

## NGO Workshop and Conference - Final Report

Amman - June 2005

The NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq - NCCI - is an independent body created immediately after the 2003 war. Its constituency includes over 100 international NGOs operating in Iraq. NCCI facilitates coordination between NGOs, the flow of information between NGOs and UN agencies, donors, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), Iraqi authorities and emerging Iraqi NGOs. A Security Office was also established. Forced to displace several times over two years, it has currently an operational office in Amman, where most NGOs have provisionally established their Iraqi offices.

The relocation of activities in Amman, and the enforcement of a "remote control" management of activities, has generated a sense of frustration among NGOs, and NCCI sees the need to review its priority and adjust its services for member agencies. Moreover, part of the senior NGO staff has been re-deployed in other operations and replaced by less experienced personnel. After a strategic meeting in October 2004, a review of the Charter, and the establishment of four working groups in early 2005, a new problem arose in April, when ECHO decided to withdraw from Iraq, causing the end of financing for NCCI activities.

It was decided to undergo a major strategic review, whose objectives were:

- 1) Review the definition of NGO and the ethic framework for humanitarian action in Iraq
- 2) Identifying a rationale for continuing assistance in the current situation
- 3) Defining guidelines to manage the changing political and operational environment
- 4) Assessing the need for coordination and information exchange by NCCI
- 5) Re-defining humanitarian space and the enforcement of IHL
- 6) Providing a framework for advocacy work

The exercise was articulated into a two-day workshop and a public conference, which were held in June 6, 7 and 9 in Amman. The workshop was attended by more than 50 NGOs representatives. The first day was devoted to a brief review of NCCI activities/lessons learnt in coordination, internationally accepted definitions of NGOs, IHL and the NGO Code of Conduct. Considering existing definitions of NGO, it was agreed that the following characteristics may be considered as universally accepted. An NGO must be: Civil-society based, Democratic, Independent, Non partisan, Non discriminatory, Non profit and Voluntary. In respect of the Code of Conduct, participants agreed that NCCI Members acknowledge actions which are: Humanitarian, Non-Discriminatory, Un-Conditional, Autonomous, Culturally Respectful, Empowering, Participatory, Sustainable, Accountable and Dignifying. All Members are required to endorse the Code of Conduct. Later, three working group discussed on Aid quality, Humanitarian space and Advocacy.

The working group on aid quality recommended to both NGOs and Donors to commit to provide high quality aid in a framework of transparency and accountability. It underlined that NCCI can make a better use of the media and other ways of communication than the single NGOs, to raise awareness about civil society. It also produced proposals about Raising awareness, Models of Return, Sharing of Information, Capacity building, Right-based programming and Communication Strategy.

The working group on Humanitarian Space, first worked on the definition of HS, defined as 'the area in which humanitarian agencies provide assistance or protection to a needy population'. An analysis was made of external and internal factors affecting HS in Iraq. Finally, participants concluded that there is need, for the benefit of HS, that NCCI play a greater role in identifying strategic needs, a new directional approach to deal with current challenges. The group produced specific recommendations.

The group on Advocacy discussed the relation between field operations and International advocacy, review of priorities in promotion of Human Rights, relations with the media, etc. First it worked on collective successes and failures of NCCI's advocacy in Iraq, looking at the past impact

of NCCI initiatives. The group agreed that NCCI should do Advocacy, but that needs NGOs cooperation in sharing information.

The second day was devoted to a large debate on the future of NCCI, which re-affirmed the unrelented commitment of Members to support consistently its action.

The final conference was attended by a large number of representatives of NGOs, Iraqi and International NGOs, UN agencies and International Organisations, Iraqi and Kurdish Authorities, donors, and ICRC/FRCC. The large participation lead to an in-depth and articulated debate, which substantially endorsed the proposals made by the workshop.

The conclusion of the exercise is that NCCI still has to accomplish a very important task for NGOs in Iraq. As a single voice to advocate for Iraqi people's rights and needs, as a representation of the large and diversified NGO community, as a forum for the dialogue between civil society organisations, as tool for coordination and information, as an independent point of reference for all the actors on the ground.

*In the last twenty years, humanitarianism has gone through a dramatic evolution of its role, technical profile and ethic framework. Changes have normally been triggered by the most politically sensitive crises, whereas the relationship of the humanitarian community with the political establishment has swung between sympathy and idiosyncrasy. This is the case for the war in Iraq, which has highlighted the increasing vulnerability of the humanitarian system vis à vis the uncertainty of the political environment, the growing role of state actors and the increasing security threats. The problem is whether and under what conditions humanitarians could work in a conflict where belligerents are "our belligerents". From Kosovo to Afghanistan to Iraq, this dilemma has repeatedly animated the humanitarian debate. Agencies' reactions to such dynamics are diversified but they all have suffered from contradictions. Elections, and the appointment of a legitimate Iraqi Government, are now shaping a situation in which humanitarian NGOs may find a larger space for action in Iraq. Yet, the peculiar characteristic of the Iraqi crisis is that all the elements of contradiction and constraint that humanitarianism has already experienced over the years, overlap in the same context: donors who become belligerent, poor political analysis, sharp clashes with governments, competition with corporate, tied aid, impotency of the UN, violations of humanitarian law, insecurity and difficult relations with the military.*

## **Introduction**

The most significant aspects of the Iraqi process mirror the core issues of the crisis of humanitarianism, as they emerge from the debate that has animated the humanitarian community in the last decade. Such challenges are part of a longer term trend, begun in the mid-1990s and made explicit in the concept of "humanitarian war" adopted to define the Kosovo War, albeit one that has accelerated in recent years both from a cumulative effect and from the political consequences of 9/11. That trend includes: "the undermining of the independence, neutrality, and impartiality of assistance and protection efforts; the special burden placed on NGOs, particularly American ones, given the high-stakes politics involved; the difficulties of functioning in insecure settings and of developing rules of engagement and disengagement for the humanitarian community as a whole; and the predominantly Western character, culture, and accountability of the humanitarian apparatus" .

In the background, there is the decline of Humanitarian organisations' advocating capacity and political influence. The polarization imposed by the "war on terror" in the political arena has created a negative environment for concerns about neutrality, impartiality and independence. When all enemies become "terrorists" it is difficult to hold the point that all life is intrinsically valuable.

## **Background**

The NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq - NCCI - is an independent body created immediately after the 2003 war. Its constituency includes over 100 international NGOs operating in Iraq. The organisation holds regular general coordination meetings in Baghdad, Basrah, Erbil and Amman, and has facilitated working groups on health, education, water and sanitation, IDPs / Vulnerables and support to national NGOs. Other working groups have been established on an ad hoc basis, including forums for the discussion of humanitarian space, advocacy, child protection, etc. NCCI

facilitates coordination between NGOs, the flow of information between NGOs and UN agencies, donors, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and then the Multi National Force (MNF), Iraqi authorities and emerging Iraqi NGOs. A Security Office was also established.

NCCI was established on 16 April 2003, by 14 NGOs, in cooperation with ICVA and InterAction. Over the summer it got funding from MCC (Mennonite Central Committee), OCHA and ECHO. By October 2003, it had recruited staff and opened an office in Baghdad, becoming operational, and participated in the Donors Conference in Madrid. By January 2004 NCCI had a geographical focal point and Field Officer in Amman, and two sub offices- North and South Iraq. In February it attended the Abu Dhabi Donors Conference. In the Spring 2004, the alert for aid workers' security reached a peak. In April, the crises in Najaf and Fallujah resulted in increasing insecurity, causing the relocation of NCCI staff (and other NGOs) to Amman.

“The prevailing insecurity has given rise to a growth in the targeting of foreigners as political targets, and is now severely restricting the ability of non-government organisations to work in all parts of Iraq. The United Nations and its NGO partners continue to operate, in large part due the tireless efforts of Iraqis, though under extremely difficult circumstances” .

In May 2004 NCCI returned to Baghdad and underwent an independent evaluation , whose outcome was substantially positive and showed the need for it to continue its activities.

Understanding the difficulty of operating in a very unsafe environment and an ambiguous political framework, International NGOs decided to minimize their visibility on the ground. It is true that “these arrangements allow their own organisations to keep a low profile, while minimising the need for outsider-led humanitarian action and encouraging local responsibility and solutions” but they probably had negative effects on the perceived neutrality of agencies, and may have legitimized non-controllable local actors.

In July/August, there was a change of NCCI team and, in September, the establishment of an Amman office facility.

The kidnappings of aid workers in September and October 2004 showed how little effective the low-profile strategy was, as far as safety was concerned. The NCCI Baghdad team moved to Amman. In November, Médecins Sans Frontières decided to pull out from Iraq because of escalating violence in the country and the danger to its staff.

The relocation of activities in Amman, and the enforcement of a “remote control” management of activities, has generated a sense of frustration among NGOs and in NCCI, resulting in a sort of widespread apathy. Moreover, part of the senior NGO staff has been re-deployed in other crisis areas, where they may be active in the field, and replaced by less experienced personnel.

A meeting in October 2004 was devoted to “NCCI Future Charter, Strategy and Structure”, to discuss the way ahead for NCCI, and a revision of the Charter. The meeting was attended by 15 NGOs.

Four working groups were established early 2005, to work on Capacity Building, Advocacy, Administration and the preparation of a Conference.

In April 2005, the organisations closed its Kuwait office, while ECHO decided to withdraw from Iraq, causing the end of financing for NCCI activities.

In June 6, 7 and 9, an NGO Workshop and a Conference were held in Amman to determine the future of NCCI, based on the lessons learnt over the past two years. This paper reports on the work done in such meetings.

The October 2004 strategic meeting The meeting held in October 2004 (NCCI Future Charter, Strategy and Structure), had spotted a number of critical areas in NCCI activity, which required a substantial review, in the light of the changed situation in the field :

1. Governance. As recommended by the independent evaluation, there is need for a larger and more empowered Executive Board
2. Membership and Compliance with the Code of Conduct. There were suggestions from participants to add new criteria to the code of conduct and to create structures /mechanisms within

NCCI to ensure that the code of conduct is being respected by the membership. The working group decided to further discuss the issue.

3. End of technical coordination/ Information sharing. There was an agreement that the main objective of NCCI, coordination, was no longer working in its original form. NCCI was created as a general coordination mechanism, this evolved into coordination for both general and sectoral activities, advocacy on common NGO concerns and representation on behalf of the NGO community. The second Najaf crisis highlighted that other actors have taken over some of the initial NCCI responsibilities, the UN has reemerged in Iraq, and Ministries are taking more responsibility on coordination.

4. Policy. The NGO community is increasingly facing policy matters that it needs to take a position on, e.g., civil-military relations, NGO registration, visas, etc. It was suggested that NCCI is the most appropriate forum for NGOs to discuss, agree on a common strategy and see that strategy through.

5. Advocacy. Initially it was decided that the concept of NCCI advocacy needed to be "unpacked". What are we referring to when we discuss advocacy? The complexity in which NCCI advocacy has taken place, shows that the process of putting out statements, etc. which require the full endorsement of all NCCI members has been very slow and virtually impossible.

6. Guidance on security. While stressing that security management remains the responsibility of the individual agency, it was suggested that NCCI would continue to provide security information as a service to NGOs. Perhaps there is a need for NGOs to inform NCCI staff what their security information needs are, and NCCI will try to meet that need.

7. Representation. The issue of representation is closely linked to Advocacy and Coordination. Depending on the suggestions concerning these issues, representation can be discussed. The topic was referred to the working group.

The forthcoming end of NCCI financing by ECHO (28 June 2005) suggested to further develop this reflection in the June 2005 exercise, by broadening the debate to a larger number of member NGOs and involving IOs and other actors.

### **The June 2005 exercise**

After preparatory work carried out in May, it was decided to focus the scheduled meeting on determining the future of NCCI based on the lessons learnt over the past two years.

Main objectives of the exercise were:

- 1) Review the definition of NGO and the ethic framework for humanitarian action in Iraq
- 2) Identifying a rationale for continuing assistance in the current situation
- 3) Defining guidelines to manage the changing political and operational environment
- 4) Assessing the need for coordination and information exchange by NCCI
- 5) Re-defining humanitarian space and the enforcement of IHL
- 6) Providing a framework for advocacy work

The exercise was articulated into a two-day workshop and a public conference.

### **Outcome of the Workshop**

"The primary humanitarian aim is not to occupy as much of humanitarian territory as possible. Even if you can occupy it, it is unlikely you will be able to hold it, or do all you want on it, if you have not first overcome those who do not want you to have it. Instead, the strategic aim is rather to protect and assist the civilians on this territory and to defeat your opponents who are causing their suffering or preventing their protection" .

The current situation of NCCI and NGOs in the Iraqi crisis

NCCI is going through a transition that reflects the changes currently occurring in Iraq as well as in the NGO community in general. The relocation of activities in Amman, following to the increased insecurity evidenced by the killing and kidnapping of aid workers, has affected to large extent the

engagement and operations of NGOs. The so-called “remote control” scheme of operations, based on NGO expatriate staff supervising activities from Amman and/or Kuwait City, and Iraqi staff operating in the country, represents an almost unprecedented *modus operandi*, which Humanitarian Organisations adopted only occasionally - and for very limited periods of time - in countries like Somalia or Afghanistan, or in regions like Chechnya and the Great Lakes. This type of approach minimises the role of International NGOs and leaves the ground to local forces which, in the case of Iraq, have little operational experience, and whose reliability in many cases is yet to be verified. The alternate entries and evacuations from the country have produced discontinuity in actions and increased difficulties in establishing relationships with the growing NGO sector in Iraq. Moreover, many big NGOs have decided to definitely leave the country, as they believe the situation of humanitarian space does not allow consistency and sustainability of relief work.

The exit of ECHO leaves NCCI without its main source of funding and the organisation is facing different problems at the same time: resources, possible downsizing of the structure, need to re-design part of its activities and review priorities, tools and approaches.

The preparation of the strategic review process carried out in the June’s workshop, has been developed extensively in the weeks preceding the event, involving the Board, the NCCI staff and - as much as possible - the membership. It was decided to hire a facilitator in order to streamline the works and allow a timely achievement of expected results.

After the attempt carried out by the Coalition Provisional Authority to establish legislation on NGOs (order 45) there was a feeling of urgency in defining a clearer framework for the establishment of NGOs in Iraq and a widespread adoption of the 1994 Code of Conduct for humanitarian organisations. This aimed at resolving the contradictions created by a too loose definition of NGO, provided in the Order 45.

### **Organisation of the Workshop**

The workshop was attended by more than 50 NGOs representatives. The discussion was extremely lively and the level of participation very high and qualified.

**Day 1** (6 June) was devoted to a brief review of NCCI activities/lessons learnt in coordination, presented by the NCCI coordinator and board members; a presentation on internationally accepted definitions of NGOs, their role, action and principles; and a review of major element of IHL and the NGO Code of Conduct.

After a debate, participants split up into three working groups:

- Group 1: Aid quality
- Group 2: Humanitarian space
- Group 3: Advocacy and Human

Some issues were common to all the WGs: coordination, relations with MNF and Iraqi Government, NGO legislation, financing, cooperation with the UN and other IOs, respect of the CoC, Human Rights.

**Day 2** (7 June) was devoted to reports from the WGs and a large debate on the analyses and recommendations they had produced; possible scenarios for 2006 for both NGOs and the NCCI; and was concluded by a debate on the future of NCCI, which re-affirmed the un-relented commitment of Members to support consistently its action.

**Day 3** (9 June) the WGs chairs and rapporteurs, together with the facilitator and members of the NCCI staff, worked extensively to produce a final report from the Workshop for the Conference.

### **1. Definition of NGO and respect of the CoC**

It was therefore agreed to address as first the problem of agreeing on a definition of NGO, as a means to protect NCCI from any type of “contamination” that might hamper its perceived neutrality and independence. This was made in the first part of the Workshop, through a series of three presentations followed by a wide discussion.

1. *Review of activities. Lessons learnt in coordination.* Presented by Kasra Mofarah, Jane Gibreel, Greg Hansen and Hakim Chkam. 2. *Setting the framework: internationally accepted definitions of NGOs, their role, action and principles.* By Gianni Rufini 3. *The CoC and the IHL: defending humanitarian space.* By Ali Shaheen.

After a review of existing definitions of NGO, those used by IOs and major Donors, and those adopted by other NGO coalitions, it was agreed that they all provide a number of elements that we may consider as universally accepted.

An NGO must be: • Civil-society based • Democratic • Independent (from governments or power groups) • Non partisan • Non discriminatory • Non profit • Voluntary (in whole or in part)

The 1994 “Principles of conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in disaster response programmes” commonly called “the Code of Conduct” (CoC) represents so far the most faithful and effective set of rules for the implementation of the International humanitarian law and principles in the NGO action.

In respect of the CoC participants agreed that NCCI Members acknowledge actions, which are: Humanitarian, Non-Discriminatory, Un-Conditional, Autonomous, Culturally Respectful, Empowering, Participatory, Sustainable, Accountable and Dignifying. All Members are required to endorse the Code of Conduct.

## **2. Quality of Aid**

The working group on aid quality was facilitated by Wael Ibrahim and focussed on the state of different sectors, linking relief to development, NGOs partnership, capacity building, relations with ministries and local authorities, cooperation/competition with the corporate sector, etc.

The group produced the following recommendations:

- a. *Upholding International Standards* It is recommended that both NGOs and Donors alike commit to provide high quality aid, according with generally accepted standards (i.e. Sphere) in a framework of transparency and accountability. NCCI has an important role to play in building a “culture of accountability” through training, technical fora, exchange of information and lessons learning.
- b. *Raising Awareness on the Role of Civil Society* NCCI can play the major part in raising awareness around the role of CS with the communities and the Iraqi Government and authorities. For this purpose it can make a better use of the media and other ways of communication than the single NGOs.
- c. *Raising Governments and people awareness about their rights* In the same way, NCCI could be very effective in raising people, NGOs, and also the Government and authorities awareness about their rights.
- d. *Developing Models of Return* In view of the expected return of NGOs to Iraq, in their full capacity, NCCI should develop “models of return” that organisations may decide to follow jointly, in order to increase their impact as well as strengthening the national staff and give them a greater say in accountability accomplishments.
- e. *Sharing of Information* One of the challenges to Aid quality identified is the lack of sharing information among NGOs themselves. It is recommended that NCCI look at re-examining their strategy, to better identify contents and targets of information, which has to be of practical use and of benefit to the members. It is also recommended that NCCI adopt a more pro-active approach to information gathering.
- f. *Smarter Cake* In order to improve aid quality, NCCI should represent to UN what NGOs need and do. Help to create modalities for financing and lobby for funding to NGOs.
- g. *Capacity Building* NCCI must continue to bring specific approaches and training for capacity building, and continue the presence and work of the technical teams
- h. *Rights Based Programming* There is need for all people in the Iraqi community to know their rights. For example, the right of water, security, health, democracy, etc. Therefore, NCCI should facilitate a workshop or a discussion about Rights Based Programming to NGOs.
- i. *Changing Roles of NGOs* With the constant changing Roles of NGOs seen lately, NCCI should promote a workshop aimed at understanding who is who, and who does what.

j. *Communication Strategy* NCCI has to formulate a communication strategy with the Iraqi people and governments to make our work more feasible, and so of a better quality, by explaining to the community and the governments of Iraq who we are and why are we different.

### **3. Humanitarian Space**

The working group on Humanitarian Space was facilitated by Greg Hansen (Independent Expert) and Hakim Chkam. It discussed the issue of Humanitarian Space (including issues concerning impartiality and neutrality, IHL, civil/military interaction, security, relations with other actors, access, etc.) as a whole group and then divides into two groups to better focus discussions.

First, the group worked on the definition of HS, concluding that it is important to recognise that HS is not fixed in size - its boundaries are susceptible to external and internal factors, which can either reduce or expand its space. HS is therefore not only defined by its context but by the circumstances in which it exists. For the purpose of our discussion HS is defined as 'the area in which humanitarian agencies provide assistance or protection to a needy population'. An analysis was made of external and internal factors affecting HS in Iraq. The divisions between external and internal factors are sometimes blurred as factors directly influence each other. By addressing the main external and internal factors the group identified that these factors are varied and subject to change due to different variables.

Finally, participants concluded that there is need, for the benefit of HS, that NCCI play a greater role in identifying strategic needs, a new directional approach to deal with current challenges. For this purpose it is important to ensure a greater and more forceful NCCI voice.

The suggested actions for NCCI:

- a. *Strengthen its Context Analysis Efforts to help inform members' operational decisions*
- b. *Initiate a Strategic Analysis Efforts to help inform policy and programming decisions.*
- c. *Provide risk / benefit analysis - based on a stronger understanding of needs in Iraq and more capacity to organise the collection of scarce information.*
- d. *Carry out an analysis of the impacts of aid, as well as of withdrawal of aid agencies, and understand who benefits from their presence or withdrawal.*
- e. *Set up a Forum for organised debate / lessons-learning exercises.*
- f. *Develop an Outreach, Communications and Media Strategy*, for the purposes of Advocacy / education / representation with combatants, population, religious bodies & clergy, authorities / politicians / lawmakers, other parts of the assistance community, international & local civil society, donors, other platforms (ICVA, InterAction, VOICE etc). This aims at improving access, protection, acceptance, awareness of IHL, adherence to Code of Conduct, etc. and implies specialised staff capacities (experience / training)

### **4. Advocacy**

The group was facilitated by Jane Gibreel (NCCI Chairperson) and Hazel Siri (NCCI Staff Member). It discussed the relation between field operations and International advocacy, review of priorities in promotion of Human Rights, relations with the media, etc. First it worked on collective successes and failures of NCCI's advocacy in Iraq, looking at the past impact of NCCI initiatives, which was reasonably successful in the period 2003-2004, and much less noticeable in the end of 2004-2005 in Amman, producing little or no impact on Humanitarian Space

The group agreed that NCCI should Do Advocacy, but that needs NGOs cooperation in sharing information and giving the feed back to NCCI.

The group requested the following:

- a. *A pro-active NGOs commitment* to improve the quality of specific objectives, strategy, capacity/technical expertise, sustained effort and resources for Advocacy;
- b. *Advocacy actions* should aim at regaining operating space for humanitarian action. By building wide recognition of, and committed action to meet, humanitarian needs; promoting the

understanding of definition and role of NGOs with Iraqi Public, thus strengthening NGO s credibility and accountability; influencing allocation of resources.

c. It is recommended that *NCCI develop a strategy taking into account the unpredictable environment*, the expected 3-5 years of insecurity and the presence of INGOs, as well as the different landscape in the North, Center and South of the country. It also has to identify clearly targets and allies

d. *NCCI should build linkages with key national and international coordinating bodies* like ICVA, InterAction and Voice

e. *A system for monitoring should be set up to assess relevance and impact of advocacy actions*

f. There is need to *systemise data collection*

g. It is proposed to *undertake three pieces of quality research* over next year on relevant topics

Among the most critical issues, the group has identified:

**· Security as everyone's priority · Communication with MNF · Operational Imperative · The need to adhere to Minimum Standards**

**Day 4 (9 June):** NGO Conference

A Preparation session was held, on June 7th, with the participation of Jane Gibreel, Wael Ibrahim, and Kasra Mofarah. The group synthesized the main points to be presented and discussed in the NGO Conference:

a. *Definition of NGOs*

b. *Doubt over continued NCCI existence due to lack of guaranteed funding*

c. *Added value of NCCI for donors and NGOs:*· Service provider to NGOs- coordination, security · Service provider for donors (humanitarian needs, updates, coordination) · Voice for NGOs- stronger voice for advocacy/lobbying · Voice for NGOs- single interlocutor for donor(s) · Past successes of NCCI- advocacy, sectoral coordination · Advocacy/lobbying (see below)

d. *Other NGO needs which NCCI (or re-structured NGO platform) may be able to meet:* · May encourage other governments to consider funding/grants for humanitarian actions · Access to existing funding sources for NGOs · Lobbying regarding NGO legislation following the withdrawal of Order 45, and the institution of a new Civil Society law · Advocacy- defined as one of the Pillars of a future NGO platform, along with Information (gathering and dissemination), Training and capacity building (for NGOs), Analysis and reports.

The conference was attended by 52 representatives of INGOs, 16 of NNGOs, 24 rep. of UN agencies, 8 from Iraqi and Kurdish Authorities and 9 donors / Embassy Rep. and 2 of ICRC/FRCC.

It was articulated into an historical introduction to NCCI activities, reports from the Workshop, the views of Iraqi NGOs and a broad debate on the issues raised in the working groups from the previous days.

The large participation of Iraqi authorities, International Organisations, Iraqi and International NGOs and independent experts contributed to an in-depth and articulated debate, which substantially endorsed the proposals made by the participants in the workshop.

The conclusion of the exercise is that NCCI still has to accomplish a very important task for NGOs in Iraq. As a single voice to advocate for Iraqi people's rights and needs, as a representation of the large and diversified NGO community, as a forum for the dialogue between civil society organisations, as tool for coordination and information, as an independent point of reference for all the actors on the ground.