

Heartbeat IRAQ



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Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights– Iraq Programs

Heartland Alliance is a non-governmental organization that was founded in Chicago, Illinois in 1888, and has been working in Iraq since 2004. *Heartland Alliance's mission is to advance human rights by responding to the needs of vulnerable individuals through the provision of comprehensive and respectful services, and through the promotion of permanent solutions leading to a more just global society.*

As part of our work in Iraq, Heartland Alliance builds the capacity of health and mental health care providers through training and supervision, and supports the provision of mental health, social, medical, legal, and educational services to Iraqis, returnees, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Heartland Alliance provides health and mental health care services targeting women, children, and the mentally ill, and specializes in the treatment of survivors of trauma and human rights abuses. Heartland Alliance additionally runs protection programs providing legal, mediation and social services to victims of gender-based violence. Heartland Alliance works with the support and collaboration of governmental ministries and local Iraqi NGOs to carry out its mission throughout Iraq.



Integrated Mental Health

Heartland Alliance's aim is to integrate mental health services into the Iraqi primary health care system to address the long-term impact of widespread torture that has affected thousands of Iraqis throughout the country. Since 2004, Heartland Alliance in cooperation with the Ministry of Health has trained 200 community mental health workers (CMHWs) and 100 physicians in 15 of Iraq's 18 governorates to provide psychosocial services through remote health centers. Over the past year Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health has partnered with Heartland Alliance to conduct an ongoing study to determine the most effective therapeutic intervention for torture survivors, and to then provide training to all CMHWs on the intervention determined to be most effective.

Heartland Alliance trains CMHWs on skills needed to provide psychosocial services to survivors of torture and trauma as well as individuals dealing with other mental health issues. CMHWs provide clients with intake and treatment planning, psycho-education, medication management, suicide prevention services, substance abuse treatment, and advocacy assistance to access available resources. In addition to working directly with individuals and their families, CMHWs engage the community through education to raise awareness about the need for mental health services and to reduce the stigma associated with mental health problems. In the past year CMHWs have served over 3,000 individuals throughout Iraq.



Trauma Rehabilitation & Training Center

In December 2007, Heartland Alliance opened the Trauma Rehabilitation & Training Center (TRTC) to provide comprehensive services to survivors of torture and trauma.

The Trauma Rehabilitation & Training Center (TRTC) is based in Sulaimaniya, where qualified staff provides comprehensive and confidential services that include individual and group counseling, psychiatric services, medical services and referrals, and case management. The psychosocial rehabilitation services provided assist the survivor to reconnect to family, reintegrate into society, and find and maintain employment, housing, and other life essentials. Additionally, the TRTC staff supervises the network of community mental health workers throughout Iraq. Heartland Alliance has provided extensive and ongoing training to its staff that have now become an important resource inside Iraq to train other paraprofessionals on the importance and delivery of mental health services from a trauma-informed approach.

Since its inception, the TRTC has achieved the following:

- Provision of comprehensive high quality services to more than 200 survivors of torture and trauma.
- Group therapy with Anfal widows in Kalar and with Arab IDPs in Qalawa Camp.
- Outreach and awareness raising to reduce the stigma of mental health among the general population.
- Establishment of female Client Advisory Board (*male counterpart to follow*).
- Completion of six-week training rotation in counseling of six students from Koya University.



Johns Hopkins University Study

Heartland Alliance has partnered with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (*Johns Hopkins*) to undertake an intensive study in northern Iraq designed to identify whether an effective treatment for depression among torture survivors can be found. The study—the first of its kind to be conducted inside Iraq—compares Behavioral Activation and Cognitive Processing Therapy, two well-researched therapies for trauma and torture survivors in other locations, to determine whether they could be useful in alleviating symptoms of depression among survivors in the Iraqi context.

Experts on both therapies visited the KRG from the U.S. to train 36 of Heartland Alliance’s community mental health workers (CMHWs) to participate in the study. These CMHWs have been trained and monitored by Heartland Alliance since 2005 and provide psychosocial services in rural health centers throughout the Governorates of Dohuk, Erbil, and Sulaimaniya. As part of the study, Johns Hopkins aims to provide mental health treatment to 480 survivors of torture.

Once the study is completed, Heartland Alliance plans to expand its mental health training to a wider network of CMHWs, and to train CMHWs currently working in Southern Iraq to use the treatment paradigm found to be most effective.



Psychosocial Care for Children in Emergencies & Crisis: UNICEF Teacher Training Programme

Heartland Alliance recently completed a year-long pilot program providing psychosocial support to children attending schools in areas affected by violence and conflict, including Baghdad, Erbil, Wasit, Missan, Thi Qar, and Basra. The trainings were designed to provide Iraqi teachers with effective tools needed to address the needs of vulnerable children, particularly those affected by war and violence. Teachers received trainings on teaching methods appropriate for children suffering from the effects of trauma or war, creating a safe and supportive learning environment, creating individualized education plans for children experiencing difficulties, and improving coordination with parents.

The Psychosocial Teacher Training Program was conducted in close consultation with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, and was also supported by a Steering Committee that was assembled by UNICEF. An extensive monitoring and evaluation program was developed, and the results are currently being evaluated and analyzed.

During the last year Heartland Alliance achieved the following:

- Training of 68 teacher trainers to prepare them to train teachers in six governorates.
- Training of 1,728 teachers by teacher trainers.
- Reached 51,719 vulnerable children aged 6 to 14-years old.
- Developing teacher-parent associations to address problems facing children in school and at home.

In December 2009 Heartland Alliance launched the second year of the program, which was expanded to include the Governorate of Sulaimaniya. The aim of the second year of the Teacher Training Program is to train an additional 16 teacher trainers and 2,036 teachers. Additionally, Heartland Alliance is developing a curriculum to train 40 social workers in school settings to identify and respond to children and families in need of special services or support.



Programs Addressing Gender-Based Violence & Human Trafficking

Mediating to Prevent Violence Against Women

With the support of the United Nations Development Fund for women, Heartland Alliance created a training manual on mediating to prevent violence against women. Tribal and religious leaders have long used mediation in Iraq to settle disputes between individuals, families and communities, and many womens' rights advocates have adapted these practices to protect women and girls from harm. Heartland Alliance's manual was developed specifically to approach mediation from a gender-sensitive approach, and was based on extensive research with social workers who successfully mediate to prevent violence against women in northern Iraq.

This manual combines well-established mediation principals with local practices to provide a resource and training tool for social workers interested in learning the nuts and bolts of gender-focused mediation and best practices for working with victims of gender violence. Heartland Alliance has used this manual to train more than 50 social workers affiliated with local organizations working to prevent gender-based violence.

Most recently Heartland Alliance used the manual to train thirty internally displaced Kurds living in Failaq Camp in Kirkuk to prevent gender-based violence in their own communities. The mediators identified numerous individuals in need of assistance within their community, and using the strategies learned in the training, the mediators assisted approximately 100 persons in very difficult cases involving blood marriage, forced marriage, deprivation from education, and domestic violence.

Access to Justice for Victims of Gender-Based Violence

Heartland Alliance is working with Iraqi NGOs in the KRG as well as Kirkuk, Baghdad, and Basra to advocate for the legal rights of victims of gender-based violence in the criminal justice system and the Personal Status Courts. Heartland Alliance trained lawyers to build critical legal skills and to promote the rule of law and the right to due process for their clients during the investigation, trial, and appeals process. Heartland Alliance trained participating lawyers to provide legal representation from a client-centered approach that places the needs and interests of their clients at the forefront of the legal and decision-making process. Lawyers were also trained to gather evidence, to develop novel legal arguments and to ensure the application of existing laws that are beneficial but may be underutilized.

The model of service delivery is one that combines legal representation with social services mediation. This has proven effective as lawyers protect the rights of their clients while social workers ensure that clients can reintegrate into their families and communities free from violence.

In addition to providing direct services, Heartland Alliance aims to promote longer-term institutional change by documenting how the criminal justice system and Personal Status Courts impact victims of gender-based violence and working with the relevant authorities to improve legislation, policies, and procedures.

During the past year Heartland Alliance's working with its Iraqi NGO partners has achieved the following:

- 612 women and girls screened for comprehensive services (*legal representation with social support*).
- 235 victims of gender-based violence provided with legal criminal defense.
- 270 victims of gender-based violence provided with comprehensive services in the Personal Status Courts and to file criminal claims against perpetrators.
- 436 clients provided with social services.
- 775 victims of gender-based violence provided with mediation support.
- 1,663 female detainees provided with supplemental medical services.



Gender-Based Violence Media Programs

Heartland Alliance has developed television talk shows and radio dramas combined with discussion segments to provide a forum for addressing sensitive issues relating to gender-based violence and to allow viewers and listeners to participate in the programs. The programs focus on issues such as domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse, honor related violence, forced marriage, suicide, and female genital mutilation (FGM). Related topics that these programs have covered include matters involving personal status such as divorce and child custody, as well as issues that arise for victims of gender-based violence in the criminal justice system. Heartland Alliance produced a Public Service Announcement on forced marriage which can be viewed at the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUr98YTHprc>.

Tracking and Documenting Gender-Based Violence

In recent years **Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)** took the initiative to document incidences of gender-based violence in Sulaimaniya, Erbil, and Duhok through various government agencies. Heartland Alliance conducted an assessment of how the KRG identifies, documents, tracks, and reports information pertaining to gender-based violence. Heartland Alliance developed a report with recommendations for improving data collection systems that will be provided to various relevant government agencies with suggestions to adopt the suggested changes. The report can be found at www.heartlandalliance.org.



Regional Counter-Trafficking Program

During times of conflict, **women and girls are at greater risk of gender-specific harms, including sex trafficking.** In Iraq, because of internal conflict and the breakdown in law and order since the overthrow of the Iraqi regime in 2003, large numbers of refugees and internally displaced Iraqis have had to flee their homes, resulting in a rise in kidnapping and trafficking. Victims of sex trafficking may be forced into prostitution by family members, subsequently falling under the control of third party criminals, or may be simply kidnapped. Trafficking victims face the same pervasive stigma attached to women and girls who violate cultural restrictions on behavior and sexuality, and are viewed as having dishonored their families.

Heartland Alliance, in partnership with local non-governmental organizations, recently launched a two-year education, prevention, and direct services project to address the needs of Iraqi victims of sex trafficking in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and within Iraq. The project aims to increase awareness and improve understanding of human trafficking among the general public, first responders, and service providers. Local partners will provide direct services to victims and will document information that will lead to an overall greater understanding of the patterns and practices of human trafficking of Iraqi women and girls internally and to neighboring countries.



Protecting the Rights of Institutionalized Persons

In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, **Heartland Alliance** is implementing a program to improve the standards of care of institutionalized persons throughout several Iraqi provinces from the south in Basra to Baghdad to the north in the KRG. Targeted institutions include psychiatric institutions and psychiatric units of hospitals, jails and detention centers for juveniles and women, women's shelters, and orphanages.

This program has the following objectives:

- 1. Develop or strengthen** independent mechanisms within MOLSA and MOH to assure proper treatment of institutionalized persons.
- 2. Train and supervise** Iraqi NGOs in direct protective services for the populations in women's shelters, residential psychiatric units, and orphanages.
- 3. Promote** the creation of a national mutual support organization of families of the mentally ill or disabled, building capacity for public advocacy.
- 4. Involve** Iraqi medical and legal professional organizations in the accreditation of institutions, advocacy, and public education on the needs of institutionalized children, women, and the mentally ill.

In addition to training psychiatrists, social workers, and institutional administrators on issues such as building skills for working with institutionalized populations and developing and implementing policies and best practices, Heartland Alliance will carry out a number of related activities. Heartland Alliance will develop training curricula and other educational materials, and will work with professional medical and legal organizations to create and promulgate codes of conduct for the ministries responsible for these institutions. LNGO partners will also provide direct services to individuals who suffer from abuse and neglect, and will advocate for improved treatment.





Juvenile Justice Protection

Heartland Alliance's Juvenile Justice program seeks to enhance access to justice for juveniles in the criminal justice system. Heartland Alliance, working with local NGOs, will strive to improve the quality and reliability of child and adolescent assessments conducted by the Ministry of Labor & Social Affairs' (MoLSA) Office of Personality Assessment. Heartland Alliance will work with MoLSA to apply international standards of treatment for minors in the criminal justice system, and strengthen MoLSA's capacity for a more rigorous system of supervised release and safety planning.

Heartland Alliance trains its LNGO partners to provide legal screening, advocacy and representation to detained youth facing criminal charges. Heartland Alliance also trains LNGOs on restorative justice mediation and the promotion of alternatives to detention for those convicted of minor crimes. Prevention activities for children and juveniles include the creation of children centers that provide safe and educational activities as well as social and health services for vulnerable street children. Heartland Alliance opened such a center in Baghdad and plans to create a similar center in the KRG.

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IRAQ PROGRAM

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