

# Annual Report 2021

April 2022

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## Foreword

At the time when we are writing this foreword, Europe is once again the theatre of a war of aggression. Our thoughts are with the Ukrainian people who are defending their country and democracy against the Russian invasion. Looking forward, we will try to support Ukraine and its people in our own way, building on our experience with supporting people in and from other conflict zones.

During the past year, our activities were naturally heavily influenced by the Covid pandemic. Despite having to move a number of workshops online, we were still able to organise events and conduct research on-site in Iraq, Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan and Tunisia. 2022 will be the first year our team will implement an EU-funded project. As a consequence, our team has expanded to include three new members, bringing our staff number up to 18 in Berlin, Cologne and Iraq. We are proud to count a whopping nine nationalities among them! We also had the pleasure of collaborating with a CrossCulture fellow for three months as part of ifa's [CrossCulture Programme \(CCP\)](#).

On an internal level, after a communications strategy review that led to a mini visual identity revamp, we made the decision to grow our social media presence. The number of followers on LinkedIn and Facebook have more than doubled. We have also started being active on Twitter. Our Youtube channel is now updated with all videos ever produced by elbarlament, giving a complete overview of our work in the different projects we have managed since 2014.

This report covers our two legal identities (elbarlament GmbH and elbarlament e.V.).

### **Birgit Laubach and Sebastian Bloching**

Managing Directors elbarlament GmbH and Board Members elbarlament e.V.

## About us

Elbarlament is a peacebuilding and democracy support organisation, with a special focus on empowering women and youth. We follow a unique approach that integrates conflict sensitivity, cultural awareness and intersectionality. We cooperate with parliaments, governments, civil society actors and international institutions, implementing projects and delivering consulting services in German, English, French and Arabic. Our international and multilingual team is based in Berlin, Cologne and Erbil (Iraq).

We believe in the transformative power of culture and the arts as well as inclusive dialogue, especially in contexts of state fragility. Through our work we aim to:

- Promote peaceful coexistence between all groups in society
- Foster democratic norms and practices
- Support dialogue between civil society and political decision makers
- Increase environmental awareness and contribute to mitigating climate change-related conflicts

We follow an integrated approach in supporting locally-owned reform agendas, combining arts-based tools for peacebuilding and civic education with more classical tools like technical assistance.

Elbarlament operates under two separate legal identities: a limited company (elbarlament GmbH) and a non-profit association (elbarlament e.V.). The two legal entities share the same vision and mission.

## PROJECTS - elbarlament GmbH

### *Women Take The Lead (concluded)*

- **Country:** Lebanon
- **Duration of the project:** January 2020 to December 2021
- **Project partners:** [Women Now for Development](#)
- **Project objective:** Leadership programme for Syrian and Lebanese women
- **Funded by:** Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa) funding programme zivik, with funds from the Federal Foreign Office

The Women Take The Lead project continued to build the leadership capacity of a mixed group of Lebanese women and female refugees. Some of the activities implemented in 2021 are presented below:



Graduates of the programme in Lebanon, November 2021

- In March, we conducted a workshop on non-violent communication. The overarching theme of the three days was how to develop better communication with oneself, others, and a large audience. Some of the topics were barriers of communication, the role of gender in communication dynamics, non-violent communication and public speaking.
- In October, we organised a three-day mediation and conflict-management workshop led by Dr. Govinda Clayton, Senior Researcher in Peace Processes at the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich. The participants familiarised themselves with the basic concept of conflicts, violence and non-violence, actors mapping, and the violence triangle.
- In November, representatives from all the initiatives that emerged from the project participated in a donor meeting where they presented their project ideas in an effort to receive more funding. Here is [one of them \(video\)](#).
- In the last quarter of the year, the project participants conducted their own local initiatives in support of other women in their communities.



The trainer Govinda Clayton shared his impressions of the training on Twitter, October 2021



One of the women behind the initiative 'A smile of hope' explains the concept behind it, November 2021

#### More information:

- [How a leadership programme changed the life of 80 Syrian and Lebanese women](#) (short video)
- [Women Take the Lead: A leadership programme for Lebanese and Syrian women](#) (full video)
- [Here for each other - an initiative](#) (video)

#### *Artists: creators of social change (ongoing)*

- **Country:** Iraq
- **Duration of the project:** January 2021 - December 2022
- **Project objective:** Offering a large number of women in the cultural scene in Iraq the chance to network while also enabling them to participate confidently in the cultural, political and social spheres.
- **Funded by:** German Federal Foreign Office

The project offers women in Iraq the chance to network and improve their filmmaking skills by participating in filmmaking training workshops, led by professional trainers and experienced practitioners. Women from various ethnic and religious groups are invited to work together. The project builds upon the previous project: 'Self-determined. Women Make Film', with a new format and participants who will benefit from long-term training.

We organised a number of training workshops throughout the year:

- In March and April, we held an online workshop on **art history** from a female perspective by artists Ala Younis and Raed Ibrahim. In the course of this workshop, the participants gained knowledge about art history with a special focus on feminist signs and female depictions from different times.
- In May and June, we conducted two online workshops: one on **film criticism** and one on **film development**.
- In September, a workshop on **scenario writing** for the documentary film was organised in Erbil and held by the film director and script writer Rouba Atiyeh.
- In September and November, participants took part in a **cinematography** workshop, held by the film director Corine Shawi. The participants had the opportunity to make a personal short documentary film.



Participants talk during one of the workshops. Networking is a big part of all of elbarlament's projects

- A workshop on **film editing** was conducted at the end of October by the filmmaker and editor Mariam Mekiwi in Erbil.
- A YouTube channel was created to foster dialogue and exchange between the participants and viewers.
- Last but not least, in December, we launched the virtual exhibition 'Baghdad Tahrir Art'. It is



a map-based homepage that archives images and videos from the youth protest movement that began in October 2019 in Baghdad's Al Tahrir Square, and links them to their respective places of origin. On display are selected murals, photographs, poster designs and video statements that highlight the different ways young artists, creatives and amateurs use the medium of imagery in order to visualise desires and demands and to show solidarity.

Navigate the streets around Tahrir square and view how artists expressed their views at <https://baghdadtahrirart.net/>

#### More information:

- [Baghdad Tahrir Art Website](#)
- [Youtube channel of the project](#)
- [Instagram](#) and [Facebook pages](#)

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### *Clean Tigris (concluded)*

- Country: Iraq
- **Duration of the project:** February 2020-December 2021
- **Project objective:** Develop sustainable solutions to fight water pollution and improve water management in Iraq
- **Website:** [www.cleantigris.com](http://www.cleantigris.com) (in Arabic)
- **Social media:** [Instagram](#), [Youtube](#) and [Facebook](#) (in Arabic)
- **Funded by:** Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa) funding programme zivik, with funds from the German Federal Foreign Office.

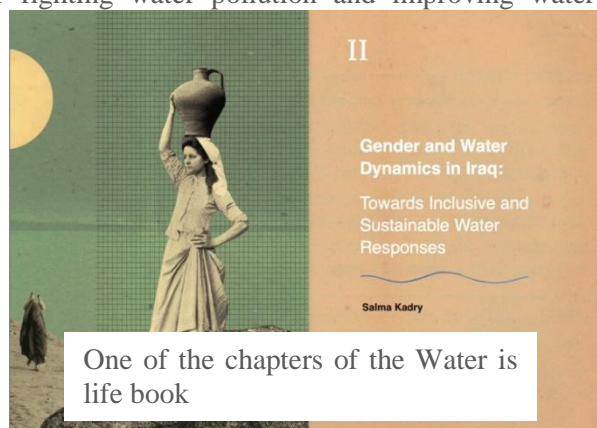


In December 2021, this two-year dialogue programme successfully came to an end. It brought together city mayors and other decision-makers, academics, active members of civil society and artists living along the two main rivers Euphrates and Tigris and the Marshlands in Iraq. Together, they developed a roadmap with recommendations for fighting water pollution and improving water management in the country.

During the course of the project, online workshops with local and international experts on water legislation, international water conflicts, transboundary conflict resolution and negotiation games, as well as the impact of climate change in Iraq and gender dynamics of water conflicts took place.

In early November 2021, the *Water for Future* festival and conference took place in Erbil, Iraq.

Towards the end of the project, a research book titled [Water is life](#) was published. We also published a [comic book](#) with three stories raising awareness among children and adults alike by telling the tale of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.



The final product of the project was the [Roadmap for a sustainable water resource management in Iraq](#), offering a set of recommendations on how to improve the water situation in the country.

#### More information:

- [Clean Tigris Website](#)
- [Videos made by the participants](#)
- [Water is Life: Perspectives on Water in the Land of Two Streams](#)
- [Comic book: A story of a river](#)
- Roadmap for a sustainable water resources management, in three languages: [English](#), [Arabic](#), [Kurdish](#)

### *Lange Nacht der Ideen (concluded)*

Elbarlament held writing workshops for over 200 women from all regions of Iraq from 2016-2018 with funding from the German Foreign Office. These participants have now become socially active in their communities. They organise literary circles, submit their texts to literary festivals, founded their own writers' association and now run their own writing workshops.

An exhibition of poems written by the women writers and their portraits was displayed as a photo exhibition in the atrium of the German Federal Foreign Office in December 2019, opened by Minister of State Michelle Müntefering. In addition, a German-Arabic book with portraits and poems was produced.

During the German Foreign Ministry's *Lange Nacht der Ideen* that took place in May 2021, this exhibition was presented digitally. Visitors got a glimpse of the tremendous talent of Iraqi women writers, as well as of their willpower and strength to pursue what gives them hope and joy of life – writing.



**More information:**

[German-Arabic book with portraits and poems](#)

[Digital Exhibition](#)

[Schreiben: Mein Fenster zur Welt](#) (Writing: My window to the world) (video)

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## **CONSULTANCY WORK - elbarlament GmbH and our experts**

### ***Democracy Support Alliance (ongoing)***

- **Country:** worldwide
- **Contact person:** bloching@elbarlament.org
- **Duration of the project:** November 2021 - April 2022
- **Aim:** To support GIZ with designing a project to promote and protect democracy and human rights worldwide
- **Commissioned by:** Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

Elbarlament's managing director Sebastian Bloching supported GIZ with developing a project aimed at operationalising the new [Team Europe Democracy](#) approach. The project will be funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and start in May or June 2022. It aims to promote and protect democracy and human rights worldwide (including gender equality), develop networks, share experiences on democracy support models, approaches and tools, and build broad alliances to inform policies, programmes and actions both at global and EU partner country level.

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### ***Study on the role of digital technology in promoting the participation of women and young people in local governance in Tunisia (concluded)***

- **Country:** Tunisia
- **Duration of the project:** August 2021 to February 2022
- **Project objective:** Conduct a study on the role of digital technology in promoting the participation of women and young people in local governance
- **Commissioned by:** Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

Our team of experts conducted research and produced a report with recommendations for the GIZ team in Tunis. Our main findings at the end of the project include the current state of digital use by young people and women in the management of local affairs in 10 Tunisian municipalities, ways to increase citizen participation in local public life and the role of young people and women in these municipalities through digitalisation. It assesses actions that should be taken and which local initiatives should be encouraged or set up to improve access to and use of digital technology and therefore, an increased participation of young people and women in local public life.

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### ***Research on civil society space in Kyrgyzstan (concluded)***

- **Country:** Kyrgyzstan
- **Duration of the project:** May to October 2021
- **Project objective:** To assess the space for civil society in Kyrgyzstan
- **Commissioned by:** European Partnership for Democracy



Between May and October 2021, elbarlament conducted research on civil society space in Kyrgyzstan in the framework of the EU-funded Media Dialogue project. Data collection was done through a desk review, an online survey, bilateral interviews, focus groups and a workshop. Elbarlament's managing director Sebastian Bloching travelled to Kyrgyzstan twice to conduct the focus groups and workshop in tandem with a local researcher. The goal was to assess recent political developments and how they impact civil society in Kyrgyzstan. This included analysis on how an on-going constitutional reform process, legal reforms and other actions by the current political regime affect not only NGOs, but also other stakeholders in the broader civil society field, such as media organisations, think tanks, trade unions, business associations and religious groups.

The research report is confidential and not available for circulation.

## PROJECTS - elbarlament e.V.

### *Women Talking Peace (ongoing)*

- **Country:** Iraq
- **Duration of the project:** August 2020 to May 2022 (potentially extended until December 2022)
- **Social media channels:** Facebook and Instagram (in Arabic)
- **Project objective:** For women to perform leading roles in organisations, institutions or peace processes in politics and society in Iraq
- **Funded by:** Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)



From the workshop with tribal and religious leaders and women

The Women Talking Peace project continued to work on involving women in peacebuilding and state-building processes in Iraq. We can report on the following activities:

- In May, we organised workshops on social cohesion and non-violent communication within the framework of the UN Security Council Women, Peace, and Security Agenda for two separate groups, namely a) tribal and religious leaders and b) female leaders. The participants came from different religious backgrounds, sects and regions in Iraq, including both urban and rural areas.
- In July, in the presence of the Iraqi Minister of Defense General Joumaa Anad Aljabouri, we organised a three-day training workshop for high ranking officials from the ministry and military academies in Iraq. The training equipped the participants with relevant skills and competencies to develop and implement gender-sensitive policies within the Ministry of Defence.

- Four workshops on monitoring and writing reports for the member organisations of Alliance 1325, an Iraqi national initiative that advocates for women's rights and the implementation of Iraq's National Action Plan (NAP) for the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. These were held in coordination with the Women Empowerment Organization (WEO).
- In September, participants of the leadership programme met in person after months of online meetings due to the pandemic. The group celebrated the successful completion of the leadership programme with a graduation ceremony and participated in a final workshop on political campaigning.



One of the participants in the leadership programme receives her diploma during the graduation ceremony

- In October we published the study '[Women and Peace in Iraq: opportunities, challenges and prospects for a better future](#)' by Zeynep N. Kaya and Ilham Makki, looking at the current situation of Iraqi women with regards to their inclusion in peacebuilding processes. It is available in English and in Arabic. More research papers on women and peace in Iraq will be published in the course of 2022.
- In December, we invited alumni that took part in activities of the Women Talking Peace project from across the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) region to a three-day regional network meeting to exchange experiences and to jointly identify best practices related to the strengthening of women's participation in peace processes.
- Lastly, Women Talking Peace launched its [own website](#) exclusively dedicated to peacebuilding and women empowerment in Iraq and the MENA region as a whole. It is a valuable source of information on the topic and includes special features such as an interactive map of organisations involved in peacebuilding in Iraq; a database of research papers and studies conducted within the framework of the project; all relevant legislations on the issue and a blog (in Arabic) where women are invited to openly express their thoughts and opinions about peacebuilding and women empowerment.



#### More information:

- [Women Talking Peace platform](#)
- [Women and peace in Iraq: opportunities, challenges and prospects for a better future \(publication\)](#)
- [Women Talking Peace in Iraq: opportunities, challenges and prospects for a better future \(video\)](#)
- [Creative Writing Programme \(video\)](#)
- [Leadership Programme \(video\)](#)

### *Democracy needs Civic Education – a feasibility study for a digital civic education platform (ongoing)*

- **Country:** Iraq
- **Duration of the project:** December 2021 to May 2022
- **Project objective:** Assessment of existing civic education activities, gaps and potential for creating an online platform for civic education in Iraq.
- **Funded by:** German Federal Foreign Office

The feasibility study aims at assessing existing civic education activities, identifying gaps and evaluating the potential for creating an online platform for civic education in Iraq. This six-month project, which started in December 2021, is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. The study will identify the needs for civic education activities through consultations with all relevant stakeholders (non-state and state actors, civil society organisations, local and international organisations as well as academic institutions). Among other topics, it will answer the questions of who currently provides civic education in Iraq; on which topics and in which regions (urban – rural) as well as what non-partisan, independent and sustainable offers there currently are. It will also examine whether central knowledge platforms and networks already exist and, very importantly, how the planned platform could be financed in a sustainable way.

#### **More information:**

[Project page \(elbarlament website\)](#)

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