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The Future of Iraqi Non-Governmental Organizations in the Post-US Funding Era: Challenges and Strategies for Sustainability

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Abstract

The suspension of US foreign aid under Executive Order 14169 has exposed the precarious financial dependence of Iraqi non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on foreign, particularly US funding, threatening their ability to deliver critical humanitarian and development services, let alone their own sustainability. This study examines the operational and financial challenges facing Iraqi NGOs in the wake of abrupt US funding suspension, drawing on mixed-method research, including surveys of 13 Iraqi national NGOs and interviews with their program leaders. Findings reveal that over 50% of Iraqi NGOs relied on US funding for their core operations, with many reporting severe disruptions, including project suspensions, staff layoffs, and reduced beneficiary reach, following the US aid suspension. The issue has further disproportionately impacted vulnerable groups, particularly women, children, and displaced populations, who depend on NGO-led protection and assistance, and healthcare, education, and legal services. Nonetheless, although the situation is underdeveloped and the opportunities are limited, the Iraqi national NGOs are at the stage of exploring other possibilities to survive and hopefully thrive again through diversifying the donor/funder source to ensure strategic sustainability. By analyzing lessons from the current funding crisis and the strategies developed as a way forward towards a more sustainable future for NGOs, the research contributes to broader debates on NGO resilience and sustainability and offers recommendations to support the long-term viability of Iraqi NGOs in an increasingly uncertain aid landscape.



About the Journal

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

The history of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Iraq, particularly in the Kurdistan region, is closely tied to the humanitarian crises following the Gulf War in 1991 and the consequent uprisings. These events led to the mass displacement of nearly 1.5 million Kurds, who fled to Iran and Turkey, and, consequently, the intervention of international organizations to assist and protect the Iraqi Kurds in northern Iraq. In April 1991, the United Nations signed an agreement with Iraq to facilitate the return of Iraqi refugees from Turkey and Iran, putting the first cornerstone of the work of international organizations in the country (Adelman, 1992). Thus, the NGO culture in Iraq was first established by international organizations, including United Nations agencies and other organizations mainly funded by the United States and the European Union. The intervention of the international organizations primarily focused on humanitarian aid to support the resilience and recovery of Iraqi Kurds in the aftermath of the war, displacement, and widespread poverty. Francia and Gautier (2005), about the international organizations in the Kurdistan region of Iraq in 1991, indicated that the projects “were funded by USAID, ECHO, and aid agencies from various countries, notably among which were the Scandinavian countries. The main activities covered were health assistance, mother and childcare and protection, water and sanitation, and the rehabilitation of schools”. This aid was particularly crucial due to the impact of dual sanctions: one imposed by the United Nations on Iraq through Security Council Resolution 661 (1990) in response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, and another imposed by the former Iraqi regime on the Kurdish autonomous area of Erbil, Sulaimaniya, and Duhok for political reasons as the zone was internationally protected and had its own de facto self-administration as a result of the UN Security Council Resolution 688 (1991) that addressed the humanitarian situation in Iraq by creating a ‘Safe Haven’ for the Kurds and further shaping international intervention in the region (Francia & Gautier, 2005; United Nations Digital Library, n.d.-a; United Nations Digital Library, n.d.-b).

In the early stages, international organizations operating in Iraqi Kurdistan primarily executed projects and activities through direct implementation. However, they soon recognized the need to partner with national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that were more familiar with the local context, had faster mobility, and were more cost-effective. On the other hand, the need to create national NGOs led groups of activists, particularly those Iraqis who lived in the West and were familiar with the culture and work of NGOs, including some of those who used to work as contractors with the former government of Iraq. “Kurdish NGOs emerged in 1991, comprising former employees who had worked as contractors when Baghdad started its economic liberalization toward the end of the Iran-Iraq war” (Oftringer & Backer, 1994). The Iraqi national NGOs initially, first operated within the Kurdish area; however, after 2003, they expanded to work across Iraq. Among the oldest NGOs that were established and operated in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1991-1992 were Kurdistan Reconstruction and Development Society (KURDS), Kurdistan Reconstruction Organization (KRO), Kurdistan Save the Children (KSC), Kurdish Human Rights Watch (KHRW), and the Iraqi Al-Amal Association (Aaml) (NGO Base, 2025). These NGOs, among others, have played a crucial role in supporting the people of Iraq, starting with humanitarian aid and later expanding into development projects.

Since the fall of the previous regime in Iraq as a result of the Iraq ‘Liberation’ War in 2003, Iraqi national NGOs funded by the UN agencies and other international organizations have played a vital role in Iraq’s struggle for hope, development, and prosperity. The NGOs worked across the country, not only in the humanitarian sector and providing emergency aid but also in development, governance, women’s empowerment, child rights, and other fields to rebuild a better, stronger, and more prosperous Iraq based on democracy, citizenship, and justice. Additionally, the Iraqi national NGOs played a significant role in responding to crises, meeting the basic needs of vulnerable people, rebuilding communities, and restoring hope amid the devastation of long wars in the

country. They first started with providing emergency assistance such as distributing food and non-food items, setting up medical clinics, repairing water systems, and so on. Later, they started involving in addressing the long-term needs of people such as healthcare, education, and psychosocial support, mainly for war-affected families, vulnerable families, internally displaced, and refugees (ReliefWeb, 2003a; Génot, 2010).

Furthermore, when the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) started attacking Iraq in 2014, NGOs, again, stepped in and assisted the displaced people and survivors who fled violence and atrocities and lived in camps, villages, and towns. A while after the defeat of ISIS, the NGOs, step by step, still continued the humanitarian assistance but also shifted to development and reconstruction programs. Despite security risks, NGO workers and volunteers remained at the heart of these efforts, not just delivering assistance and rebuilding schools and hospitals, but also strengthening reconciliation and advocating for human rights. Their work has been vital in helping Iraqis have hope in life and proving that even in the darkest times, people are resilient and capable of paving the way for recovery and development again (ReliefWeb, 2003b; Stoddard et al., 2021; KirkukNow, 2023).

This paper discusses the future of Iraqi national NGOs in the post-US funding era and identifies the main challenges ahead and possible strategies for their sustainability. The main focus of this research is on the consequences of Executive Order 14169 signed by President Donald Trump on 20 January 2025, ordering a 90-day suspension on all US foreign development assistance programs to conduct a review under the 'Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid' (The White House, 2025). The key research questions examine the current and potential future impacts of the suspension or significant reduction of US funding to Iraqi national NGOs' operations and long-term sustainability. The study also explores how NGOs can continue to fulfill their missions and operations amid financial uncertainty while proactively identifying opportunities, alternative funding sources, and innovative strategies to navigate these challenges and build a more sustainable future.

1.2 Research Problem

Over the past three decades, the Iraqi national NGOs have almost completely depended on external funding, directly or through UN agencies, international NGOs which were mainly funded by the US and EU countries, along with Canada, Japan, and some Arab Gulf countries that started contributing particularly after the ISIS war in 2014 (ReliefWeb, n.d.; (UNHCR, n.d.; Medeni, 2023). Therefore, it is possible that any sudden suspension of funding would leave Iraqi NGOs struggling to survive, let alone assist those in need. "The sustainability of an organization refers to the capability of managers to maintain and retain a business over the long term (Omeri, 2014 in Gul & Morande, 2023); hence, a lack of sustainability, including diversification of sources, would create a serious obstacle for the Iraqi NGOs to continue their operations, programs, and activities, particularly that the country has not yet recovered from the consequences of series of conflicts and the government is not yet capable to properly meet the services required by the public.

Moreover, since a significant portion of the funding for the Iraqi national NGOs comes from Western countries, mainly the United States, the sharp suspension and decline of such funds would place many NGOs at risk of downsizing or even closing their programs and operations across the country. This, in turn, could cause a critical gap in the services, among others, humanitarian, social, and development services provided by such NGOs, which the government currently does not have the capacity or expertise to provide. Therefore, there is a pressing need to analyse and understand how Iraqi NGOs can survive, adapt, and continue in the post-US funding era.

1.3 Research Objective

The primary objective of this research is to explore the challenges faced by Iraqi non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in continuing their operations, achieving sustainability following the decline

of US and other foreign funding, and to identify effective strategies that can support their long-term viability and independence.

While the issue of the suspension of funds to NGOs by the US government is rather fresh, a very limited number of small-scale assessments have been conducted, mainly by journalists and NGO activists. However, this study distinguishes itself by focusing on the local experiences and perspectives of NGO practitioners within Iraq, using mainly qualitative interviews but also quantitative questions to uncover grounded insights into how Iraqi NGOs are coping with funding transitions. Moreover, unlike much of the existing literature, which often generalizes across regions or emphasizes donor-driven solutions, this research centers on Iraq's unique political, economic, and social landscape, offering context-specific strategies for long-term resilience and local ownership.

1.4. Scope of the Study

While the study focuses on the Iraqi National NGOs that have been receiving funds from the US government, directly or through US or international organizations, the scope of the study was limited to include only the NGOs that fall under this category. Furthermore, due to time, financial, and geographical constraints, the Iraqi NGOs that are headquartered in Erbil were selected. However, the selected NGOs have had operations and programs across the country, including the Kurdistan region in the north, as well as the center and the south of the country. Finally, to serve the very same purpose of selection and scope of the study, accordingly, purposive, non-probability sampling was deployed to ensure the objectivity of the study and increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings. This approach was, hence, chosen to gather rich, in-depth qualitative data from participants who could provide meaningful insights into the challenges, coping mechanisms, and strategic responses (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). Therefore, by selecting the NGO participants based on their relevance to the research questions rather than through random selection, the study ensured that it stayed within its scope and obtained a detailed understanding and insights into the issue from the perspective of those impacted by the suspension of funds.

1.5. Research Questions

RQ 1. What is the main impact of the suspension of the US funds on the Iraqi national NGOs?

RQ 2. What challenges do the Iraqi NGOs face in terms of operations, programs, and activities as a result of the funding suspension?

RQ 3. What internal (organizational) and external (environmental) factors influence the sustainability of NGOs in Iraq?

RQ 4. How have Iraqi NGOs responded to the decline in international, particularly US, financial support?

RQ 5. What are the best practices, strategies, or innovative approaches that could be applied to ensure the long-term viability of Iraqi NGOs?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it addresses a critical and timely issue: the sustainability of Iraqi non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the aftermath of declining US and international funding. Particularly since 2003, Iraqi NGOs have played a crucial role in humanitarian relief, development, and civil society building. However, their heavy reliance on foreign aid has left many of them vulnerable to financial instability and organizational collapse. Therefore, the findings reveal not only a sense of urgency among NGOs but also a growing awareness of the need for self-reliance, strategic planning, and collaboration. The results of the study are interpreted in light of the broader literature on NGO and their sustainability, while also highlighting the unique characteristics of the Iraqi context. By integrating the voices of practitioners with existing research, this research aims to provide a grounded understanding of the current realities and potential future directions for Iraqi civil society organizations. By exploring the challenges and identifying practical strategies for

sustainability, this research provides valuable insights for:

- **NGO leaders and practitioners** who can use the findings to improve their planning, fundraising, and stakeholder engagement.
- **Policymakers** better understand the support mechanisms needed to create a more enabling environment for local NGOs.
- **Donors and development agencies**, who may be reconsidering their funding models and seeking to promote long-term local ownership and resilience.
- **Researchers and academics** contribute to the limited body of knowledge on civil society sustainability in fragile and post-conflict states like Iraq.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Gratton (2025) explains that an NGO is a mission-driven and non-profit entity composed of passionate individuals who operate independently of government; they are a group of ordinary people coming together to do extraordinary things. These groups that could be organized at local, national, or international levels have played a transformative role in history by advocating for justice, providing humanitarian aid, and amplifying the voices of marginalized communities. Rooted in principles of voluntarism, autonomy, and public service, NGOs work toward the common good, addressing critical social, environmental, and political issues where governments or the private sector fall short. From pioneering human rights campaigns to delivering life-saving relief, their impact reflects a commitment to equity, accountability, and grassroots empowerment. Hence, “non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are now recognised as key third sector actors on the landscapes of development, human rights, humanitarian action, environment, and many other areas of public action” (Salamon, 2010).

The roots of NGOs stretch back to the 19th century, when ordinary citizens organized to fight against slavery, child labor, and women’s oppression. The Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1823, was one of the first international advocacy groups, proving that people-powered movements could challenge entrenched injustices (Charnovitz, 1997). Then came the Red Cross in 1863, born from the vision of a single man, Henry Dunant, who was horrified by the suffering of wounded soldiers in war. His idea that neutral volunteers should aid the injured regardless of nationality revolutionized humanitarian work (Barnett, 2011). The term ‘NGO’ itself became widely recognized after World War II, when the United Nations formally acknowledged the role of NGOs in rebuilding a broken world. Organizations like CARE and Oxfam delivered food to starving families in post-war Europe, showing that compassion could cross borders (Willets, 2011; Gratton, 2025). By the 1960s and 1970s, a new wave of NGOs emerged, driven by young activists who believed in global solidarity. Amnesty International, founded in 1961 after a British lawyer read about imprisoned students in Portugal, became a lifeline for political prisoners. Greenpeace, born from a small group of protesters sailing into nuclear test zones, proved that bold action could change environmental policies (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

What makes NGOs unique is not just what they do but how they do it. Unlike governments or private corporations, NGOs operate on a set of deeply human principles: 1) **Voluntarism (The Power of Collective Action)**: NGOs are built on the belief that change happens when people come together whether it is a village building a school or doctors volunteering in disaster zones, these efforts rely on ordinary people giving their time, skills, and resources (Salamon & Anheier, 1996). 2) **Non-Profit (Mission Over Money)**: While businesses chase profits, NGOs measure success in lives improved; every dollar donated to organizations goes toward saving lives, not shareholders’ dividends (Fisher, 1997). 3) **Independence (Speaking Truth to Power)**: Governments and corporations can be self-interested, but NGOs are independent, neutral, and challenge injustice, corruption, and abuse without fear (Edwards & Hulme, 1996). 4) **Grassroots Change (From Local to Global)**: Some NGOs, like Bangladesh’s BRAC, started as small community projects and grew into global forces, and others, like the Malala Fund, amplify the voices of those who would

otherwise go unheard (Lewis, 2014).

Moreover, NGOs, in their ethical principles of work, abide by the four principles of humanitarian work. The principles “inspired by the 1864 Geneva Convention, as well as additional principles drawn from other Red Cross sources, governed the Movement informally until 1921, when its principles were codified for the first time in the ICRC’s revised Statutes” (Sharpe, 2023). The four principles are 1) Humanity: Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, and humanitarian action should be driven by the desire to help those in need; 2) Impartiality: Humanitarian assistance must be provided based on need, without discrimination and regardless of the individual’s race, nationality, religion, etc., background; 3) Neutrality: Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature; and 4) Independence: Humanitarian organizations must be independent from political, military, or other external influences (UNOCHA, 2011). Additionally, there are nine core humanitarian standards (CHS) as a set of guidelines, launched in 2014, to help NGOs ensure effective, transparent, and accountable operations. These standards are crucial for maintaining ethical practices, achieving organizational goals, and building trust with stakeholders. The CHS aims to promote the well-being, rights, and protection of people affected by crisis and facilitates greater accountability to communities and people affected by crisis by ensuring they know what to expect from humanitarian organizations and how to hold them accountable. The nine core humanitarian standards include guidelines about Accountability and Transparency, Governance, Financial Management, Human Rights and Ethics, Program Quality and Impact, Sustainability, Compliance with Legal and Regulatory Frameworks, Safeguarding and Protection, and Inclusivity and Participation (CHS, 2024).

2.2 Iraqi NGOs and Sources of Funding

According to the Department of Non-Governmental Organizations, General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers - Iraq, there were 6,477 non-governmental organizations, including 6,291 local/national NGOs registered across Iraq by the end of 2024 (NGO Directorate, 2024). Furthermore, according to the statistics published by the Department of NGOs in the Kurdistan region in 2023, 4,737 organizations were registered in the Kurdistan Region, and from this number, 3,967 were Iraqi Kurdish organizations, and 587 others were either Iraqi or international organizations (GOV.KRD, 2025). NGOs in Iraq are formed and operate based on two main laws that are issued by the Council of Representatives in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region’s Parliament: the Iraqi Law No. 12 of the year 2010, and the Iraqi Kurdistan Law No. 1 of the year 2011 (Ministry of Justice of Iraq, 2010; Kurdistan Regional Government, 2011).

An NGO is defined in Chapter 1, Article 1 of the Iraqi NGO law as “a group of natural or legal persons that have registered and obtained legal personality according to the terms of this law to pursue not-for-profit purposes” (ICNL, 2010; Ministry of Justice of Iraq, 2010). Moreover, Chapter Four of the financial provisions for NGOs outlines the various resources and guidelines governing their financial management. Article (13) stipulates that the resources of an NGO consist of four main elements: first, the fees and dues paid by members; second, internal or external donations, grants, bequests, and gifts; third, revenues generated from the organization’s activities and projects; and fourth, any other financial resources that support its goals. Additionally, Article 14 describes how NGOs are expected to use these funds. The first clause emphasizes that the funds must be directed toward fulfilling the organization’s goals. The second clause allows NGOs to participate in bidding for tenders issued by public authorities, provided the procurement subject aligns with the NGO’s field of expertise. The third clause permits an NGO to acquire real estate necessary for establishing its headquarters, branches, or meeting spaces for its members, or for furthering its goals, in compliance with the law. Additionally, the fourth clause permits the sale of non-essential properties, with the proceeds being recorded as revenue for the organization, again by the law. These provisions establish a clear framework for managing the financial resources of NGOs, ensuring they are used appropriately to further their missions while complying with legal requirements (ICNL,

2010; Ministry of Justice of Iraq, 2010).

NGOs worldwide depend on various sources of funds, among others, international aid and development funds, including grants that are provided by governments, international organizations, private sector companies as part of corporate social responsibility (CSR), personal and local donations, in-kind donations, crowdfunding campaigns, and financial proceedings generated by the NGO activities, and membership dues (fundsforNGOs, n.d.). However, viewing the source of humanitarian funding to the Iraqi NGOs in the past three years, it indicates that over 50% of funds have come from the United States alone, and the majority of funding, altogether more than 90%, comes from foreign governments, mainly the United States and European Countries. Hence, a permanent suspension or significant reduction in US funding could severely impact the sustainability of Iraqi NGOs, which rely heavily on these financial resources for their operations and humanitarian efforts. The three charts below provide a detailed overview of the trends in humanitarian funding to Iraq over the past three years, underscoring the critical role of US financial support.

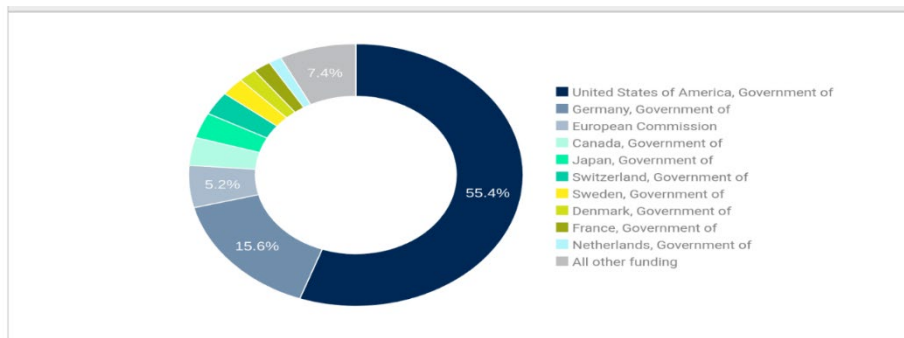


Figure 1. Humanitarian Funding by Source – Iraq 2022
Adopted from (UNOCHA, n.d.-a)

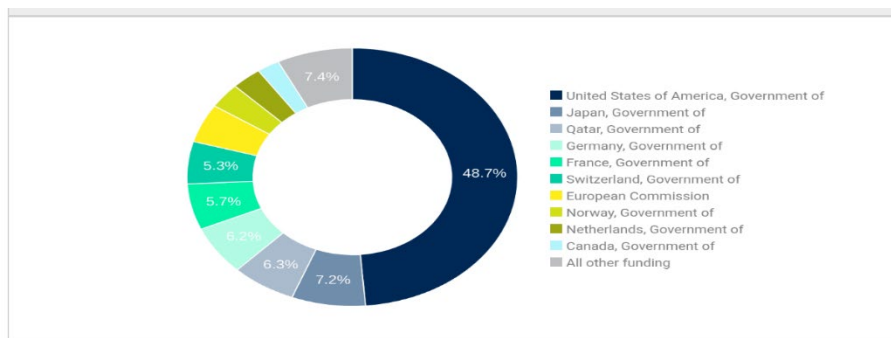
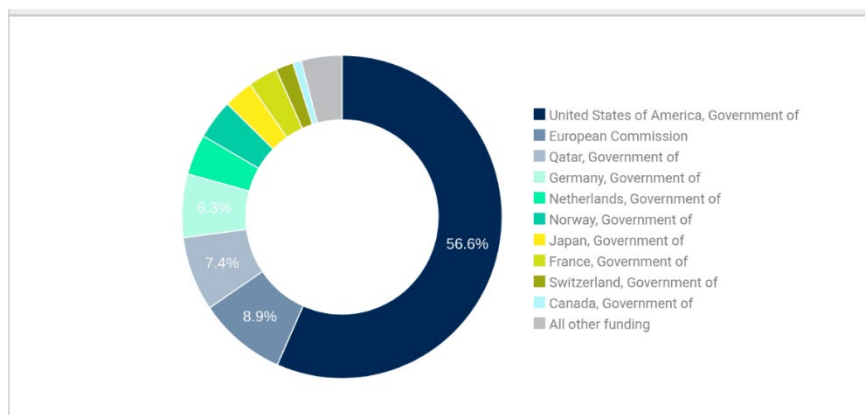


Figure 2. Humanitarian Funding by Source – Iraq 2023
Adopted from (UNOCHA, n.d.-b)



2.3 Suspension of the US Funds

In January 2025, shortly after taking office, President Donald Trump signed Executive Order 14169, titled "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid," which initiated a 90-day suspension of all US foreign development assistance programs to conduct a comprehensive review (The White House, 2025). Accordingly, Mohamed (2025), citing a statement from State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce, pointed out that "President Trump stated clearly that the United States is no longer going to blindly dole out money with no return for the American people". The US State Department implemented this order by suspending nearly all existing foreign aid programs, with initial exceptions for emergency food assistance and military aid to Egypt and Israel (Bateman, 2025). It is worth noting that the United States is the world's biggest international aid donor, spending 68 US billion dollars in 2023, according to government figures (Bateman, 2025); other sources mentioned that "in 2023, Washington disbursed \$72bn in foreign aid across nearly 180 countries" (Mohamed, 2025).

The aim of the suspension, under President Donald Trump's agenda of 'America First', is claimed to be ensuring that US aid programs are effective, cost-efficient, and fully aligned with national foreign policy priorities. The executive order further reflects concerns that certain foreign aid initiatives may not align with American interests and values (The White House, 2025). During this review period, federal agencies will evaluate existing programs, deciding whether to continue, adjust, or discontinue them, with final determinations requiring approval from the Secretary of State. Although the US government emphasized that this temporary halt is not a reduction in aid but a strategic reassessment to maximize impact and taxpayer value, critics argue the freeze could disrupt critical humanitarian efforts, while supporters contend it is a necessary step to prevent waste and refocus resources on key geopolitical goals (Gamso, 2025). The suspension of US funds, although claimed to be temporary, has had profound global impacts because "the US government is the single-largest aid donor in the world, according to the United Nations, accounting for more than 40% of all humanitarian aid the UN tracked in 2024" (DeSilver, 2025). For instance, the abrupt termination of USAID-funded programs has led to service shutdowns, treatment disruptions, and loss of healthcare access for millions, particularly those living with HIV, tuberculosis, and other critical health conditions in Africa (ICWEA, 2025).

In Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, like other parts of the world, the suspension caused several US-funded organizations and projects to cease operations. It is worth noting that the US government, only through USAID, from 2015 until March 2023, supported more than 900 projects in Iraq aimed at rehabilitating schools, water treatment plants, health care facilities, and power substations - efforts that helped displaced Iraqis return to their communities and improved access to basic services. This disruption has impacted hundreds of projects and thousands of vulnerable Iraqis (Rasheed, 2025).

3. Methodology

Considering the nature, context, objectives, and the main question of the research, exploring the future of Iraqi non-governmental organizations in the post-US funding era, and strategies that can ensure their sustainability, the research included both secondary and primary sources of data. The secondary research involved the analysis of existing data, both qualitative and quantitative, collected and analyzed by reliable organizations. The secondary source of data included academic materials such as peer-reviewed articles, as well as books, reports, and conference outcomes that provide concepts, insights, assessments, findings, and recommendations provided by international and national organizations (NGOs), government, research centers, and reliable media sources. "Secondary qualitative data analysis can be a powerful method by which to gain insights that primary data analysis cannot offer" (Cheong et al., 2023). On the other hand, the primary data source was also used to collect raw descriptive and numeric data, as it is also very necessary to collect original, firsthand, and up-to-date records of information, which provide direct access to the subject in descriptive details without being already analyzed and interpreted by others.

Although collecting primary sources of data for the study is a combination of quantitative questionnaires and qualitative semi-structured interviews, the focus of the study is more qualitative, considering its inductive approach to explore the details of the research topic. Nevertheless, utilizing both sources is essential to obtain both measurable trends and a deeper understanding and insights into the perceptions and intentions of the respondents. Hence, by using mixed methods, the research was not only able to assess the effectiveness but also explored other details of questions related to how, why, and for whom. The mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods allowed for a more integrated and richer data collection and analysis, enhancing the development of the themes and interpreting meanings. Additionally, data triangulation was used to combine insights from both datasets, offering a more comprehensive and detailed analysis. The quantitative data with qualitative narratives led to a more rigorous and detailed analysis and findings. The main outcome of the mixed approaches was that both numerical trends and personal experiences and descriptions were considered, which, in turn, provided a balanced and insightful deeper analysis of the research topic. By utilizing the strengths of both approaches, the researcher could cross-check data, validate findings, and develop a more inclusive understanding of the research questions. As noted by Ahmed et al. (2024) about the mixed-method approach, "This approach allows for the exploration of diverse perspectives, enabling the collection of rich, contextual data alongside statistical analysis."

Moreover, the data analysis for the study also involved a comprehensive approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a holistic understanding of the research questions and the overall goal of the study. For the quantitative data, which was collected through the online Google Form Questionnaire, the analysis focused on statistical techniques and interpreting the meaning of numbers; therefore, descriptive statistical analysis was used to summarize and describe the features of the data. As for the qualitative data, which was gathered through interviews with managers of the organizations, the method of analysis involved coding the responses and identifying key themes and patterns that emerged. The aim was to obtain the primary meanings and insights from respondents' perspectives, in turn, providing a deeper understanding of the research topic (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Moreover, purposive non-probability sampling was used, as per the requirements of the study, to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings. Non-probability sampling method involves deliberately identifying and selecting individuals or groups that possess specific characteristics, experiences, or expertise that align with the objectives of the study. This approach was, hence, chosen to gather rich, in-depth qualitative data from participants who could provide meaningful insights into the challenges, coping mechanisms, and strategic responses (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). Therefore, by selecting the NGO participants based on their relevance to the research questions rather than through random selection, the study obtained a detailed understanding and insights into the issue from the perspective of those impacted by the resolution of the suspension of funds.

The 13 Iraqi national NGOs that participated in the research are based in Erbil - a hub for many Iraqi NGOs - but operate across diverse humanitarian and development sectors in Iraq, including those of human rights, women's empowerment, child protection, and other types of support for vulnerable groups and internally displaced people. The 13 NGOs that participated in the research and answered questions of both qualitative semi-structured interviews and quantitative Google Form included the Kurdistan Organization for Human Rights Watch (KOHRW), Women Empowerment Organization (WEO), Public Aid Organization (PAO), Civil Development Organization (CDO), Accepting Others Organization (AOO), Harikar NGO, The Lotus Flower (TLF), Alliance of Iraqi Minorities Network (AIM), Dak Organization for Ezidi Women's Development, Mari Research and Development, Women's Legal Assistance Organization (WOLA), Better World Organization for Community Development, and Wchan Organization for Human

Rights Violations.

Finally, to abide by ethical standards and principles of data protection, the privacy, data, time, and contribution of the respondents were respected and protected. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before completing the interview/questionnaires, along with clearly explaining the study's purpose, voluntary participation, transparency, and the right to withdraw at any time, to both groups of respondents. Additionally, to strengthen data protection and ensure confidentiality, the refugees completed the questionnaire forms anonymously - their names and specific personal details were not indicated. Apart from the researcher and the university journal that published the study, no other party or institution has had or will have access to the collected data or transcripts. By considering and applying the ethical standards and considerations, the study is believed to have been carried out in compliance with Iraq's data protection laws and international academic ethical principles and standards.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the key findings that emerged from the qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted with managers of Iraqi non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as the quantitative questionnaire shared with them online. The results are organized and analysed thematically in line with the research questions, focusing on the main challenges Iraqi NGOs face in the post-US funding era and the strategies they are employing to ensure sustainability.

4.1 Impact of Suspension of Funds on NGOs' Operations and Beneficiaries

The abrupt suspension of the US funding significantly disrupted the operations of NGOs across Iraq. Many of these entities had relied heavily on multi-year funding cycles from US-based agencies and were forced into crisis or semi-crisis mode. The most immediate consequences included the suspension of ongoing programs, projects, and/or activities, and, in many cases, the shuttering of some offices. Additionally, in the absence of financial inflows, staff retention became increasingly difficult. As a result, a significant number of employees were laid off, and some organizations rely heavily on unpaid volunteers as the only viable means of maintaining operations. One of the NGO managers interviewed stated, "As a result, our organization has unofficially closed its main office, and several staff members are now volunteering to keep the organization's advocacy efforts alive" (Mamand, Personal Communication, April 9, 2025). Furthermore, the effect on beneficiaries was severe and widespread. Key services such as protection and assistance support for the internally displaced persons and refugees, gender-based violence case management, mental health and psychosocial support, legal aid for vulnerable women, and child protection projects were reduced or altogether halted. In areas where NGOs were the sole providers of these services, the vacuum left behind has had tangible negative impacts on disadvantaged communities' well-being. For example, children of vulnerable people, particularly of the displaced populations, have experienced increased pressure due to a decrease or lack of services such as safe spaces and psychosocial and educational support, and, in some cases, women survivors of violence were left without case follow-up or legal recourse. "In some areas, we have had to scale down programs or suspend certain activities altogether, leaving many beneficiaries without critical support, especially the women and children who are vulnerable and are survivors of violence" (Abubaker, Personal Communication, April 7, 2025). The fallout has extended beyond direct service cuts to a general erosion of trust between communities and the civil sector NGOs, undermining years of social cohesion work.

Additionally, the results of the quantitative research show that the majority of the surveyed national NGOs remarkably depended on US funding to operate and sustain their operations, with 50-60% of their annual budgets from US sources. The abrupt suspension has had a cascading effect across the sector, leading to widespread project suspensions, cancellations, and reductions, which, in turn, have significantly decreased the number of beneficiaries reached and triggered substantial staff layoffs or reductions in working hours. As a result, the future outlook for these organizations is

increasingly unwarranted, with most anticipating severe budget shortfalls for 2025-2026 that threaten their ability to maintain existing services, retain staff, and respond to the ongoing needs of vulnerable communities in the country.

4.1.1 NGOs' Budget Funded by the US in 2023-2024

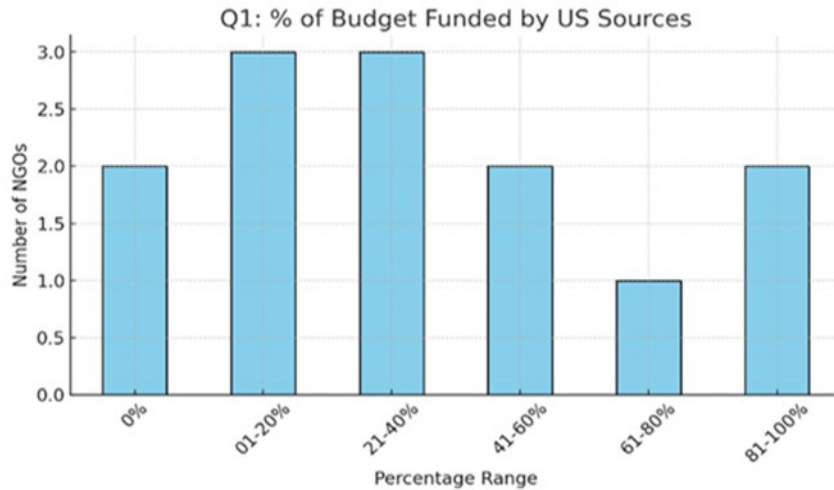


Figure 4. Percentage of Iraqi NGOs' Budget Funded by the US in 2023-2024

The responses about the size of the organization's annual program budget in 2023–2024 that was funded by US sources reflect a wide dependency range on US funding, as illustrated in Figure 4 above. While two organizations reported receiving no US-based support, the majority (11 out of 13) indicated extended financial dependence on US sources, either directly or through partnerships. Notably, three NGOs received more than 80% of their funding from US sources, while two others received between 61-80%, and another three NGOs fell within the 20-40% range. This demonstrates a systemic reliance on US-based donors within the Iraqi national NGO landscape.

4.1.2 NGOs' Projects Affected by the US Suspension of Funds

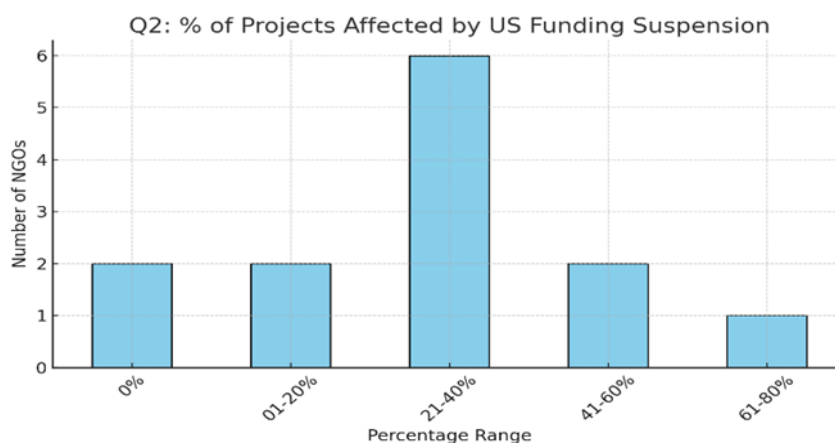


Figure 5. Percentage of Iraqi NGO Projects Affected by the US Suspension of Funds

Regarding the percentage of the organization's projects that have been affected due to the suspension of US funding, Figure 5 shows one of the most dramatic spreads in terms of impact. Only one organization reported no effect on its projects, while over 60% (8 out of 13) experienced disruptions in more than 40% of their projects, with four of them reporting that 80-100% of their programming was affected. This suggests that the funding cuts had a direct and immediate effect on

implementation. Projects have been suspended, reduced in scale, or canceled altogether, significantly limiting the reach and effectiveness of services that these NGOs were providing, particularly in a country still recovering from conflict and ongoing humanitarian challenges. This also reveals how vulnerable these organizations are to fluctuations in foreign policy and funding decisions from international actors, of course, especially the United States.

4.1.3 NGOs' Beneficiaries Affected by the US Suspension of Funds

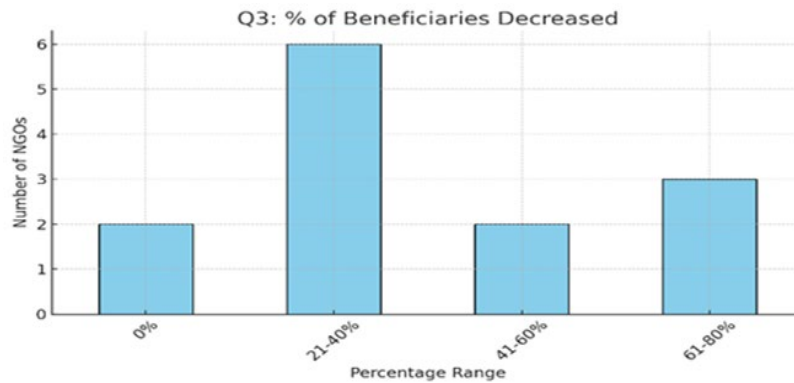


Figure 6. Percentage of Iraqi NGO Beneficiaries Affected by the US Suspension of Funds

Figure 6 shows that most organizations reported a notable decline in the number of beneficiaries they can serve, with only one NGO saying there was no reduction. The rest indicated losses across all ranges and sectors. Six NGOs experienced a 41% or greater decline, and three of them had an 81-100% drop in beneficiaries. This is alarming; it reflects a sharp decline in the delivery of life-saving or essential services such as education, health, psychosocial support, legal aid, or livelihood projects and activities. This reduction is not just numeric; it represents thousands of vulnerable individuals, including women, children, and people with disabilities, as well as communities that are no longer being reached by critical support.

4.1.4 NGO Staff Affected by the US Suspension of Funds

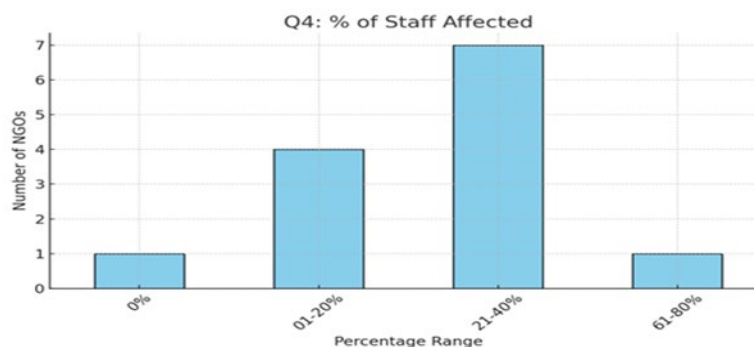


Figure 7. Percentage of Iraqi NGO Staff Affected by the US Suspension of Funds

Moreover, Figure 7 shows that the impacts are perhaps the most tangible internal consequence for the Iraqi national NGOs. 5 out of 13 organizations reported that 81-100% of their staff were affected, whether through layoffs, reduced working hours, or loss of benefits. An additional three organizations indicated that between 41-80% of staff were impacted. This creates a dual hit: not only are communities suffering from reduced services, but the local humanitarian workforce itself is shrinking, resulting in a loss of expertise, demotivation, and instability within the sector. The humanitarian sector in Iraq, which has heavily relied on skilled local personnel, could face a serious setback in capacity if not soon resolved.

4.1.5 Percentage of the Shortfall in Planned Projects for 2025-2026

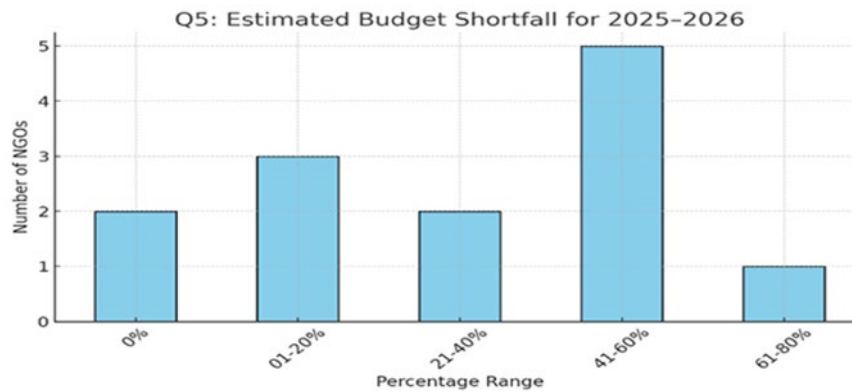


Figure 8. Percentage of the Shortfall in Planned Projects for 2025-2026

Finally, one of the most important questions was about the estimated budget shortfall for the planned projects and activities in 2025-2026 by Iraqi national NGOs, as illustrated in Figure 7. Every single organization reported an expected shortfall in its budget for the next fiscal year. While one NGO expected a relatively small gap (under 20%), the majority (eight NGOs) anticipated a shortfall of over 60%, with five of them estimating more than 80%. This illustrates a dire forecast for the future sustainability of national NGOs in Iraq. Many will be forced to scale back operations drastically, suspend growth plans, or even shut down if no alternative funding sources are secured. It also raises serious questions about donor coordination, sustainability planning, and the longer-term impact on Iraq's civil society and humanitarian sector.

4.2 Programmatic Adjustments and Donor Priorities

Facing financial strain, organizations further recalibrated their operational models. Many adopted severity strategies, including cutting program scope, suspending peripheral activities, and focusing resources on core humanitarian interventions. Prioritization conditions were introduced to determine which services were deemed essential, such as lifesaving, protection, legal aid, emergency gender-based violence (GBV) response, and critical health interventions. Moreover, the value of strong community relationships also became apparent. Where trust and collaboration had been built over time, organizations were able to pivot more effectively and retain community engagement, even with minimal resources. Some NGOs turned towards community-based models to leverage non-monetary resources. For example, volunteers with contextual knowledge provided psychosocial support and basic protection monitoring. These community networks, while less formalized, filled urgent gaps and offered a form of resilience grounded in social capital. A few organizations began to design and implement income-generating activities, such as craft cooperatives and initiatives, to sustain small-scale operations and empower local groups. Additionally, some NGOs referred to collective advocacy to urge and request the Iraqi government to allocate a certain annual budget to support projects and activities funded by NGOs. Advocacy efforts for domestic governmental support have gained traction, with calls for the Iraqi central and regional governments to institutionalize mechanisms to support and fund the national NGOs. However, the policy environment remains unpredictable, with financial constraints, bureaucratic hurdles, and inconsistent political will. Additionally, there is a tendency to invest in internal capacity, which enables the Iraqi NGOs to adapt quickly and sustain operations in a shifting donor landscape. Organizations with trained staff in proposal writing, financial reporting, and donor communications were more agile in navigating the transition.

The funding crisis has exposed critical vulnerabilities within Iraq's civil society sector, prompting NGOs to reassess their overall strategic positioning. Chief among these was the excessive dependence on a single donor ecosystem. When that ecosystem collapsed, the lack of contingency frameworks left most NGOs exposed to the risk of not remaining sustainable. Hence, a major lesson

for the Iraqi national NGOs was the necessity of funding diversification, not only across donors but also across donor types, such as inter-governmental, international agencies, private sector, philanthropic, and so on. The post-US funding environment has thus catalyzed reorientation in donor targeting. There is an observable direction toward European governmental donors, some Arab regional foundations, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arms of multinational private sector companies, mainly oil companies, operating in the country, and some NGOs considered engaging diaspora networks. These funders might be in the position to support some of the short-term or medium-term initiatives, such as education, environmental projects, community-based activities, and other social entrepreneurships, diverging from the emergency-focused funding models of the past.

Technological innovation also surfaced in donor tracking and proposal development. A handful of NGOs reported piloting up-to-date technology and AI-powered tools to analyze donor grants and customize funding pitches. Others are exploring accountability systems to ensure transparent financial tracking, which may increase online donor confidence. However, these efforts are only relatively effective because of limited digital and IT skills among some of the NGOs' staff, lack of financial and perhaps adequate human capital to invest in innovation, and limited institutional knowledge to endorse and embrace new and higher-level scale of ideas. Additionally, the ongoing global economic instability, global and regional conflicts, and decline in the political interest in Iraq further discourage the long-term involvement of the international community in Iraq, and, in turn, decrease the future opportunities for funding the Iraqi NGOs.

4.3 Strategies for Sustainability

Plans and strategies of the Iraqi NGOs regarding sustainability are rather complicated at this point, and vary from one NGO to another, or perhaps from one sector to another. Some organizations already embrace optimism, yet with caution. Others try to consider the expansion of their donor networks and the utilization of local partnerships. Some NGOs are actively engaged in developing multi-year strategic plans, exploring fundraising opportunities, as well as methods to retain their staff and invest in digital tools and AI knowledge and skills, as a shift toward long-term resilience and sustainability.

Organizations with trained personnel in grant writing, financial reporting, and donor communications have demonstrated better coping mechanisms and agility in responding to changing donor prospects. This has allowed them not only a means to secure alternative funding sources but also to align with emerging global standards concerning transparency, impact measurement, and digital literacy. Investments in human resources are also essential at this critical moment to empower local staff and actors, strengthen leadership, and enhance project management and delivery. Moreover, to assist and protect Iraq's vulnerable communities from crises, whether manmade conflicts or natural disasters, NGOs must prioritize preparedness and have proper contingency plans for emergency situations. This means engaging some potential donors/funders to be ready to fund the NGOs if such crises happen.

Government and private sector partners can also contribute to these efforts through flexible funding and technical support. Lessons from the previous crisis and emergencies underscore the importance of anticipatory systems and rapid response capabilities. Hence, another promising path forward lies in comprehensive funding diversification. Iraqi NGOs must look beyond traditional donors and actively seek support from European Union programs, bilateral aid agencies, Arab philanthropic institutions, and private sector CSR initiatives. "The crisis is still in its early stages, but we have already stepped up efforts to submit proposals to other donors, including EU calls. We are trying to stay ahead by identifying alternative funding as early as possible" (Tahir, Personal Communication, April 3, 2025). Furthermore, mapping donor interests by themes and geography enables better alignment between NGO proposals and donor priorities. In parallel, there is growing interest in

alternative funding sources, including diaspora philanthropy, Islamic charitable traditions such as waqf and zakat, and emerging digital giving platforms. Policy advocacy is another critical lever for systemic change.

At a national level, civil society actors must organize to lobby for favorable legal frameworks and budget allocations for NGOs by the government - the Iraqi federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government - to establish dedicated funding mechanisms for NGOs. "NGOs should approach and make advocacy with the Iraqi and KRG governments; they have money, and it has been for many years that the national governments have not funded the national NGOs, so they should resume that and give funds to the national NGOs, particularly to fill the gaps left by US funding. This, however, requires a strong advocacy by us, the Iraqi NGOs" (Ahmed, April 8, 2025). A transparent and independently managed fund could provide core and project-based grants, especially for organizations operating in conflict-affected or underdeveloped areas. The relevant government ministries should appoint focal points to coordinate with NGOs, and parliamentary oversight mechanisms should ensure accountability and fairness in the allocation of public resources. The creation of a national civil society engagement strategy would formalize this collaboration and help align government investments with local needs. Government support, when structured transparently, can be transformative, ranging from technical assistance to public funding streams that prioritize grassroots organizations and community needs.

Moreover, engagement with the private sector offers further opportunities for synergy. Companies, particularly international companies, operating in Iraq can contribute far more than charitable donations. Through comprehensive CSR strategies, they can fund projects and activities conducted by NGOs, as well as support NGOs with capacity building, such as training, equipment, materials, and so on. Moreover, public recognition schemes through CSR can encourage sustained private sector involvement and partnership with NGOs, for which chambers of commerce and business associations in Iraq can play a convening role through CSR roundtables and sector-wide agreements. "There is a need for more collaboration among NGOs, government, and the private sector to create a more sustainable ecosystem for civil society NGOs in Iraq" (Mustapha, Personal Communication, April 6, 2025).

Additionally, localization and community ownership are equally essential for long-term sustainability. Embedding operations within local structures through community committees, advisory boards, and peer-support mechanisms can enhance legitimacy, reduce costs, and strengthen accountability. These models ensure that programs are rooted in the needs and aspirations of the communities they serve, and they help safeguard operations in the event of donor withdrawal. Furthermore, to reduce dependency and generate unrestricted income, NGOs are also exploring the development of social enterprises. Finally, for the Iraqi NGOs to thrive again, they should consider and explore income-generating projects such as education and vocational training projects, for which collaboration with universities and other entities might be necessary. Establishing small or medium-scale businesses could be another source of income to sustain NGOs' operations now and ensure sustainability and perhaps scalability in the future. Equally importantly, the NGOs need to be more efficient in economizing on using and consuming resources, which requires thorough assessment and evaluation.

5. Conclusion

For decades, the Iraqi NGOs have relied heavily on Western donors, with more than half of the funds coming solely from the US. The sudden and unexpected suspension of US funding placed Iraqi NGOs in an undesirable crisis and difficulties, revealing an important lesson on how they were intensely dependent on foreign funding, mainly the US funds, and how fragile their operational and sustainability models could be. When the US fund was suspended, the consequences were immediate and severe, even for NGOs' very critical programs, projects, and activities such as healthcare, child protection, and psychosocial support to the most vulnerable people who are in dire need of their help and support. Thus, it leaves vulnerable populations, such as displaced families,

survivors of gender-based violence, and traumatized children, without essential support. Staff layoffs and office closures further weakened the NGO sector in Iraq, undermining and putting at risk years of progress in community trust and social cohesion.

Nonetheless, Iraqi NGOs have started exploring various opportunities and strategies to be resilient and build long-term sustainability. As diversifying funding sources from current and prospective donors, some NGOs have already started turning to other paths, methods, and models. However, these adaptations are not without challenges. Equally important, the path forward toward sustainability demands collaboration of Iraqi NGOs across sectors and the country. Therefore, while the road ahead is still challenging, embracing diversification, innovation, and stronger local roots, Iraqi NGOs can transform this moment of vulnerability into an opportunity for strength and lasting sustainability. Their ability to adapt will determine whether they can continue to survive and thrive again to serve as pillars of hope and recovery for the country, which is still struggling in the aftermath of long-term conflicts.

5.1 Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided for the Iraqi national NGOs in order to be able to cope with the current challenges and difficulties that are caused by the suspension of the US funds, as well as to ensure long-term sustainability in the future. The recommendations are divided into two main categories of internal management and external relations.

Internal Management

- **Develop Comprehensive and Adaptive Strategic Plans:** Iraqi NGOs should prioritize the creation of multi-year strategic plans that are adaptable to funding fluctuations. These plans should include risk assessments, sustainability goals, and contingency strategies for donor withdrawal or emergencies.
- **Invest in Human Capital and Organizational Capacity:** NGOs must further invest in building the skills of their staff, particularly in areas such as grant writing, financial management, funding digital tools, and donor communications .
- **Enhance Donor Alignment and Proposal Targeting:** NGOs should improve their ability to map donor priorities by theme and region. This strategic alignment will increase the likelihood of successful proposals and enable more tailored and effective partnerships.
- **Implement Cost-Efficiency and Resource Optimization Measures:** Finally, NGOs must conduct internal evaluations to identify areas for cost savings and improved resource use. Efficiency measures can ensure long-term sustainability, especially during financial uncertainty.

External/Public Relations

- **Diversify Funding Sources:** The mindset of depending on traditional donors is critical. NGOs should actively pursue funding from other non-US forces, such as the European Union programs, regional governments and institutions, private sector – Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, religious institutions, donations platforms, and other possible sources.
- **Advocate for Government Funding and Policy Support:** Iraqi NGOs should also jointly advocate for the federal Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional Governments to establish national funding mechanisms for NGOs. A transparent, independently managed civil society fund, along with the appointment of government focal points and oversight mechanisms, can significantly enhance NGO sustainability and reach.
- **Strengthen NGO–Private Sector Collaboration:** NGOs should proactively engage the private sector through structured CSR programs that go beyond donations. Companies can provide technical support, capacity building, and strategic investments aligned with development goals. Chambers of commerce and business associations should help facilitate these partnerships.

- Promote Localization and Community Ownership: Embedding operations within local structures through advisory committees, peer networks, and community-based mechanisms will increase accountability, reduce operational costs, and improve legitimacy. Localization efforts should be central to all NGO programming.
- Establish and Scale Social Enterprises: To create independent revenue streams, NGOs should explore the establishment of social enterprises linked to their mission areas. This could include vocational training centers, educational services, or small businesses that align with community needs.
- Collaborate with Educational Institutions: Partnering with universities and vocational training centers can help NGOs design income-generating projects, expand outreach, and build credibility. These partnerships may also support research, innovation, and evidence-based programming.

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داهاتووی ریکخواه ناھکومییەکانی عیراق لە سەردەمی دواى بەخشین (فەند) ی ئەمریکا: ئاستەنگەکان و ستراتیجیەکان بۆ بەردەوامی

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پوختە

راگرتنی یارمەتیە دەرهەکیەکانی ئەمریکا بە پێی فەرمانی جێبەجێکاری 14169 پشتبەستنی دارایی ترسناکی ریکخواه ناھکومییەکانی عیراقی بە دەروە ئاشکرا کرد، بەتایبەتی پارەى ئەمریکا. ئەم توێژینەوہیە لیکۆلینەوہیە لە ئاستەنگەکانی کارکردن و دارایی دەکات کە رووبەرەووی ریکخواه ناھکومییەکانی عیراق دەبنەوہیە لە دواى راگرتنی بەخشین (فەند) ی ئەمریکا. توێژینەوہکە میتۆدی تیکەلایى بەکار ھێناوہ، لەوانە چاوپێکەوتن بە میتۆدی چۆنایەتی لەگەڵ سەرپەرشتیارانی 13 ریکخواوی ناھکومی عیراقی و ھەلسەنگاندنی چەندایەتی بۆ پرۆگرامەکانیان. دەرنجامەکان دەریدەخەن کە زیاتر لە 50% بودجەى ریکخواه ناھکومییەکانی عیراق پشت بە بەخشین (فەند) ی ئەمریکا دەبەستن، راگرتنی یارمەتی ئەمریکی بەتە ھۆکاریکی بەرچاوی بۆ پچرانی پرۆژەکان، دەرکردنی بەشیکی کارمەندان و کەمبوونەوہی ژمارەى سوودمەندەکان. ئەم کیشیە کاریگەری زیاتری لەسەر گروپە سوودمەندە لاوازەکان کردوہ، بەتایبەتی ژنان، مندالان و ئاوارە و پەنابەران کە پشت بە پاراستن و یارمەتی ریکخواه ناھکومییەکان دەبەستن، ھەروہا ئەوانەشی کە یارمەتی لە رووی چاودێری تەندروستی، پەرورەدە و خزمەتگوزاری یاسایی وەرەگرن. لەگەڵ ئەوہشدا، ھەرچەندە دۆخەکە گەشەنەسەندوہ و دەرفەتەکانیش سنووردان، بەلام ریکخواه ناھکومییەکانی عیراق لە قونای گەران بەدواى ئەگەری تردا بۆ مانوہ و بەو ھیوایەى دووبارە گەشە بکەنەوہی لە ریکەى ھەمەجۆرکردنی سەرچاوەى بەخشەر و سەرمايە بۆ دنیابوون لە بەردەوامی ستراٹیژی. توێژینەوہکە بە شیکردنەوہی قەیرانی دارایی ئیستا و ئەو ستراٹیجیانی کە وەک ریکایەک بۆ داهاتوویەکی گونجوتر، گفتوگۆی فراوانتر لەسەر خۆراگری و بەردەوامی ریکخواه ناھکومییەکان پێشکەش دەکات و ھەندیک پێشنیاریش پێشکەش دەکات بۆ پشێوانیکردن لە بەردەوامی درێژخایەنی ریکخواه ناھکومییەکانی عیراق لە ھەلومەرجی ناديارى دارایی.

وشە سەرھەکیەکان: ریکخواه ناھکومییەکان، ریکخواه ناھکومییەکان، کۆکردنەوہی کۆمەک، بەخشەر و بەردەوامی

مستقبل المنظمات غير الحكومية العراقية في مرحلة ما بعد التمويل الأمريكي: التحديات واستراتيجيات الاستدامة

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المخلص

كشفت تعليق المساعدات الخارجية الأمريكية بموجب الأمر التنفيذي رقم 14169 عن الاعتماد المالي محفوف بالمخاطر للمنظمات غير الحكومية العراقية على التمويل الأجنبي، وخاصة الأمريكي، مما يهدد قدرتهم على تقديم الخدمات الإنسانية والتنمية الأساسية، ناهيك عن استدامتهم. تتناول هذه الدراسة التحديات التشغيلية والمالية التي تواجه المنظمات غير الحكومية العراقية في أعقاب التعليق المفاجئ للتمويل الأمريكي، بالاعتماد على بحث متعدد الأساليب، يشمل استطلاعات رأي لـ 13 منظمة غير حكومية عراقية وطنية ومقابلات مع قادة برامجها. تكشف النتائج أن أكثر من 50% من ميزانية المنظمات غير الحكومية العراقية اعتمدت على التمويل الأمريكي في عملياتها الأساسية، حيث أبلغ العديد منها عن اضطرابات حادة، بما في ذلك تعليق المشاريع، وتسريح الموظفين، وتقليص نطاق وصول المساعدات إلى المستفيدين، بعد تعليق المساعدات الأمريكية. وقد أثرت هذه المشكلة بشكل غير متناسب على الفئات الضعيفة، وخاصة النساء والأطفال والنازحين واللاجئين، الذين يعتمدون على الحماية والمساعدة التي تقدمها المنظمات غير الحكومية، بالإضافة إلى الرعاية الصحية والتعليم والخدمات القانونية. مع ذلك، ورغم تخلف الوضع ومحدودية الفرص، فإن المنظمات غير الحكومية الوطنية العراقية في مرحلة استكشاف إمكانيات أخرى للبقاء، لكي يزدهروا من جديد وهذا من خلال تنوع مصادر التمويل لضمان الاستدامة الاستراتيجية. ومن خلال تحليل الدروس المستفادة من أزمة التمويل الحالية والاستراتيجيات التي وضعت كمدار نحو مستقبل أكثر استدامة للمنظمات غير الحكومية، يسهم البحث في نقاشات أوسع نطاقاً حول مرونة المنظمات غير الحكومية واستدامتها، ويُقدم توصيات لدعم استمرارية المنظمات غير الحكومية العراقية على المدى الطويل في ظل بيئة مساعدات تتزايد فيها حالة عدم اليقين المالي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المنظمات غير الحكومية المنظمات غير الحكومية، جمع التبرعات، الجهات المانحة، الاستدامة