campaigns, as well as our occasional rapid aid interventions, possible.

WADI'S ACTIVITIES IN NUMBERS

Support for Yazidi ISIS Survivors

56 Seminars with a total of **726** beneficiaries

Awareness on FGM, Women's and Children's Rights

5 Media reports: **4** TV reports, **1** interview

112 FGM and violence awareness seminars with a total of **1843** participants

56 Women's rights seminars with **426** young women participants

14 Health seminars for a total of **210** women

Playbus Activities

10 Camps and more than **200** villages visited, **6,077** children participated, **109** fathers and **296** mothers benefited

Environment Protection and Awareness

8 Media publications: **4** TV reports, **3** articles, **1** stream video

56 Environment seminars with a total of **426** participants

Recycling awareness reached **1,371** adults and **11,596** students



Citizenship Empowerment

This six-month project, funded by the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands, focused on enhancing the capacity and resilience of local stakeholders in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to foster citizenship and active engagement within their communities, particularly addressing children's rights, youth empowerment, and environmental concerns. Despite facing significant political and economic challenges, the project successfully engaged thousands of children and hundreds of women and young men through various activities, promoting social cohesion and media engagement to strengthen local discourse and cooperation.

Focusing on three key intersectional issues - children's rights, youth empowerment, and environmental concerns, with a specific focus on youth engagement and media resonance in engaging youth - the project sought to use these topics as a springboard for broader conversations, intended to explore citizen engagement, effective cooperation, and youth-based approaches to resolving local issues. Wadi played a crucial role in coordinating activities among all implementing partners, providing technical capacity building and support to stakeholders, and overseeing the monitoring and evaluation of the project's progress.

Environment

In the realm of environmental initiatives, Wadi's partner NWE organized a series of seminars and a youth camping event focused on environmental issues. The seminars aimed to educate the citizens of Halabja about the importance of environmental conservation and the harmful effects of household chemical cleaners on both the environment and human health. They also provided insights into alternative cleaning methods and highlighted the significance of using recycling centers for plastic waste disposal. To promote an intersectional



All women hiking activity

approach to the project, media partners KirkukNow, Radio Deng NWE, and Radio Dang (Kalar) collaborated with NWE Organization to either report on their efforts or gain a deeper understanding of local environmental challenges, which they then shared with their audiences. This collaboration aimed to engage local stakeholders, particularly youth, in discussions about these issues.

Child rights

Schools and children's rights serve as an excellent foundation for citizen-driven projects. These initiatives often highlight the existing deficiencies in local educational institutions and demonstrate the significant potential for positive change when teachers, parents, administrators, and students collaborate to tackle common challenges. A recent example of this collaborative spirit occurred in Duhok, where our partner organization, Jinda, swiftly addressed the evolving needs of Yazidi refugees in the camps. Following the devastating ISIS attacks on Sinjar a decade ago, these individuals sought refuge in the camp, only to face a new crisis in August 2024 when the Baghdad government announced the defunding of the camp. This decision not only threatened their basic needs but also jeopardized their children's education, as local schools were unprepared to accommodate them. Acknowledging this urgent issue, Jinda, with logistical and technical support from Wadi, seized the opportunity to enhance citizen engagement, empowering local stakeholders to collectively communicate their situation to the media. The active citizenship promoted through this project aimed to build trust in local problem-solving, encouraging residents to stay in their communities and invest in their futures rather than resorting to migration. Starting on June 1, 2024, the project collaborated with the Yazidi community in the Duhok camp to advocate for citizen-based solutions to the various challenges they faced. The project's media coverage, significantly amplified by our media partner KirkukNow, has been extensive, further enhancing the positive impact of this active citizen approach and giving a voice to the Yazidi community.

Jinda team also conducted a series of sessions for internally displaced persons (IDPs), primarily Yazidis, focusing on citizenship, tolerance, coexistence, and human rights awareness. In June 2024, the Baghdad government's decision to stop funding Yazidi displacement camps caused significant panic among residents. Jinda held meetings in Khanke, Essian, and Sharia camps to address concerns about potential disruptions to education and forced returns to unsafe areas in Shingal. Many participants expressed fears about inadequate housing, security, and basic services in their home regions, as well as the risk of losing educational opportunities for their children.



Discussion with young women in the camp

Responses to the sessions were mixed; while some participants felt empowered and valued within the broader community, others expressed disappointment and renewed fears for their safety as Yazidis. The joint activities fostered some trust between communities, but challenges

arose in reconciling new values with deeply rooted cultural norms. Concerns about losing cultural identity to host communities were also voiced. Jinda engaged with local officials, including the Director of Education in Simele, who opposed the camp closures due to instability in Shingal and the lack of alternatives. Many camp residents expressed a desire to emigrate rather than return without justice for past crimes. Despite disruptions from the Eid holidays, Jinda continued coordinating with various organizations and government bodies to support the displaced population, exemplifying active citizenship and strengthening local stakeholder networks to address these issues.

In addition to the urgent situation in the Duhok camp, various child rights and youth empowerment initiatives have showcased the effectiveness of this approach. The playbus (see p. 25), a mobile playground from partner ADWI, travels to villages in the Ranya, Erbil, and Garman regions, offering children and youth play-based learning experiences on essential topics like children's rights, civic engagement, environmental issues, and non-violent conflict resolution. To combat the widespread issue of corporal punishment, which is still legal and culturally accepted in the KRG, Wadi has led the "No to Violence" campaign (see p. 14) since 2018. This initiative collaborates with local schools, parents, and students to promote non-violent disciplinary methods, maintaining authority without physical or psychological harm. Wadi also provided expertise to project partners focused on child rights. The campaign also includes awareness on the harms of female genital mutilation (FGM).

Media coverage has effectively highlighted the project's core themes: active citizen responses to local issues, increased trust among stakeholders, and the success of youth engagement in decision-making. Empowered youth feel a stronger connection to their communities and are more likely to invest locally.

The child rights activities were implemented by several key partners: ADWI in Ranya, Garman, and Erbil; Jinda in Duhok; WoLA, which provided legal awareness training in Sulaymaniyah focusing on young women and issues like early/forced marriage and family violence; and Human Network, which raised awareness about public health issues, including vaccination and women's reproductive health. Each partner contributed unique expertise and perspectives to the project.

Rights awareness for youth

WoLA engaged female youth in schools by offering interactive awareness seminars at local girls' schools in the Sulaymaniyah area. These seminars addressed legal issues faced by young women, including forced and early marriage, legal rights in marriage, financial rights, domestic violence rights, and more recently, social media rights, as well as efforts to combat honor killings linked to social media blackmail and deepfakes. In conjunction with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25, WoLA organized a 16-day activism campaign that facilitated



All girls high school assembly on legal rights

discussions on these topics, allowing students to learn about existing laws related to violence, express their concerns, and access resources for immediate assistance.

“My sister was about to be a victim of honor killing, she was being blackmailed by a man online. The only reason they spared her life was because she agreed to marry him. Now, she’s living a terrible life; that’s both domestic and electronic violence” —Ahzin (female) 17

The seminars aimed to educate students about relevant laws and the negative consequences of these issues, fostering open dialogue and encouraging them to share their experiences. However, WoLA encountered significant logistical challenges, such as schedule changes due to student exams and national holidays, as well as last-minute school cancellations. To address these issues, they

focused on networking by meeting with key stakeholders in the education department and communicating with school principals to strengthen relationships.

This experience underscored the ongoing need for an 'active citizenship' and network-building approach, emphasizing the importance of maintaining strong connections among municipal, organizational, and local structures to effectively achieve project objectives and overcome challenges. Overall, feedback from students and school staff was overwhelmingly positive, with participating schools expressing a strong interest in continuing these seminars in 2025, recognizing their relevance to students' daily lives.

Human Network, a new partner of Wadi, initially collaborated with schools and local youth to provide general health information aimed at improving community health outcomes. Topics included vaccination, smoking cessation, and nutrition. In the project's second three months, this partner focused on women's health, discussing topics such as women's cycles and what constitutes a healthy menstrual cycle, along with other relevant health issues. They delivered dynamic and engaging seminars that encouraged youth participants to ask questions, share their experiences, and express their opinions.

Media

Media and youth engagement are vital components that enhance citizen and youth empowerment, particularly in Northern Iraq, where press freedom is limited. Citizen journalism, where non-professionals produce news, democratizes information flow and encourages active participation in public discourse. For 15 years, Wadi has supported this approach, investing in local citizen-led media and training citizen journalists to foster community discussions and independent media.

Kirkuk Now (see also p. 40) aims to strengthen the concept of citizenship in Iraq by leveraging local media to promote civic engagement and inclusivity. Their content addresses critical issues such as youth empowerment, public service deficiencies, minority challenges, climate change, women's rights, and voting rights. By raising awareness and encouraging participation, especially among women and youth, Kirkuk Now seeks to advocate for fundamental rights, including access to education and healthcare, particularly in light of upcoming parliamentary elections.

As part of their collaborative efforts, Kirkuk Now and ADWI created a voter education video for first-time voters ahead of the Kurdistan Region's parliamentary elections. However, the political landscape remains complex, with disputes among winning parties creating a legal vacuum and disrupting education due to teacher boycotts over unpaid salaries.

In the project's second half, Kirkuk Now focused on the importance of youth and women's political participation, reporting on the challenges faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs) and abducted Yazidis. Their work highlighted the need for citizen participation in governance and transparency in budget allocation. Despite challenges such as limited access to authorities and security concerns, Kirkuk Now achieved significant success, including a report that led to the government approving a national ID for a Christian woman denied due to her religion. This illustrates the crucial role of media in addressing local issues and fostering cooperation between NGOs and government entities.

Radio Dang in Kalar is also involved in the project, operating as a citizen journalist-run radio station that aims to raise awareness and foster discussions on local and regional issues. The station focuses on making topics such as environmental degradation, women's rights, and societal participation engaging and accessible to youth. Throughout the project, Radio Dang produced segments featuring one or more guests in panel discussions, beginning with a fact-based introduction. These segments were broadcast on local radio and streamed live on Facebook and Instagram, encouraging audience questions and participation.

The topics addressed included the dialogue between government and civil society, expectations for changes in parliamentary elections, the poor infrastructure of schools and youth services, strategies for local councils to invest in education, the media's role in society and democracy, the status of women and human rights in the Kalar area, the relationship between civil society and municipal councils, the reality of groundwater pollution in Garmian, women's involvement in environmental issues, actionable steps to combat pollution, and the impact of education on women's rights.

This project is supported by the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands, Joliebelle Foundation and Wadi private donations.



Recycling and Environmental Awareness Activities

Wadi operates three educational recycling centers in the Kurdish region of Iraq, situated in the Kabarto IDP camp in the Duhok area, as well as in Kifri and Halabja. Each center is equipped with a comprehensive plastic bottle collection infrastructure, featuring strategically placed collection bins at key locations throughout the area. Additionally, the project incorporates a significant educational component aimed at raising awareness and promoting sustainable practices within the community.

The primary objective of this project remains to raise awareness about the significance of environmental protection and sustainability. This is accomplished through a series of regular seminars in local schools, community meetings, and reports broadcasted on local radio and television. School classes are actively visiting recycling centers, and lectures are conducted at local schools on a consistent basis.

The project works with partner schools that are increasingly addressing environmental issues in the classroom and using the resources of the recycling centers. However, the issue that arose last year, with schools being closed due to teacher protests over unpaid salaries, persisted until the summer, impacting our outreach efforts.



Young employee at Kifri recycling center

The collection infrastructure was further expanded. Over the course of the last year, more than 1.5 tons of plastic were collected and then pressed into blocks ready for transport to big recycling facilities, or they were shredded and processed into new products using the injection moulding process. The machines required for this process have been manufactured locally with only very few crucial parts purchased abroad and are still being

improved further. All facilities are fully managed and staffed by local residents, ensuring community involvement and support.

Collaboration with universities is also set to be strengthened. There is now a student group in Duhok that actively promotes the topics of sustainability and recycling at the university. The partnership has progressed to the point where the university has established its own small recycling workshop.



Flower pots made from recycled PET plastic

Model houses

Over the past year, two houses were acquired with the goal of converting them into environmental model homes. The project addresses the critical issues of water and electricity rationing in the Middle East, particularly in Kurdish cities, where a lack of awareness and affordable technical solutions exacerbate resource management challenges.

Implemented with local partners Adwi and NWE, the initiative has acquired two residential houses in Kifri and Halabja as demonstration models for sustainable resource use. These

houses showcase practical solutions, such as solar energy systems, greywater recycling, and energy-efficient renovations, to reduce water and energy consumption. The model house in Halabja has already seen significant progress, including the installation of a solar thermal module and automatic water pump shutoff mechanisms. The project aims to establish these houses as knowledge transfer platforms, hosting workshops and seminars to educate local residents on sustainable practices. During the installation of the green roof, complications arose when water penetrated the protective layer and reached the building's structure. As a result, repairs were necessary, which took time and delayed the start of the first seminars until the end of last year.



Model house in Halabja



The newly added model house in Kifri will address specific climatic challenges and serve as a training center for the community. This project aligns perfectly with our existing environmental initiatives, all of which focus on developing sustainable and innovative solutions to contemporary challenges. Overall, the project strengthens civil society by empowering local communities to adopt sustainable solutions and fostering collaboration among residents, craftsmen, and technicians. Through these efforts, the initiative contributes to self-reliance, innovation, and sustainable development in the region.

This project is supported by Joliebelle Foundation, BMZ and the Canadian Embassy in Iraq.



No to Violence! Campaign

Violence is a vicious cycle, it only brings more violence. When a parent or teacher hits a child, that child may act out by hitting other children, and the cycle goes on. Breaking that cycle by ending all forms of physical violence is the first step in a process that then builds to develop other forms of conflict resolution, de-escalation, as well as training teachers and parents on new non-violent ways of providing authority and guidance for children.

Violence is also omnipresent in war and crisis regions. It lives in people's memories and experiences and until it is addressed it continues to grow in families and schools.

In 2016 before we began the campaign we asked hundreds of children as part of our *Playbus* playground activities what were the main issues in their lives, and consistently the answers were about fear of being hit, bullied, yelled at by teachers or their parents, girls also report being mistreated because of their gender. We also spoke extensively with teachers, social workers, parents, school administrators to understand their perspectives, how we could help them break the cycle of violence and to understand many of the issues at play in their world.



The Beginning

Wadi launched the 'No to Violence' campaign in 2017. The goal of the campaign is to stop violence against children in schools and at home, and to encourage non-violent conflict resolution and authority for teachers and parents.

This is a big task, as violence is such an engrained method of discipline, and is mostly seen as the only way. How do we change a culture of violence? The approach of the campaign is not accusatory, our teams do not take an adversarial stance with school staff or parents, but rather take a 'clean slate' approach where they explain that the past is done, and we focus on changing behaviour and approaches going forward. There is little to gain by guilting, shaming past behaviours, most of the adults who perpetrate violence towards children, be they teachers or

parents, have themselves not known anything else. They did not have access to information or tools on how to be a non-violent but effective teacher or parent. Therefore the first step is to accept that this is 'how it was', but going forward take an active commitment to no longer using violence and fear as the tool of discipline and learning.

The first year of the project (2017-2018) only one school participated, but in that year they saw a dramatic improvement in children's behaviour and grades. The success of this pilot school was extensively covered by local Kurdish media and is highlighted in this interview with the director of the school. The results in combination with Wadi pushing for awareness and bringing the subject into the larger societal debates was that in the years since the project has become a real success, and by 2022, 13 schools had committed themselves to stop beating and abuse of children by teachers. They became 'Violence-free schools'. Additionally, 15 village communities had declared themselves 'violence-free' which includes violence in the families and violence against women and children.



Feb. 07: Amelie from the German Consulate in Erbil and Cathren from Baghdad Embassy accompanied the team in Ranya, Shkarta District. A highly engaging seminar took place, and the discussion on FGM became particularly captivating. One of the ladies recently cut her 7 year old daughter.

The Method

Wadi's teams select their target for change very precisely. They watch over the school and interact with the students, trying to pinpoint the issues and start working on them. The teams would select a school and constantly visit them until they formed a close enough relationship with the committee to make a change. Eventually, the school is declared free of violence.

Other schools have registered to join the program. The teachers of participating schools all receive anti-violence training and extensive support. Parents are also included in non-violence and conflict resolution training sessions. In conversations and events with the children, they are

encouraged to stand up for their rights, learn how to behave in the event of abuse, and where to report abuse.

Creating a space for non-violent resolution to become mainstream is a long term goal of this campaign. Our aim is that by continuing to make violence against children a 'hot button' topic on local media and on social media this pushes forward a conversation on a societal level, that helps really bring about larger societal change where this practice no longer becomes the accepted norm for raising or teaching children.

Looking back on our own experiences we know that huge societal shifts can happen quite quickly, and it is our goal that this generation can break the cycle of violence and come to a place where it is no longer seen as routine, acceptable and 'the only way'.

It is important to remember that these approaches are relatively new in western countries as well, and till now not always accepted. Many of us who are 'not so old' can still remember corporal punishment in school. Although attitudes towards violence against children vary around the globe, countries that have banned the practice have often also experienced rapid societal change regarding children's rights. For example, in Germany, the law banning corporal punishment in schools was not applied at a federal level until 1983, yet today it would be unimaginable that a teacher would enforce their authority with violence. With some pressure and strong campaigning change can come quickly.



Wadi presented flowers to several mothers who protected their daughters from FGM in honor of February 6, the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.

Strategies are adapted and vary from one school to another. Generally, the teams tackle the issue slowly and indirectly, with group activities, plays, videos, seminars, and so on. As for the teacher and parents, a more direct approach is used. The campaign also includes providing stationaries and necessities for some schools that are in dire need. We are reconciliating in tribal issues related to students and teachers, and helping students emotionally and/or legally who face violence. For Wadi's team in Duhok which is working in the camp schools, these issues are rather common.



In the camp administration office

The No to Violence campaign in Duhok

The situation in the camps for Yazidi displaced people and Syrian refugees in Northern Iraq remains dire. Many Yazidis spent more than 10 years in a camp because their homelands are still combat zones. Many don't know anything else. The camp is their home, they cannot imagine to relocate. Others have lost any hope for a soon return, and the gates to Europe are closed. Especially young people are desperate because they do not see any future perspective at all.

However, some families have returned to Sinjar, although there is little infrastructure left, and despite the tense situation and ongoing clashes between different armed groups. Surrounded by violence and fear, they try to rebuild a life, against all odds.

Our Yazidi social worker team and local cooperation partners are currently operating in four camps close to Duhok. Already back in 2018, they identified considerable violence-related problems in the camps and started to tackle this issue. Today, they are raising awareness on domestic violence, promoting non-violent education and offering non-violent conflict resolution trainings for students at the camp schools.



Work in the camps

In 2024, Duhok team were requested by a number of camp managements, in particular Khanke, Domez, Sharya and Essian camps, to do awareness raising activities as they have trouble reaching out to students themselves and asked our team to help them strengthening their relationship with the students and in a way to become a bridge between the school management and the students.

The team met with the teachers in the schools every month to discuss the pupils' situation and find out whether there were any problems that they could help with. They also wanted to find out what the teachers thought of the anti-violence awareness campaign they were offering the pupils. Many teachers felt overwhelmed by the conditions at the schools and were very pleased that the Wadi team was addressing the problems of the pupils and running an awareness campaign. The teachers reported that most students listen to the team rather than to them.



In a school in the Derki camp for Syrian refugees, two students were harassed by a group of young men as they left the school for their accommodation. This led to a conflict between the students' families and the young men who were looking for trouble. The families prevented their daughters from continuing to attend the school in order to protect them from harassment. The headmaster then asked the Wadi team to please intervene so that everyone could attend classes again. Together with teachers from the school, the team visited the families, held discussions for two days, and finally brought the pupils back to school. They then approached the camp administration and asked for a police patrol to improve the sense of security and prevent such incidents from happening in the future.

The team held monthly meetings with other organizations working in the camps, sponsored by the camp administration, to enhance coordination and cooperation in serving IDPs and refugees. Most organizations expressed similar concerns about the rising cases of violence and the increasing psychological and social issues in the camps. These challenges stem from poor economic conditions and the instability faced by IDPs, particularly due to the Council of Ministers' decision to return them and close the camps permanently. Many IDPs, displaced during the 2014 ISIS attacks, have no housing in Shingal and fear returning to their original areas.

As the Wadi team in Duhok, they face challenges in addressing the numerous cases that require their assistance. Their team's capacities are limited, and many organizations that previously supported psychological and social needs in the camps have withdrawn or are under significant pressure, limiting their capacity to take on new cases.

In camp school meetings with parents, the team frequently hears from parents that they would like to support their children's education but are not able to help because they do not know how to read.

During the No to Violence program sessions this month, the team asked beneficiaries why they were reluctant to return to their original areas. Their responses highlighted security and political concerns, the instability of their home regions, the destruction of their homes, and a lack of housing. Many preferred to remain in the camps rather than return to areas where they had no shelter for their children. Students expressed different reasons; having been displaced in 2014 when they were young, they have spent ten years in the camps, forming friendships there. They also fear relocating to border areas, worried about potential attacks upon their return. This fear contributes to the low educational levels in schools.



This project is supported by Joliebelle Foundation and Wadi private donations.



Combating and Living with FGM

Building on nearly two decades of anti-FGM work, in 2019 Wadi developed a nuanced dual approach known as the "Combating and Living with FGM" project. This innovative framework recognized that different communities required tailored strategies based on their current relationship with the practice. For areas where FGM remained prevalent, we implemented the "Combating FGM" approach, while regions that had largely abandoned the practice benefited from the "Living with FGM" program.

In the Garmian and Ranya regions, this project focused on expanding and strengthening the "Living with FGM" component through implementing best practices and facilitating knowledge transfer to local healthcare providers and women's health practitioners. These included professionals in pre-marriage medical counseling, maternity wards, and obstetrics/gynecology offices—natural points of contact for women seeking health services. While maintaining vigilance in areas that had officially "abandoned" the practice, we continued promoting anti-FGM information through media and community engagement initiatives.

As our work progressed, we identified a concerning trend: as awareness about FGM's negative impacts increased, women who had undergone the procedure faced a new risk of stigmatization, being labeled as "frigid" or "too damaged" for marriage. With some men weaponizing this new information and using it as a pressure point to be able to take on a second 'non-mutilated' wife. Wadi teams also documented more young girls being pressured to leave school in order to be pressured into early marriage (15 years old). Recognizing these cultural shift, we adapted our messaging to include focused work with young men as key agents of change. For communities where FGM remained widespread, we implemented a holistic strategy engaging religious clerics, local men's councils, and women's groups simultaneously. Drawing from Wadi's 30 years of experience, we rejected a "one-size-fits-all" approach, acknowledging that different communities have varied understandings of and attachments to the practice.

The implementation of the project showed the ongoing need for education, awareness, outreach, health information, women's health, women's rights and children's rights in these areas. Participants expressed their appreciation for both practical knowledge like the first aid and also the awareness information about women's health, the long-term harms of FGM, as well as access to health professionals.

Training Sessions

Over the project duration period, Wadi offered four separate training sessions for team members. The training sessions were all led by experts in their respective fields. The first training aimed to equip attendees with the knowledge and skills necessary to address challenges in reproductive health while promoting awareness of family planning and its role in creating stable societies. The second one focused on maternal and reproductive health. Another training focused on adolescent issues such as puberty, mental and physical development, as well as communication tools when working with adolescents and how to approach common issues affecting teens in Kurdish society. Finally, the fourth training was on how to communicate with affected women, how to best provide psychosocial support, how to refer crises cases, and how to determine if cases need more support and how to refer them.



FGM Handbook created for training as part of the project

Project Activities

The project consisted of two main types of activities. The first was the health seminars that included a nurse or doctor who would lead informational seminars, answer questions, and if possible refer individuals to area clinics or hospitals. As part of this project Wadi was able to establish partnerships with local hospitals, who decided to donate their time and resources and wherever possible provide free care. This was a real success of this project as there is no universal healthcare in Kurdistan, and the access to healthcare is very low, even more so in the remote villages where the project activities took place, and where women and children have even less access to healthcare. The second type of activity was the 'living with FGM' support groups that provided ongoing psychosocial support and group therapy for women and sometimes men.

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groups that provided ongoing psychosocial support and group therapy for women and sometimes men.

The project achieved significant progress in delivering crucial health and social support to women in remote villages. In May 2024 a week-long coordination effort culminated in a specialized seminar in a village, led by a specialized doctor, focusing on critical women's health issues. The seminar was followed by individual consultations and free medication distribution, facilitated by Wadi's coordination with the local hospital. Also in May, new FGM support groups were established in several villages, providing essential information on the harmful effects of FGM, and empowering women to talk about their experience.

Wadi teams in both Rania and Garmian realized that the villages where they were conducting the seminars were often so remote, and so far away from any meaningful health centre, while also seeing that most people were involved in field labour in some way, they quickly realized how important it would be to provide First Aid training, recognizing the frequent injuries and lack of immediate medical access. Specialized nurses delivered health seminars on topics like ovarian cysts, uterine cancer, menstrual issues, and other women's health issues.

Building on these efforts, the project expanded its reach to Qaladiza, where seminars covered a comprehensive range of topics, including pregnancy health, postpartum depression, FGM and its consequences, domestic violence, and forced marriage. In one village, a new FGM support group was formed, emphasizing a gradual, trust-building approach to address sensitive issues. The project continued to prioritize First Aid training and health consultations, ensuring women received both immediate care and long-term support. A specialized doctor further provided specialized seminars on pregnancy and breastfeeding, addressing vital aspects of maternal health. In one village, the doctor conducted a health consultation seminar, using visual aids to explain ovarian cysts and their multifaceted effects. The project also went to another village, where, despite its history as an FGM hotspot, progress could really be observed by the teams. In the initial visit the midwife did not allow any women to participate in the seminar, and Wadi teams had to have a private hours long meeting with her in her home. The meeting was able to convince her of the value in allowing local women to at least learn about their own health. This interaction also showed the realities of life in small villages, and how difficult it can be for teams to reach women. After some trust was established, the teams were able to visit at other times and women gathered in anticipation of the teams, a testament to the trust that was established. Seminars in this village provided detailed education on women's anatomy, and the long-term consequences of FGM. The discussions also addressed infertility, menstruation, and vaginitis, linking these physical health issues to mental health challenges and trauma.

The project facilitated health seminars and First Aid training in Rania, led by two experienced doctors. The participants were very actively engaged, looking for answers to long-held questions about their health and personal concerns. New FGM support groups were established in previously unreachable villages, requiring persistent engagement to build trust and encourage open dialogue. These initial discussions focused on violence, child abuse, legal protections,

child labor, inheritance rights, and early and exchanged marriages, laying the groundwork for addressing FGM.

A maternity nurse conducted a seminar in a village on common post-birth health issues, and how to treat them. In another village, another nurse from Khanaqin General Hospital provided insights on vaginal health, how to practice good hygiene, and signs of menstrual issues. Across these health seminars, participants received expert advice on their health concerns. Recognizing the interconnectedness of physical and mental well-being, the teams also addressed mental health topics, including anxiety, stress, trauma, and depression, and their impact on physical health.

Overall the participants shared that they were learning a lot from the seminars. Most women in the villages were not able to finish school, and most schools do not teach much about women's health, and participants really expressed the added value that the medical professionals added to the seminars. The Living with FGM groups were also positively received, and women shared that they provided a huge outlet for them, and that this was truly the first time they could talk about their experiences living with FGM. They also felt empowered to lead their own groups, and to have this time with other women.

Comments on FGM from victims/survivors:

- Hajar (33F) "My mother mutilated me at seven. Since then, I always had infections and issues. My husband is very unsatisfied with me sexually even though I gave birth to eight children. I'm in pain every day."
- Hanar (29F) "We all mutilate our daughters here, my daughter is turning two and it's about time." After the teams talked about the harms of FGM she was convinced not to mutilate her daughter.
- M (37 F) "Yes, FGM is still being practiced, I know a woman who performs it on young girls, but she doesn't get as much as visitors as before..."

Comments on FGM and sexuality:

- Raby (39 F) "FGM affected my sex life greatly, my husband swore to divorce me if I thought about mutilating my daughters. So, I haven't mutilated any of them."
- Nasrin (42 F) "I teach Qur'an, and I can assure you that according to Qur'an women have sexual rights. If a man is sexually not satisfying her wife she can rightfully ask for divorce. Then how come the same religion ask women to be mutilated sexually?"
- Hanna (33 F) "My step sister got married recently, her mother (unlike mine) is educated, she didn't mutilate any of her daughters. Her relationship with her husband is very different from ours. They are very intimate, it seems like its not just marital duties for her"

Comments on child marriage and girls education:

- S (65 M) "What do they need school for? They will get married eventually and go to another man. I had three daughters which I married off at 15."

- F (35 F) “They don’t let girls go to school on purpose, because they want to keep them home and make them do all the work.”

- Naima (63 F) “I got married of to my cousin at the age of 14. I had no say in it, it was an agreement between my dad and uncle. Once I got married, every year I had to give birth. So, I gave birth to 13 children.”

Comments on access to health care:

- Saween (33F) “My cousin was burned. But her family didn’t take her to the hospital and decided to use herbs to heal her. She passed away from infection weeks later. They let the poor girl die out of neglect.”

- H (33 F) “Many people don’t treat certain health issues because of shame. My sister-in-law has had Hemorrhoids for five years and never went to the doctor, she’s too ashamed.”

- Nasrin (21 F) “Our culture and families require us to birth nine to thirteen children, its not in our hands. We are not allowed to make decisions of our own. Our husbands decide for us. It’s important to me to learn about family planning”

This project is supported by the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands and Joliebelle Foundation.



Mobile Playgrounds

Throughout 2024, three mobile playgrounds provided their services across Erbil and its surrounding areas, as well as in Garman and Ranya. These playgrounds visited numerous remote villages, bringing joy and entertainment to children at both schools and kindergartens. A fourth playground joined in July and was operated in Duhok.

The busses are always equipped with toys, climbing frames, writing and coloring pencils and a children's library, music instruments, drawing tools, games, sports equipment and other materials.

The mobile playgrounds are sent to the poor and remote villages in the hot plains of Garman, isolated places in the mountains of Ranya, and since 2023 also to neglected villages and quarters in and around the capital Erbil. Villages with high percentage of refugee/IDP populations are preferred visits.

The project aims to support the children through playing and learning, and is assisted by a team of educational supervisors. None of these villages have any existing facilities for children – be it playgrounds or parks or anything similar. For almost all the children in these regions the playbus is the only pure entertainment and fun they have in their hard daily life. Moreover, most of these villages don't have any professionals who have any pedagogical or medical skills.

General Activities of the Mobile Playground

Playbus teams are offering a combination of activities. Some are focusing on play and fun entertainment for the children, while others emphasize education, health or the prevention of domestic violence.

After some exuberant playing, Wadi's team members call them in for a short break time. On this occasion they sometimes ask them about their feelings and the problems they face, such as

bullying in school or abuse from teachers or parents. The children know they can trust the teams and talk openly.

From time to time, the teams also organize group discussions about the environment, insects, trees or even the universe. Children's rights are also always a topic.



The games offered are tailored to the psychology of children of various ages:

- For toddlers (ages 1-3) the playbus has many colorful memory games, like simple puzzles and picture books.
- For preschoolers (ages 3-5) there is a variety of energetic and mobility games that challenge their physical development.
- For school-aged children (ages 5-10) the playbus provides an array of competitive and engaging group games, since in this age group children start to form their personality and traits.
- As for teenagers (ages 11-17), this group is encouraged to participate in creative activities where they are invited to explore various arts and crafts like painting, jewelry making, crafting, and singing.

The activities include a variety of lectures and awareness programmes for the children and their parents. Often parents are not aware of how to prepare healthy food for their children, therefore the teams are confronted with various forms of malnutrition. The teams developed a sustainable method to teach mothers how to prepare a proper diet including vitamins and minerals. In some cases parents lack the skill to see if their children suffer from diseases or sickness.

The playbus teams are raising awareness about

- Healthy Diet
- Dental Hygiene
- Hygiene for body and clothes
- Food Hygiene
- Simple first aid assistance for minor injuries
- Non-violent child-raising

Many times the teams find themselves confronted with severe problems in the families and various forms of violence. Many parents have not yet heard of the idea that you can educate children in a positive and non-violent way. The teams offer advice to parents and make efforts to moderate in family conflicts.



2024 Activities

In 2024, the mobile playgrounds have visited **10** camps and more **200** villages, some of them repeated times. Approximately **6,077** children benefited.

The playbus project once again redirected its focus towards advocating for children's rights. On June 1st, coinciding with the International Day for Children, the project launched a dedicated campaign centered on this critical issue. This strategic shift was prompted by a distressing political decision that barred Yezidi children from attending camp schools, necessitating immediate intervention from local organizations.

During the development of this campaign, we discovered a significant gap in children's awareness of their fundamental rights. Most children did not know they have rights at all. Fortunately, the collective efforts of the campaign and local organizations, including ADWI and Jinda, Wadi's partners, successfully advocated for the continued operation of schools within the camps.

However, this marked only the initial phase of a broader initiative aimed at addressing child labor and enhancing awareness of children's rights.

Beginning on November 25th, coinciding with the *16 Days of Activism*, the playbus initiated a media campaign focused on child labor, which was intrinsically linked to the Children's Rights campaign. Together, these efforts laid the groundwork for a new strategic approach to our work.



Apart from children's rights, the playbus also aimed at non-violent conflict resolution and creating a safe space for children to talk about their problems and violence they face at home and school.

Frequently, children approached team members and asked them for help and comfort with problems they were facing. This gives the teams an opportunity to assist and mediate directly, and it helps us to understand what the children need most in terms of awareness and education.

While the children are having a good time, the parents also gather around the playbus, watching their children play while they sip tea. For many women who barely get some time for

themselves, or are not even allowed to go out unless they can give a good reason (like watching their children), this is an excellent opportunity to catch a break and mix with others.

While they do, Wadi's teams also talk to them. They highlight the importance of playing for children, how parents can support their kids, about the dangers of smartphones for kids, and many other issues.



The new Duhok playbus

Supported by the German consulate, a new playbus project has been launched in July in Duhok. It is implemented by our partner Jinda. They operate the trailer mainly in the IDP camps around Duhok: Kabarto, Khanke, Ba'adre, Sharya, Semel and Mangesh, but also in a number of villages close by. Its objectives are to:

- provide children with a safe and engaging environment with a special focus on survivors from ISIS terror
- promote emotional well-being and creativity through play and education.
- enhance the skills and confidence of children especially in camps and villages where playgrounds are destroyed and unavailable

The main activities are:

- creative play: Arts, crafts, and storytelling sessions to foster creativity and emotional expression.



The playbus trailer in Duhok

- emotional healing: sessions led by social workers to address trauma and provide emotional support
- awareness on environment protection, energy saving and recycling



Challenges

Challenges serve as a testament to the validity of our efforts; without them, meaningful progress is often elusive. In 2024, we encountered numerous obstacles that tested our resolve and commitment:

One significant issue was the environmental conditions affecting the playbus, which operates as a mobile unit traveling from village to village. Extreme weather, particularly during the summer months when temperatures soared to 50 degrees Celsius, posed safety risks for children engaging in outdoor activities.

Additionally, the instability of governmental conditions often resulted in delayed salaries, leading to widespread boycotts that impacted various sectors, including schools and government institutions. This instability complicated the process of obtaining work permits, often extending timelines significantly due to intermittent boycotts. When schools did reopen, teachers frequently prioritized academic instruction over extracurricular activities, limiting opportunities for the playbus to engage with children.

The playbus project also demands substantial material resources. Toys frequently break, supplies such as paper and beads are quickly depleted, and some electronic equipment is prone to rust. Replacing these items requires considerable time and financial investment.

Moreover, political events, such as elections and census surveys, can disrupt our operational plans. In 2024, both elections and a census survey occurred between October and December, resulting in a week-long curfew for the survey and another week of significant traffic disruptions due to the elections.

Through these challenges, we remain committed to our mission and continue to adapt our strategies to ensure the well-being and rights of children in our communities.

Participants' comments

Mustafa Muhamad, sixth grade, said, *"My parents listen to me whenever I state my opinion, whenever there is a serious family matter, they take my opinion. And it makes me feel very happy and confident."*

Aisha Mustafa, 11, said, *"I'm never allowed to speak on anything. My father always tells me that I have to respect and obey my parents, then once I get married, I have to respect and obey my husband."*

"I really enjoyed the playbus today, I was reminded that I was a child again, sometimes we are forced to grow up very fast because of our living conditions", said 12 year old Yousef, who was working after school."

"Leave everything and come play, we knew nothing but working and beating in your age", said one of the fathers, watching his children while playing himself.

"I haven't seen Erbil and it's half an hour away, let alone visiting a park. In this cursed village they buy us a couple of sheep and send us to the hills. That's it, that's all our lives", said an eleven-years-old boy who dropped out of school."

Ziryan Muhhamd, a mother waiting on her daughters while they play, said, *"My daughters have been waiting for you for two days, they woke up and wore their nice clothes. They didn't even have breakfast from excitement."*

Fatima, a twelve year old girl, was holding her little sister and caring for her like her mother. She would call her sweetie, and once in a while tighten her scarf and she sighed like an adult out of tiredness. Unaware of her rights as a child herself. She behaved completely like an adult mother.

She said: *"I enjoyed playing today, it's been a while. I haven't had time to play since I left school. I left, so that I make enough money for my little brother to finish school."*

Muhamad, 12, said, *"I love the games that involve killing; I play them all the time. Even when I go outside, we play with our slingshots and kill birds for fun. It's just a good feeling."*

Story from Duhok:

Sara, a 10-year-old refugee girl from the Domiz camp, initially hesitated to engage in activities due to her shyness and past trauma. However, over the months, the creative sessions offered by the playbus Project enabled her to express herself through drawing and storytelling. By December 2024, Sara had gained confidence and even assisted our social worker in organizing a game for her friends' entertainment.

This project is implemented by Wadi's partner ADWI and supported by Joliebelle Foundation, the Consulate General of Germany and Wadi private donations.



Support for Refugees in Lesbos/Greece

Moria White Helmets is a self-organized refugee group dedicated to empowering refugees living in the camp on Lesbos, Greece. Their mission is to enable these individuals to actively participate in improving their own living conditions and to foster a sense of normalcy for the approximately 7,000 to 2,300 asylum seekers—primarily families with children—expected to be in the camp by the end of 2024.

The project model of Moria White Helmets is straightforward:

1. All members of Moria White Helmets must be current or former asylum seekers.
2. All services provided through MWH projects are free and accessible to all asylum seekers.
3. In exchange for their participation, MWH's members receive food vouchers, cash cards and similar services that contribute to meeting basic needs. Everything donated will exclusively go towards enabling MWH to continue their projects!

Summary of MWH's current projects in 2024

Moria White Helmets has prioritized climate protection and environmental sustainability since 2020. Their efforts in **waste cleanup** earned them formal recognition from local authorities, leading to a collaborative partnership. In January 2024, they launched a larger recycling initiative focused on plastic recycling. By June 2024, nearly 25 members were actively involved in this project.

In the new camp Mavrovouni/Kara Tepe, asylum seekers with professions such as electricians and engineers assisted the camp management's technical team with **electrical work**. The collaboration was established at the end of November 2020, when winter was approaching and the refugees had not yet had their tents connected to electricity. This work still continues and the electrical team is out both night and day to ensure that all tents have power. The same applies to other types of engineers and craftsmen for other types of construction.

Many other workshops have formed and are active every day:

A **barbershop** for men for hair and beards. There are four Barbers (two at morning & two at afternoon) working five days a week

A **beauty shop** for women for hair, nails etc .There is a friendly and competent women team consistent of two groups. Each group has four members working three days per week.

A **tailor shop** where skilled seamstresses repair and adjust garments and textiles. The team comprises four female and two male members, working five days a week.

A **bicycle workshop** to adjust and fix bicycles.

A **workshop providing tools** that are required for construction ..there are four members helping morning and afternoon

Good **electricians** working & helping at the work shop, too .There are three members helping refugees & welcoming them all.

MWH provides **assistance** to newly arrived refugees. This is a collaboration with other organizations, such as the Hope Project and other NGOs, to be able to assist newly arrived refugees in the camp with whatever they need in terms of clothing, advice and guidance.



Informal education for children is provided every day. There are two classes consisting of two groups of children, each group has 15 students with a focus on music, culture and language. Here the children are introduced to both the Latin alphabet through English, Farsi and German language classes, but also the Arabic/Persian alphabet. For many parents, the latter is the most important, as their children can speak the language, but have not learned to read and write it. Adults are taught by four professional teachers, both male and female. Five days per week they have a class in the afternoon.

MWH has two coordinators for all teams members, in addition to a logistic team and two guards who take care of the places and work shops at night.

By the end of 2024, the Moria White Helmets had 32 members.



In the camp, team members receive a food card worth 10 Euros as a reward for their volunteer work and services to help others in the camp. They also receive a certificate of work and thanks and appreciation of their great efforts to those who worked with MWH and left for other countries.

The MWH team members support one another across various fields, sharing experiences to achieve success in their work and to plan for a happy and comfortable future after enduring hardships in their home countries. They seek a safe place to live, engage in integration with others, and exchange valuable experiences.

During the year of 2024 the number of refugees has reached more than 7000. Currently, the number of refugees has decreased to approximately 2,300 individuals from diverse nationalities, primarily Afghans, followed by those from African and Arab countries who have fled their homelands due to war and severe suffering. Life in the camp is extremely challenging, with limited services and difficulties in obtaining meals, which have been reduced from twice a day to just one. Additionally, there is a significant lack of medical services, particularly for patients and those requiring specialized care. Asylum services are also inadequate, with many applications being rejected.

Moria White Helmets are supported by Joliebelle Foundation, Solingen Hilft e.V. and ShowerPower

Syria emergency aid

In December, after the fall of the Assad regime, Wadi supported the non-profit organization Zinobia, which delivers emergency aid to those in need in Syria. Zinobia is registered in Greece and Idlib. It was founded in May 2024 by members of the Moria White Helmets, a refugee self-help organization in the Moria camp on Lesbos, which Wadi has supported for many years.

The organization provided aid in various locations, including an orphanage complex in Idlib and the Al-Mouwasat hospital in the capital Damascus, where they sent a group of volunteer doctors and nurses upon the director's request. They also started to help former inmates of Assad's prisons and others in dire need.



The orphanage complex in Idlib



Work in the hospital

Report about the Situation of the Yazidis in Iraq

In April, PRO ASYL and Wadi published a comprehensive 32-page report on the grim situation of the Yazidis in Iraq – and at the same time called for an immediate nationwide ban on deportations of Yazidis.

Since the genocide by the terrorist organization Islamic State in 2014 at the latest, the Sinjar region in northern Iraq, where the Yazidis have lived for centuries, has become a life-threatening hotspot, describes the report “Ten years after the genocide: The situation of the Yazidis in Iraq”. State and non-state actors are fighting ruthlessly for power and influence there. In the strategically important border region between Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran, interests are clashing – and the Yazidis are caught in the middle between all fronts. 200,000 are still stuck in Iraqi refugee camps with no prospect of being able to leave.

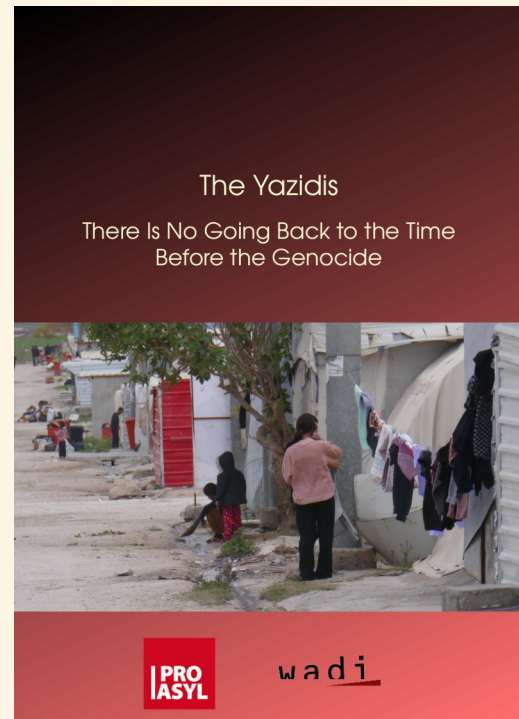
With around 250,000 people, Germany not only has the largest Yazidi diaspora in Europe, but also the second largest in the world after Iraq. Although the German Bundestag recognized the persecution of the Yazidis as genocide at the beginning of 2023, and even though the situation in Iraq remains very uncertain, several federal states continue to deport Yazidis to Iraq.

The report aims to raise awareness among lawmakers, decision-makers, and the general public about the ongoing and critical challenges faced by the Yazidi community in their ancestral homelands in Northern Iraq. It can be accessed online at

<https://www.proasyl.de/material/report-the-yazidis-there-is-no-going-back-to-the-time-before-the-genocide/>

and in German

<https://www.proasyl.de/material/gutachten-zehn-jahre-nach-dem-voelkermord-zur-lage-der-jesidinnen-und-jesiden-im-irak/>



Community Radio Dangi Nwe

Radio Dangi NWE, the independent community radio in Northern Iraq, is dedicated to women's and youth issues in a community and local context.

Dangi NWE is a community radio station managed by the local NWE organization and supported by WADI. Very exceptional in this region, the station is completely independent and not affiliated to any party. It is broadcasting 11 hours daily, from 8:00 am to 7:00 pm, on FM 88.6 MHz in Halabja governorate, Sharazoor, Hawraman and Arbat.

The morning programs are broadcasted in Kurmanji dialect and Arabic language. They are dealing with hot topics of local society, focusing especially on refugees and IDPs, but also including other health, social or cultural issues.



The afternoon programs present news, music time and various special programs on current issues. The programme includes daily coverage of youth and women's issues, as well as daily awareness on health, human rights, women's rights, FGM, children's rights, refugees in Iraq and Syria, environment protection, electricity and water infrastructure. It is aired in Sorani and Hawrami dialect.



Daily Program:

- Daily broadcasting for eight hours.
- Ten daily national and international, breaking news are presenting.
- (Hanase Nwe) daily program which is a live program for talking about hot topics inside society along with searching for citizen problems, also bringing some health, social and cultural topics.
- Daily reading subjects about women, youth and environment protection.
- Reading daily awareness about health, human rights, women rights, FGM, children rights, refugees in Iraq and Syria, environment transformation, electric, and water.

- Daily announcements about private sectors and those personal things which lose in order to finding them for its owner.
- Daily rebroadcasting Kurdish language one hour program of VOA Kurdish department.

Weekly Program:

- Special program: is a live program covering the hot topics and hosting the responsible people inside the area, sometimes three to four episodes were presented, totally (32) programs were presented.
- Radio Dangi Nwe in the framework of #Qarib program is producing Features, videos, News, and photo story about environment issues, women rights and youth in Halabja, supported by #CFI. During 2024 we produced (48) Radio features, (52) Radio News and (10) Videos, (8) photo stories.
- Hizry Yasaye program: Legal Thought is a legal program that discusses legal issues with judges and lawyers, answering citizens' legal issues. This program is presented in collaboration with Women's Legal Aid Organization. (26) programs were presented.
- Sport Nwe: This program focuses on the national and international sport news. (12) programs were presented.
- 16 programs about 16 days of activism against women on November 25.
- By Hawrami is a program was presented which was dedicated to talking about the history and culture of Hawraman village by Hawrami. This is a special program in Hawrami language monthly twice prepared in Radio Dangi Nwe. 24 programs were presented.
- Reading some short topics: environment information, science, economy and health.

Other activities:

- International Women's Day 8 March, Radio Dangi Newe regarding of 8 March presented three programs about women issues in Halabja.
- A member of Radio Dangi Nwe participated in a meeting about the 126th Anniversary of Kurdish Journalism which organized by US consulate in Erbil.



- In honor of Kurdish Press Day, CG Stroh was pleased to meet a group of press freedom advocates and independent media outlets. The event provided an opportunity to discuss the state of media freedom in the Iraqi_Kurdistan_Region, challenges faced by media and ongoing USG support for journalism training. The U.S. is committed to advocating for an environment where media can work without fear of harassment,

intimidation or politically motivated discrimination. We call for the full implementation of the Kurdish Press Law and the Access to Information Act.

- On Oct. 9, 2024 Dangi Nwe Radio and Nwe Organization held an event titled *“Let's Know the vision of Girls and Women Candidates in Halabja”*. In the first part of the event, a panel was held to discuss the role of parliamentarians in parliament, the participation rate of women in the electoral process and the presentation of several laws related to girls, women and family and many other topics were presented in the presence of Ms. Shokhan Ahmad, Lawyer and Director of Women's Legal Assistance Organization and Mr. Halsho Abdulfattah, Electoral Expert. After the panel, questions and comments were taken from the participants.

At the end of the meeting, some of the women candidates of different parties in Halabja expressed their visions and plans to serve their society in general and to serve girls and women and protect their rights and convey their demands and messages.

- A member of Radio Dangi Nwe participated in a meeting with US Consul General Mark Stroh in Erbil to discuss about freedom of expression.

- On Oct. 5, a member of Radio Dangi Nwe participated in an event to celebrate the Day of German Unity.

- On Dec. 31, 2024, several members of Nwe Organization met with Mr. Rodolphe Richard, Deputy Consul General of France and Ms. Tifenn Lecordier, Second Advisor for Political and Press Affairs of the French Consul in Erbil to discuss the activities of Nwe Organization in Halabja in general and the Qarib program, supported by the French CFI and Dangi Nwe radio is implementing it in Halabja.



Meeting with US Consul General



Discover more about Radio Dangi Nwe's daily journalist work [here](#).

Radio Dangi Nwe is supported by Joliebelle Foundation and private donations.



KirkukNow - Independent News Outlet

KirkukNow is an independent online media foundation focused on covering events and issues within the geographical boundaries of the “conflict zone” – or those related to this area – in order to promote peaceful coexistence and facilitate easy access to information.

Founded in April 2011, the foundation aims to provide news and information to all residents of the conflict areas between the Iraqi Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. This region is home to a diverse population, including Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Sunnis, Shiites, and Christians. KirkukNow pays particular attention to developments in these conflict zones.

KirkukNow is committed to impactful journalism and civic engagement. During 2024, KirkukNow’s focus remained on empowering journalists, enhancing public participation, and addressing critical social issues. Their key projects include training women journalists on environmental reporting, fostering a media safety network, and ensuring transparent governance by monitoring provincial councils and budget allocations. Through their initiatives, such as “Expanding the Role of Women Journalists in Environmental Coverage,” “Budget is Your Right,” “Media Resilience,” and “Active Citizenship,” they strive to amplify marginalized voices, raise awareness on climate change, and promote citizen participation in governance. These efforts, implemented in collaboration with



local and international partners, aim to strengthen independent journalism and social accountability across Iraq.

Expanding Role of Women Journalists in Coverage of Environmental Issues (June 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024)

The project focused on empowering women journalists by training them in environmental reporting and promoting constructive journalism.

Project Activities:

- Trained 18 women journalists in a 10-day training program held in two phases.
- Produced 80 reports, most of which were based on constructive journalism.
- Established a network of women journalists, with a three-member board elected by participants.
- Implemented in cooperation with the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the German Consulate in Erbil.

Project Significance:

- Introduced constructive journalism as part of a training program.
- Provided a women-led initiative focused on environmental journalism.
- Addressed climate change issues, considering Iraq's ranking as the fifth most affected country by climate change (United Nations).
- Reached at least 900,000 people through published reports and online awareness campaigns.
- Established Iraq's first environmental journalism network.



The successful 'My Story' format

"Budget is Your Right" (June 1, 2024 – February 28, 2025)

This project monitored the performance of provincial councils in Nineveh, Kirkuk, Diyala, and Salahaddin, focusing on local government formation and budget allocation.

Project Objectives:

- Promoted transparency and accountability in the budgeting process.

- Encouraged citizen participation, reinforcing their legal right to be involved in budgeting.
- Monitored the first provincial elections held after the fall of ISIS, when provincial councils became responsible for government formation and budget approval.

Project Implementation:

- Organized eight focus groups (two in each province).
- Conducted 15 meetings with government and provincial council officials.
- Held four public sessions with officials, citizens, activists, and journalists.
- Published 70 news pieces, reports, and interviews.
- Produced podcasts, videos, and radio programs.
- Conducted surveys in all four provinces.
- Performed desk reviews for research and analysis.

Project Status:

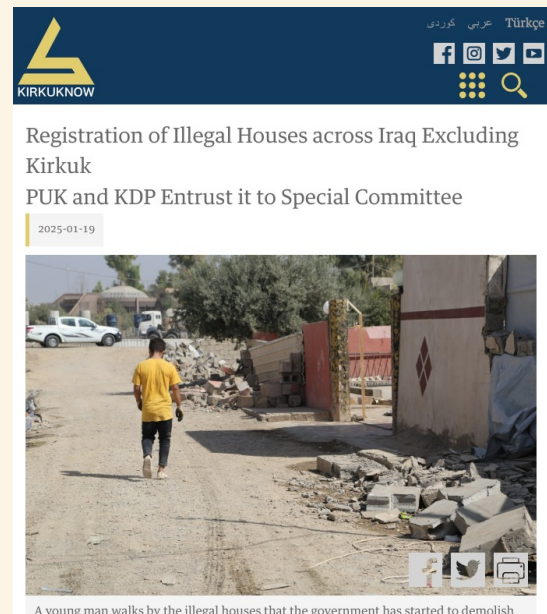
The project was temporarily halted following a decision by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) under new policies from the U.S. administration.

Media Resilience (March 1, 2024 – February 28, 2025)

A partnership with Internews and other media organizations, this initiative focused on enhancing journalist safety and forming a media workers' safety network.

Project Activities:

- Selected 25 Iraqi media professionals/technologists to create a safety guidance network.
- Provided a five-day intensive training to these professionals.
- Established a "Safety Laboratory", where each trained journalist conducted one-day training sessions for 15 journalists, expanding safety awareness across Iraq.
- KirkukNow assisted in selecting journalists and organizing training sessions.



Local news

Project Status:

The project was temporarily halted due to a decision by Internews, following new U.S. government directives.

Active Citizenship (June 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024)

This project, implemented in partnership with WADI and local organizations, and funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aimed to amplify marginalized voices and increase civic engagement.

KirkukNow's Role:

- 1- Produced and published stories on marginalized communities, including youth, women, and minorities.
- 2- Raised awareness on underreported issues such as environmental concerns and the rights of IDPs and refugees.
- 3- Created multimedia content to engage young audiences through:
 - a. Podcasts on pressing social issues.
 - b. Videos and infographics designed for social media outreach.

Project Status: Under implementation

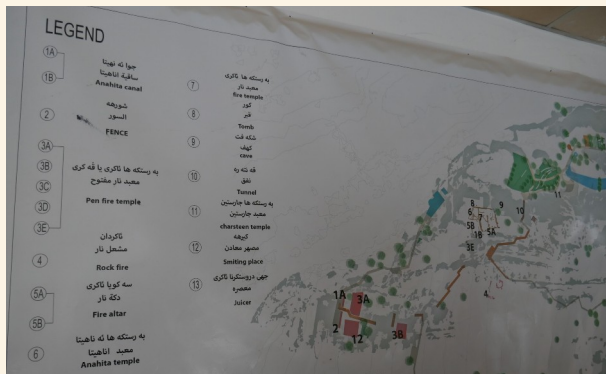
KirkukNow is supported also by Joliebelle Foundation, Aide Humanitaire & Journalisme (AHJ) and Free Press Unlimited.



Development of Charsteen Cave Site

In partnership with UNESCO, ILO and in cooperation with the Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage in Duhok, with funding from the EU, Wadi has launched the project entitled **“Creating Decent Job Opportunities through Development and Upgrading the Site of Charsteen Cave in Duhok”** under the framework of the project **“Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development”**.

For Wadi, the topic of preserving 'Cultural Heritage' has developed into a new, independent area in recent years. Previously more on the fringes of larger campaigns, it reflects the growing interest of people in northern Iraq in meaningfully preserving historical relics and new forms of memory culture. As with our other project areas, the idea here is also to view 'Heritage' not as a separate domain, but in connection with and within the socio-political context.



An exemplary project is the restoration of the archaeological site 'Charsteen' in a popular recreational area of Duhok, which was carried out from 2023 to 2024. The site, located on a mountainside and representing a complex of likely Zoroastrian cult sites, mostly consists of excavated foundations, with the highlight being a cave that served as a temple and symbolizes

the four elements: fire, water, earth, and air. Access is through a tunnel carved into the rock. Last year, our team in Duhok, in cooperation with the local antiquities administration, UNESCO, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), was able to restore the site for visitors. The project was effective on multiple levels: a certain percentage of the workers had to be refugees from Syria, and there was also a quota for women.

The surrounding area is a popular urban excursion spot, so the project also included the restoration of a well-known artificial waterfall, where a picnic area was created. The economic goals included both the promotion of employed refugees and an improvement of the local

tourism offerings; the relatively water-rich, 'green' area is also an attraction for domestic tourism within Iraq.

The project gains an even broader significance considering that the 'Islamic State,' with its policy of destruction in the region, has also targeted historical and cultural monuments; the annihilation and displacement of people also involves the erasure of memory, which is a terrible, repeatedly experienced practice in northern Iraq. This gives a deeper meaning to the fact that there are still followers of Zoroastrian cults here, for whom the fire temple in the cave is officially recognized as a place of worship—Zoroastrians are also exempt from the small entrance fee that is charged. The preservation of this site thus also represents a commitment to the multi-religious history of the region.



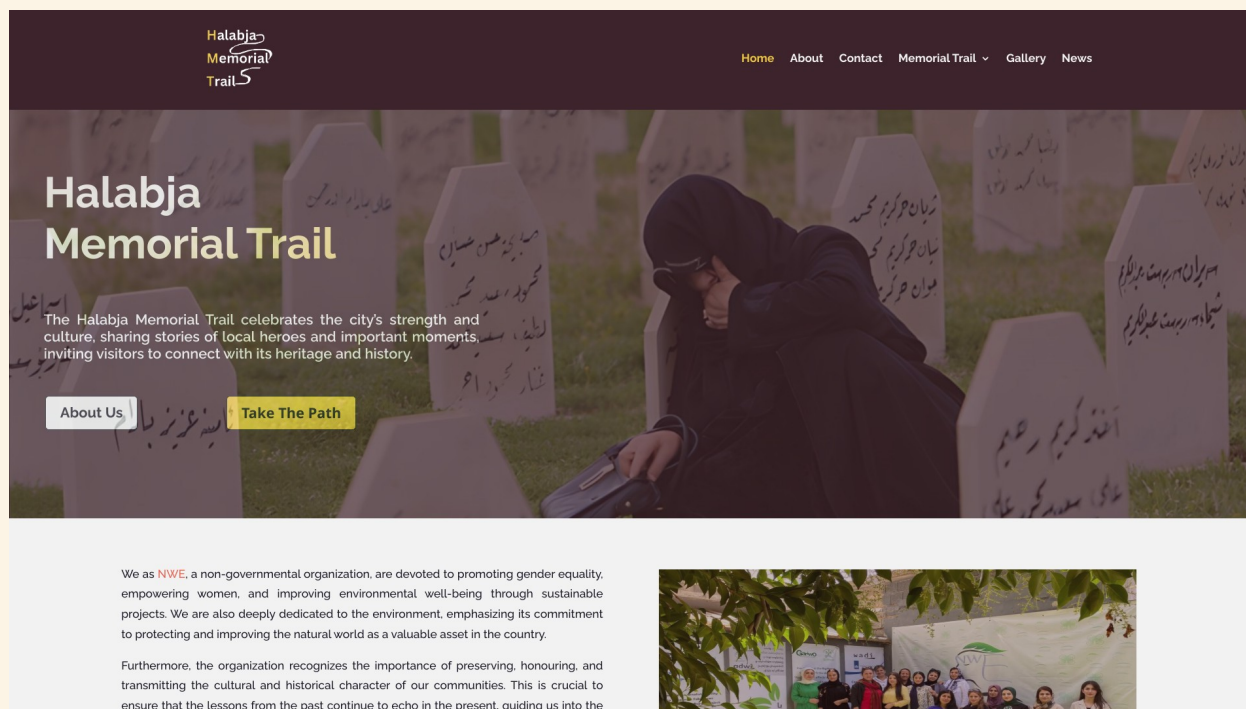
Revitalization of an old craft tradition: Gypsum mortar production in Koya

In the past, gypsum was a widely used building material in Iraqi Kurdistan. In the age of cement, this has changed drastically. A new project aims to revitalize this old building material.

Memory and cultural preservation are closely intertwined. For many years, Wadi has supported projects focused on dealing with memory and traumatic experiences: In Halabja, through a memory path with information panels distributed throughout the city that commemorate important sites related to the chemical attack, as well as significant places and people in the city; in Goptepe, through a local photo archive. In Koya, WADI supports the Department of Antiquities in Koya in documenting and preserving their historic old town, which is exceptionally unique in Iraqi Kurdistan.

In the past, gypsum was one of the most important building materials in the Koya region of Iraqi Kurdistan. However, due to the use of cheaper cement, it has almost been forgotten as a mortar, a problem that current restoration projects in the old town of Koya are facing. Nowadays, gypsum is only used as a plaster, which requires a different, simpler production method.

Wadi e.V. and Klessing-Hoffschmidt Architects, in cooperation with the General Director of Antiquities in Erbil, Kaify Mustafa Ali, and the Department of Antiquities in Koya (Yekaty Wahip and Hemin Kawez), have therefore begun, with the support of the *Gerda Henkel Foundation*, to revitalize this old craft tradition.



Halabja Memorial Trail

This collaborative project with NWE Halabja and the Municipality of Halabja is in its final stages of implementation. The "Halabja Memorial Trail" will be inaugurated on March 16th, coinciding with Halabja Day. On this day in 1988, the Iraqi Air Force bombed Halabja with chemical weapons, resulting in the deaths of at least 5,000 residents, with many more suffering from the long-term effects. The city was subsequently devastated, and the remaining population was forcibly displaced.

The memorial trail guides visitors through the city, highlighting significant locations. The route starts from the Halabja monument, then extends to the city center, later to the cemetery, then reaching the Jewish quarter. Each plate contains different informations and stories regarding the survivors, the genocide and the city's history and heritage.

A first informational billboard has been installed in the cemetery, with seven additional billboards planned. Furthermore, a website provides background information and assists visitors in navigating the trail: <https://halabja-trails.com/>

This project is supported by Hans-Böckler-Stiftung and VVN-BdA Bayern.

For more information about Wadi's project focused on memory and the past, please visit: <https://wadi-online.org/memory/>

Articles and Media Coverage

Stop FGM

ROJNEWS: till now no case of FGM was taken to the court, Wadi member Said Layla Ahmed talks about FGM, 06-02-2024

ROJNEWS: the data of mutilated cases in 2023, interview with Bakhan Jamal from wadi Suli office, Feb 6th, International Day of Combating FGM

Jin TV, program on FGM, from 14:08 to 20:08 , interview with Bakhan, Feb 6th, International Day of Combating FGM

Channel 8, KENÎŞKANE talk show, a program dedicated to FGM, Bakhan from wadi was there as a guest to talk about FGM in Kurdistan, 04-03-2024

Sahiyo: "Secrecy leads to the continuation of FGC in families and communities", an interview with Bakhan from Suleymaniyah office

Environment

Jin TV made a long reportage about environment and Halabja Recycling Center, 16-01-2024

AVA news, four women recycling Halabja's plastic waste, 01-03-2024

Rudaw report about the upcycling project in Halabja, 02-06-2024

Esta TV with a reportage about Halabja Recycling Center, 29-06-2024

Zeng media broadcasted a feature about the recycling center in Kifri, 08-08-2024

KirkukNow: "Plastic Recycling in Garman: New Treatment for an Old Headache", 21-10-2024

Rudaw Stream, nice report about our partners from NWE Halabja and why they stopped using plastic, 29-12-2024

Kirkuknow, article about the cotton bag project in Halabja, 27-12-2024

Refugees' self organization

Aya Jalal, project coordinator at our partner Jinda, quoted in: Qantara: "Yazidis relive the horror as deportation looms", 06-02-2024

Report by PRO ASYL and Wadi about the dire situation of the Yazidis in Iraq, calling for an immediate stop to deportations from Germany for Yazidis. 24-04-2024

English version

Der Widerstandskämpfer (the resistance fighter) - Podcast of Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation about Moria-White-Helmets-co-founder Raid al-Alabd, 04-05-2024

Citizenship program

Kirkuknow, reporting on Yazidi children asking for their right of education in the camps, 09-06-2024

Dang Radio, Layla and Chro from Garmyan team were invited to a program on children's rights and how much they are aware of it, 12-07-2024

2nd link

Kirkuknow and ADWI, collaborating on a short-animated video regarding election in Kurdistan and what you need to know in a simple language, information provided by Kirkuk now, video created by ADWI. 20-10-2024

Goptapa media center reporting about the sewing training wadi arranged for the women in Goptapa, 21-08-2024

Cultural heritage / historical memory preservation

Rudaw: "Zoroastrian site in Duhok close to being fully renovated", 04-02-2024

KNN, reporting on the opening of the memorial trail, 14-03-2024

Halabja TV, on the inauguration of the memorial trail, 14-03-2024

Rundschau24: report about Hemn Goptapy's journey to Germany: "Visit from Iraq: Exchange on Kurdish memorial work in Landshut", 04-11-2024

KurdSat News: report about Anfal survivor, historian and Wadi member Hemn Goptapy, 10-11-2024

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and our numerous committed private donors.

For further information please contact us on public@wadi-online.de

or refer to our contact details on page 2.