

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019



## *Foreword*

Article 21 of the Lisbon Treaty clearly states that the European Union shall seek to advance democracy worldwide. Supporting democracy is therefore not an option for the EU; it is an obligation to be respected in all of its external policies. In today's global context, characterised by democratic backsliding, shrinking space for civil society and a resurgence of conflicts and violence, the urgency to act on this legal obligation could not be clearer.

*elbarlament* acts in line with the EU's democracy support framework by supporting countries and societies to counter the aforementioned challenges and move towards more inclusive, participatory and legitimate forms of democratic governance. Through activities ranging from training, coaching and capacity building to cultural promotion and dialogue between civil society and political decision makers, we are spreading cultures of democracy in our projects and consultancy work, worldwide. We follow a needs-based approach, tailoring our interventions to the specific local context, in consultation with our partner organisations and contacts on the ground.

*elbarlament* has built a well-deserved reputation as a trusted assistance provider driven by its mission to support governments, parliaments and civil society, especially women and youths, in developing democratic ideas and processes contributing to good governance and sustainable development. Since our creation in 2013, we have built a solid track record in Iraq, Lebanon, Tunisia, Myanmar, Estonia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and South Africa.

In 2019, the global community witnessed yet again popular uprisings in the Middle East and in other parts of the world. We reacted quickly to the demands of the protesters in Iraq by adjusting our ongoing projects in the country after consulting our donors at the German Federal Foreign Office. Thanks to our deep knowledge of the region and our strong local connections, we managed to navigate the troubled waters of the revolution and continue our work in support of democracy and inclusive development in Iraq.

The purpose of this annual report is to showcase the highlights of our work in 2019. At the same time, we are looking forward to continuing our work in Iraq and Lebanon as well as South Africa and Nigeria in 2020.

Our deepest gratitude goes out to our partners, experts and trainers, and, last but not least, to the *elbarlament* team in Berlin and Cologne, for their invaluable contribution to our mission to promote cultures of democracy, worldwide.

Birgit Laubach and Sebastian Bloching  
Managing Directors---

elbarlament – cultures of democracy



## ABOUT ELBARLAMENT

*elbarlament* is an independent, nonpartisan and impartial organisation founded on the premise that civil society, parliaments, governments and administrations in transition require a specific and innovative quality of technical assistance and advisory services, based on political analysis, research and evaluation of assistance practices. The specific approach of *elbarlament* consists in creating sustainable links and cooperation between political actors and civil society by developing the capacity of key stakeholders in all sectors concerned. *elbarlament* creates innovative pathways between societal and cultural activities to foster democracy and participatory governance. It supports partners and beneficiaries in developing their potential to contribute to good governance, the rule of law and the prosperity of the people they serve and represent through strong, open and effective administrative, operational and decision-making processes and structures.

*elbarlament* draws expertise from a wide range of partnerships and a multi-national pool of experts covering topics such as democratisation, rule of law, public administration reform, sectoral policies including budgeting and planning, security sector oversight, human rights, cultural promotion and women and youth participation.

*elbarlament GmbH* is a member of the “Facharbeitskreis Governance” of the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ). Our nonprofit association is a member of the Community of Practice of the Brussels-based European Partnership for Democracy (EPD).

## Annual Report 2019

### PROJECTS

#### *Women think Iraq anew*

In 2019, supported by the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V. (ifa) with funds from the German Federal Foreign Office, *elbarlament* continued its work with politically engaged women in Iraq. Our project “Women think Iraq anew” brought together female members of the national parliament of Iraq, the National Council of Representatives, with women leaders from civil society, academia and the legal professions and supported them in developing a joint vision for the future of their country. The project promoted new approaches for ensuring the participation of women in democratic, societal and peace processes on a local, regional and national level. Our participants come from many different cities and regions of Iraq such as Baghdad, Dohuk, Kirkuk, Mosul, Basra, Nasiriya, Erbil, Maysan, Al Anbar and Sulaymaniyah. They are connected to different political parties and civil society organisations and have different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

2019 was a challenging year for Iraq and for our project, with countrywide protests erupting in October 2019 and continuing to this day. Under the guidance of our local and international trainers and experts, the project’s participants discussed and prepared **amendments to a draft bill on fighting domestic violence** and developed **amendments to the so called “Yezidi Bill”** in the first part of the year. After focusing on improving the legal situation for women, we focused on integrity and countering corruption measures in the second half of the year, an issue that lies at the root of the protest movement. Facilitated by our experts, the group of women leaders developed a catalogue of **recommendations for anti-corruption measures** for both civil society organisations and governmental institutions which were subsequently presented to a high-ranking audience at the prestigious RCD Forum in Baghdad.

#### *Women take the lead for a new Syria*

In 2019, *elbarlament* together with the Syrian civil society organisation Women Now for Development implemented the project “Women take the lead for a new Syria”, which was supported by ifa with funds from the German Federal Foreign Office. The aim of the project, which will be continued in 2020-2021, was to encourage Syrian refugees to participate actively in rebuilding their country.

Through a tailor-made **leadership programme** we provided the women with knowledge of political processes as well as skills in political mediation and conflict management. In particular, the participants developed the know-how that they need to contribute effectively to local efforts aimed at ensuring the rule of law and transitional justice. We also supported the integration of the participants into their host communities in Lebanon, while equally preparing them for their eventual reintegration into the Syrian society. Two **small grants** were given to two groups of participants who used the funds to implement grass-roots initiatives in their local communities in Lebanon.

### *Cultural Initiatives for Civil Society in Iraq 2019*

The project “Cultural Initiatives for Civil Society in Iraq 2019” offered female writers from Iraq safe spaces where they could express themselves freely and challenge societal prejudices through exploring different writing genres together. The Train the Trainer Programme was funded by the German Federal Foreign Office as a continuation of our successful “Writing for Life” project. In 2019, despite the difficult situation in Iraq, we succeeded in expanding into new regions of the country and in involving new participants. Train the Trainer Workshops took place in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Dohuk, Hilla and Baghdad. Furthermore, we facilitated two storytelling workshops for female refugees in Dohuk.

The participants belonged to different age groups, ethnic and religious backgrounds and writing genres, but shared experiences of grief and sorrow, often linked to the recent terror reign by the so-called Islamic State, and the wish to overcome paternalistic societal structures and to become better writers. One of the main goals was to build the women’s confidence in their own writing, encouraging them to see themselves differently in society: as individuals with unique artistic gifts and skills contributing actively to Iraqi culture. The **Train the Trainers programme** provided them with the necessary methodological knowledge and practical tools to organise writing workshops and cultural events for other writers on their own.

Furthermore, in December 2019 *elbarlament* organised a **photo exhibition** with photographs and videos of the project’s participants in the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin. The exhibition was opened by the Minister of State for International Cultural Policy at the Federal Foreign Office, Michelle Müntefering and *elbarlament* managing director Dr. Birgit Laubach who emphasised the importance of cultural initiatives in peacebuilding processes.

Adding another new element to the project, in January 2020 *elbarlament*, in cooperation with World Art Connection and the city of Tunis, held an international **Arab Women Literature Festival** under the slogan ‘My pen. My voice’ in the Medina of Tunis. Originally, the plan

had been to hold the festival in Baghdad, but due to the tense security situation in Iraq at the end of the year, we decided to organise the event in the Tunisian capital instead.

The festival brought together female authors from Iraq, Morocco, Syria, Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. They introduced the audience to the different worlds of writing genres and allowed them to explore the unique talents and styles of female writing. Next to public readings, the authors discussed the situation of female writers in the Arab world. It was the first time for most of the invited authors to share their challenges and ideas with fellow female writers from the Arabic speaking world. Given the positive feedback *elbarlament* received from the participants and the audience, we have started looking into options for organising a follow up festival in Baghdad in 2020 and for creating a platform for Arab female writers facilitating networking and collaboration.

## CONSULTANCY WORK

### *Advisory and training: Promoting Human Rights and Legislative Efficiency in the Pan-African Parliament*

As part of the EU-funded project “Strengthening the African Human Rights System”, Dr Birgit Laubach, Managing Director of *elbarlament*, was contracted by GFA to provide technical assistance to the Pan African Parliament (PAP), the legislative body of the African Union, in Midrand, South Africa. The PAP had expressed a need for capacity building support on formulating laws that promote human rights on the African continent. The goal of the PAP is to get full legislative power and to harmonise the legislation of the African Union member states. Model laws can play an important role to reach these objectives. In 2019, the PAP found itself in the process of developing model laws on people with disabilities, policing, immigration, protection of cultural heritage as well as food, nutrition and food security. The consultancy work undertaken by *elbarlament* served to support this process.

During parliamentary sessions in September and October 2019, Dr. Laubach worked closely with the parliamentary staff of various standing committees, the legal department, as well as MPs to address the PAP’s existing draft guidelines on the development of model laws. The consultancy consisted of a **workshop for the Members of the Pan-African Parliament** on the conduct of public hearings and the formulation of model laws, **technical support** to the drafting process, a **review of the draft guidelines** on the development of the existing model laws. Another task consisted in compiling **proposals for new rules and amendments to the existing Rules of Procedures of the parliament**, ultimately helping to make the PAP a more

transparent, effective and efficient institution while also emphasising the importance of human rights more generally.

*Study trip: Searching for new approaches to solve Iraq's environmental challenges*

Iraq is facing environmental degradation, resource competition and scarcity, as well as human insecurity. The country is marked by massive environmental problems: plastic, rubbish and industrial waste contaminate various water bodies, critically diminishing fish populations in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The decline in water resources, due to both increased droughts and resource competition from neighboring countries, poses a risk to peaceful transboundary water usage and regional cooperation. The establishment of an environmental institute is being considered by Iraqi stakeholders as an option to deal with these changes, including by promoting closer cooperation among the relevant departments of the country's universities and facilitating needed research and environmental programmes.

From the 27th to the 31st October 2019, *elbarlament*, with the support of the German Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and GIZ, organised a study trip to Germany for a high-ranking Iraqi delegation in order to support and contribute to the ongoing discussions about environmental policy in Iraq. The **Iraqi delegation** was headed by the First Lady of the Republic of Iraq, Dr Serbagh Salih. Other delegation members included Dr Jassim Alfalahi, Deputy Minister of Environment and Health; Dr Abdulbary Almudarris, elected member of the Council of Representatives and Mr. Mohammed Taher Al-Tamimi, General Director of the NGO Directorate and Chairman of the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers. The participants were offered opportunities to **explore the work of leading German institutions in the fields of science, civil society and politics**, exchanging and comparing different ideas, experiences, and approaches to securing and improving water quality, promoting renewable energy sources, combatting resource scarcity and protecting vulnerable ecosystems and Iraq's unique natural heritage – all with a view towards stabilising social structures in Iraq and ultimately moving the country towards a more peaceful future.

The study trip commenced with visits to the First Lady of Germany, Mrs. Elke BÜdenbender, the Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Environment Ministry. The delegation also visited the Federal Environment Agency in Dessau and exchanged ideas with the German Council for Sustainable Development. The Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research in Leipzig presented the current research on decentralised wastewater management for water-scarce regions, the impact of pollution through toxicants such as pesticides on surface waters, as well as the project "Future Trajectories for Jordan's Water-Energy-Food Nexus". Furthermore, State Secretary Volker Ratzmann informed the Delegation about the "Policy to be heard" of the State of Baden Württemberg. Meetings with German civil society

organisations at the forefront of environmental activism and civil mobilisation highlighted the importance of civic participation and cooperation between the state and the civil society in the planning of environmental projects.

*Research report: Arts-based approaches to peace-building in Iraq*

Between December 2018 and February 2019, *elbarlament*, with funding from the German Federal Foreign Office, conducted research on foreign-funded cultural programmes and projects in Iraq, with a focus on initiatives using the arts for peacebuilding purposes. The report builds on desk research as well as field interviews conducted by *elbarlament* with artists and civil society activists from Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Sulaymaniyah, Nasiriyah, Dohuk and Erbil. It provides **analysis of the local “demand” for cultural programmes in Iraq** while also providing an overview of the existing **“offer” in this field in terms of funding and other kinds of international support programmes**, concentrating on initiatives supported by Germany, France, Denmark, Austria, Great Britain, Switzerland, the USA, the European Union and UNESCO.

## DEBATE

*Panel discussion (“Werkstattgespräch”): Culture Matters!*

On 4 July 2019 at the taz Kantine in Berlin, *elbarlament* organised a panel discussion on how Iraq can achieve stability, and what role cultural projects can play in overcoming the consequences of war and in supporting reconciliation processes. The discussants were Susana Abdul Majid, an actress with Iraqi roots who took part in Milo Rau’s play “Orestes in Mosul”, which combined the Greek tragedy with the recent presence of the so-called Islamic State in Mosul, Sebastian Bloching, co-author of the report “Cultural work against the consequences of war - a snapshot from Iraq”, Andrea Böhm, journalist with many years of experience reporting on Iraq and the MENA region for DIE ZEIT, and Alisha Molter, Project Manager for Iraq at *elbarlament*. The event was organised in the framework of our project “Women think Iraq anew”, which was supported by ifa with funds from the German Federal Foreign Office.

*Panel discussion (“Werkstattgespräch”): Mass protests in Iraq: Part of a Global Movement?*



From October 2019 onwards, millions of Iraqis began taking to the streets, uniting across religious affiliations and ethnic origins to demand an end to Iranian influence and a state that serves its people, where they can find employment and a more promising outlook on the future. In the framework of its project “Women think Iraq anew”, *elbarlament* hosted a panel discussion on 17 December 2019 at the taz Kantine in Berlin that focused on the situation in Iraq, especially since the beginning of the mass protests and acts of civil disobedience. The panel consisted of Haifa Alamin, a former parliamentarian and chairman of the Women’s Committee in the Iraqi Parliament until October 2019, when she resigned her mandate in solidarity of the protesters; Eman Al-Waily, an Iraqi author living in Baghdad; Monika Bolliger, journalist and Arabist as well as Christoph Reuter, journalist at Der Spiegel and Middle East expert.

The shareholders and management would like to thank *elbarlament* staff, experts and partners for their commitment to the organisation.

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