

STEP  
ORGANIZATION  
FOR DEMOCRACY  
AND ELECTIONS

# ANNUAL REPORT

2025

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# Introduction

STEP Organization for Democracy and Elections is an independent non-governmental organization officially and legally registered in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. It was established in 2018 by a group of civil activists committed to supporting democratic transformation and strengthening civic participation. The organization works in the fields of democracy promotion and electoral integrity, human rights protection, good governance, women and youth empowerment, peacebuilding, and social cohesion. It also contributes to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) :

- Quality education.
- Gender equality.
- Reduced inequalities.
- Peace, justice, and strong institutions.
- Partnerships for the goals.

through awareness programs, capacity-building initiatives, and community-based activities that promote active citizenship and civic engagement.

The organization has extensive experience in managing and implementing diverse projects aimed at strengthening political participation, particularly among women, youth, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). It has also implemented initiatives focused on promoting freedom of expression, media freedom, and the protection of human rights during crisis coverage, as well as raising awareness about the Social Security Law for workers. These efforts have been carried out through awareness campaigns and advocacy initiatives supported by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, the UNDP, the International Republican Institute- IRI, Un Ponte Per- UPP, the International Labour Organization- ILO, and international institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

# Implemented projects-2025

**1- Project Title :** Securing the Future: Increasing Social Security Registrations through Innovative Outreach

**Duration :** 10 months

**Total Budget:** 58,420 \$

**Donor:** International Labour Organization - ILO

**target Locations:** Erbil, Duhok, Sulaimanye, Ninevah, and Kirkuk.

**2- Project Title :** Collaboration with peer organizations and IHEC on activities related to counter hate speech 2025

**Duration :** 3 months

**Total Budget:** 9000 \$

**Donor:** International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

**target Locations:** Duhok, Erbil, and Ninevah

# Target Beneficiaries in 2025

**27700** Total Direct Beneficiaries

**7000** Total Indirect Beneficiaries



MALE 65 % 18005

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FEMALE 35 % 9695

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MALE 60 % 4200

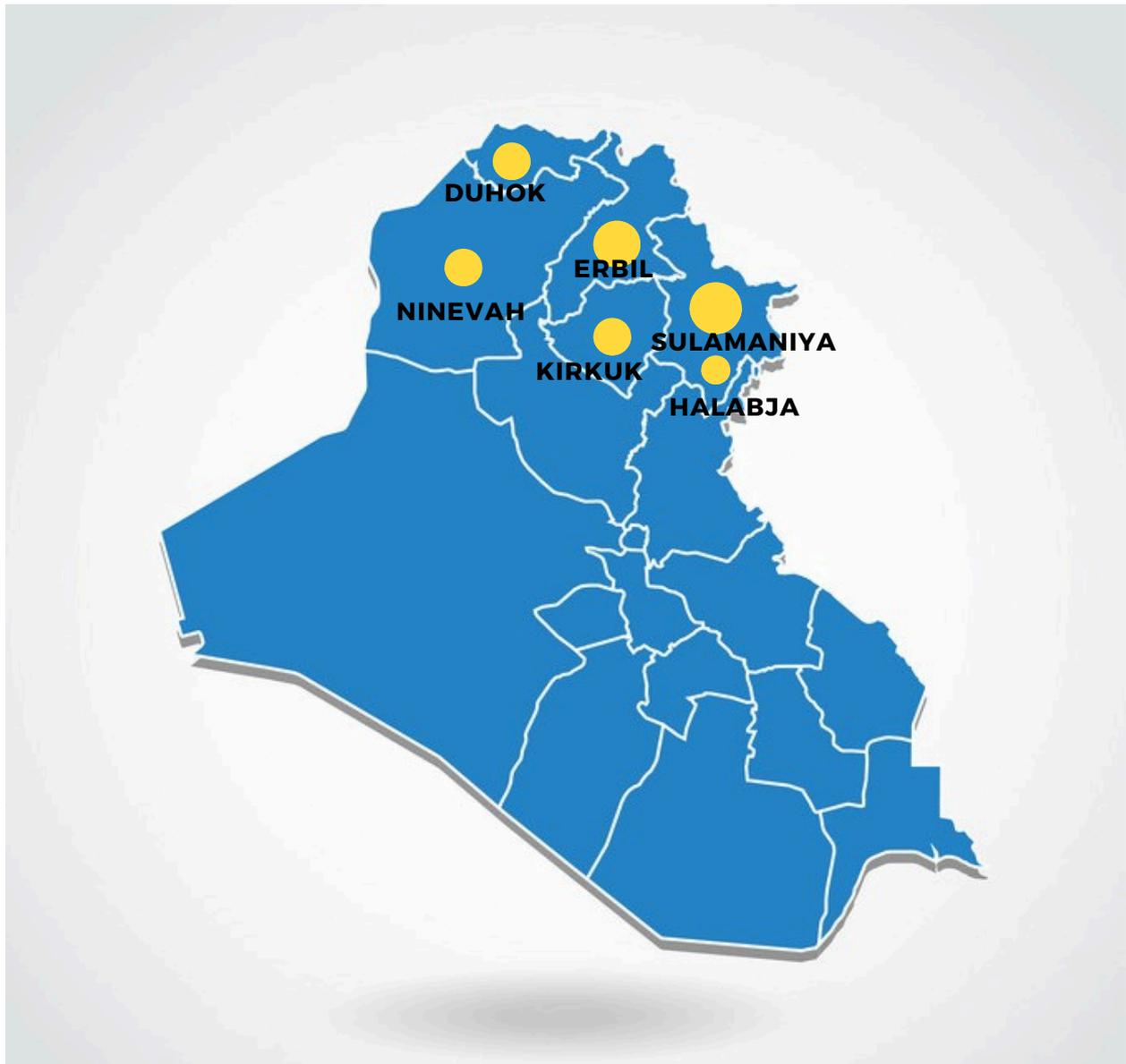
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FEMALE 40 % 2800

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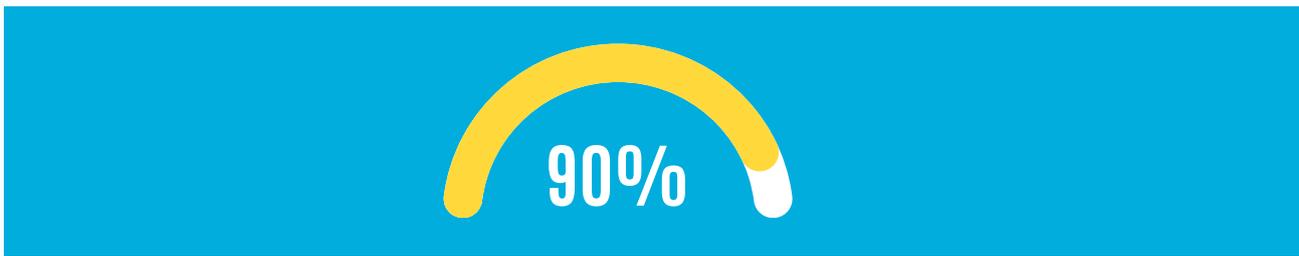
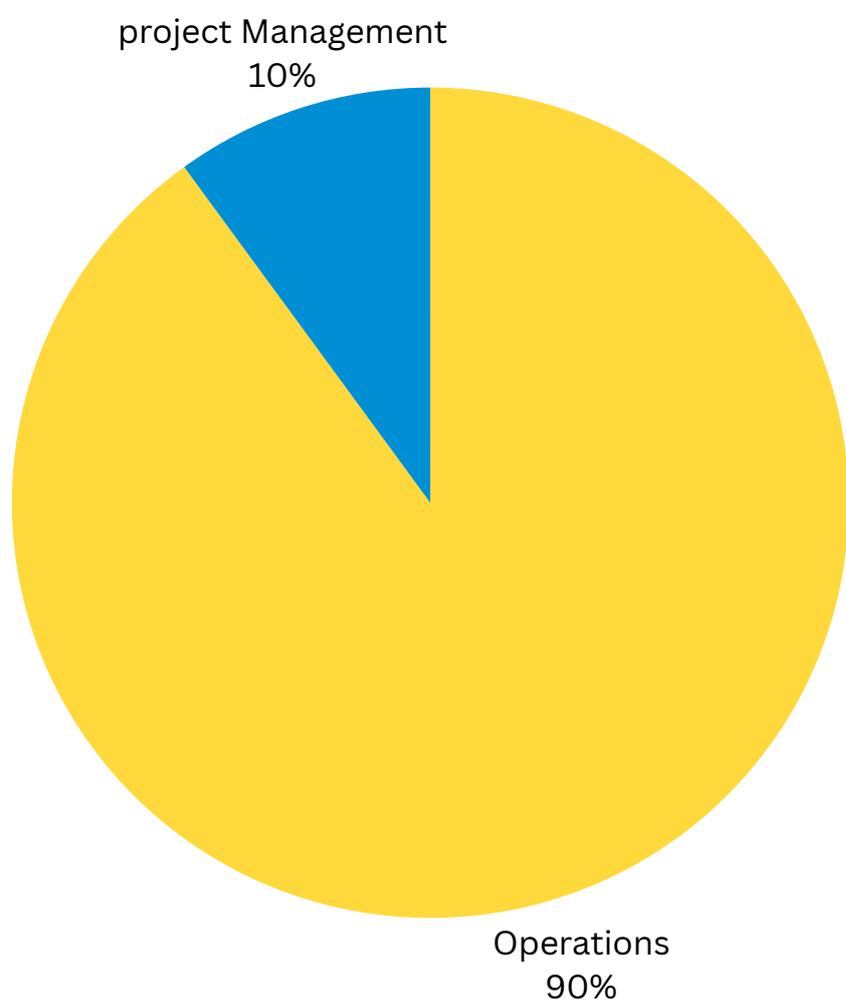
# Target Locations in 2025



# Finaacial Buget in 2025

in 2025 we have implemented Two projects, the total budget of all project was 67.420 \$.

only 8% of total budget paid for projects management and 92% \$ for projects activities directly or indirectly.



# Activities in 2025

1. The Step Organization for Democracy and Elections, in cooperation with the Legal and Political Studies Center at the College of Law, University of Duhok, organized a dialogue session on Wednesday, 15/01/2025, titled “The Role of Political Parties in National Dialogue.” The session was held at the Cultural Center of the University of Duhok and was attended by a number of specialized university professors as well as representatives of political parties in Duhok Governorate.

The session included three main themes. The first theme, presented by Dr. Sherzad Al-Najjar, a university professor, was titled “Reflections on the Relationship Between Political Parties and National Dialogue.” The second theme, titled “Political Parties and National Dialogue: A Critical Reading,” was presented by Mr. Farhad Amin, former Member of Parliament and former Governor of Duhok. The third theme, “The Role of Political Parties in Building the Civil State,” was presented by Mr. Sarbast Mustafa, Director of the Step Organization for Democracy and Elections and former Chairman of the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq.

2. Mr. Sarbast Mustafa, Director of the Step Organization for Democracy and Elections, participated in a conference held in Baghdad on 17/02/2025, organized by the Freedom and Peace Organization, addressing the challenges facing the work of non-governmental organizations in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. The conference was attended by representatives of several Iraqi ministries, as well as leaders and representatives of NGOs from across the country.

3- On Saturday, 12/04/2025, Step’s legal representative, Sara Al-Azzawi, participated in a workshop in Baghdad organized by Jisr Training Center in cooperation with the Iraq Center for Studies. The workshop discussed the electoral law for the 2025 parliamentary elections and was attended by NGO representatives specialized in electoral affairs, along with representatives from the government and the Presidency.

4- The Director of the Step Organization also participated in the Humanitarian Exchange (HX) Conference held on April 28–29 in Baghdad, with wide participation from NGOs across Iraq. On the second day, he presented a paper titled “The National Fund for Financing the Work of NGOs in Iraq.”

# Activities in 2025

5- The Director of the Step Organization for Democracy and Elections participated in a workshop held in Baghdad on April 21–22, 2025, on electoral risks in the information environment. The workshop was organized by International IDEA in partnership with the Independent High Electoral Commission. It was attended by Judge Amer, Head of the Electoral Administration, along with commission staff and experts, representatives of national electoral networks and organizations, university professors, and media representatives. On the first day, the Director presented a paper titled “Internal and External Electoral Risks,” focusing on the Iraqi experience.

6- The Step Organization also participated in the closing conference of the Tataweer (Development) Program, implemented by UPP Organization in partnership with Al-Masalla Organization, held at Al-Mahatta Hall in Baghdad on 28/05/2025. The program was funded by the European Union. Representatives of dozens of NGOs from across Iraq and the Kurdistan Region attended. Notably, Step implemented a first-phase project under this program focused on media freedom in the Kurdistan Region.

7- On Tuesday, 27/05/2025, the Step Organization participated in the 56th Duhok Governorate Day Festival held at Newroz Square in Duhok. The event included numerous government institutions presenting their services and projects. Step was the only NGO from Duhok participating in the festival, where it showcased its projects, publications, books, posters, and artworks, distributing them to visitors at its pavilion. The participation aimed to raise awareness of the Social Security Law for workers and encourage worker registration in social security directorates to ensure access to legal rights and benefits, including pension eligibility and compensation for workplace injuries and illness. This activity was implemented within a project launched by Step in early May 2025.

# Activities in 2025

8- The Step Organization for Democracy and Elections participated on Sunday evening, 31/08/2025, in the Fourth Youth Festival in Duhok, held in conjunction with International Youth Day. The event was organized by the Duhok Directorate of Youth at the Student Center Hall of University of Duhok. During the festival, Step organized several activities to promote civic engagement among working youth, including a theatrical performance, an infographic video presentation, distribution of brochures, and awareness booths and posters. This participation was part of a project implemented by Step in cooperation with the International Labour Organization to raise awareness about the Social Security Law for workers.

9- The Director of Step also participated in the third workshop on Protecting Elections in the Information Environment, held in Erbil on 26–27 August 2025. The workshop was organized by International IDEA in cooperation with the Independent High Electoral Commission, with the participation of several Iraqi electoral networks and organizations.

10- As part of the same awareness project on the Social Security Law implemented in cooperation with the International Labour Organization, the Deputy Director of Step visited the Duhok Directorate of Youth and met with its Director and staff to discuss potential cooperation and joint activities aimed at encouraging private-sector youth workers to register with the Social Security Department and benefit from the law's protections and privileges.

11- On Thursday, 31/07/2025, Step organized an awareness activity at Shariya Camp for displaced Yazidis, within the framework of the ILO-funded project. The event highlighted workers' rights and benefits under the Social Security Law in the private sector and presented a success story of a worker who secured pension rights despite working in the private sector. A legal expert from the Social Security Directorate in Duhok delivered a lecture, informational materials on registration procedures and legal benefits were distributed, and five awareness banners about the Social Security Law were displayed throughout the camp.

# Activities in 2025

12- On Friday, 25/07/2025, the Step Organization for Democracy and Elections, in cooperation with the Duhok Endowments Directorate, conducted an awareness campaign on the implementation of the Social Security Law for workers. The campaign encouraged private-sector workers to register with the Social Security Department through Friday sermons delivered in several mosques across Duhok, along with the distribution of brochures explaining the importance, scope, and benefits of registration and the key protections provided under the law. This activity was implemented within Step's awareness project in cooperation with the International Labour Organization.

13- On 24/07/2025, Step organized a seminar with preachers from several mosques at the Endowments Office in Duhok District. The session was delivered by Mr. Dilkash Sadiq, Deputy Director of Step, and aimed to encourage workers and employers to register with the Social Security Department to protect private-sector workers' rights.

14- On 15/07/2025, the Director of Step participated in the conference "Unifying Voices Toward Effective Civic Participation in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region" held in Sulaymaniyah, organized by Al-Masalla Organization in cooperation with the Kurdistan Social Forum. He spoke on "The Role and Objectives of NGOs in Participating in Electoral Processes." The conference brought together leaders and representatives of numerous NGOs from across the Kurdistan Region.

15- From 12 to 14/07/2025, the Director also participated in a three-day workshop in Erbil titled "Protecting Elections in the Information Environment: Roadmap Workshop," organized by International IDEA in cooperation with the Independent High Electoral Commission. Participants included Judge Amer, Head of the Electoral Administration, senior commission officials, IDEA representatives, leaders of electoral networks and NGOs, representatives of teachers' and lawyers' unions, the Jurists Union, and university professors.

# Activities in 2025

16- The Director and Deputy Director of the Step Organization for Democracy and Elections, together with several directors of NGOs affiliated with the JAF Network, met with a delegation from the Human Rights Office in Erbil of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Discussions focused on the implications of the conclusion of the UN mission's mandate in Iraq at the end of 2025.

17- On the occasion of Christmas and New Year, Step, with support from the International Labour Organization, organized an awareness event on 24/12/2025 at Mar Ith Alaha Church (Dair Barani) in Duhok. The activity aimed to raise awareness about the Social Security Law for workers and included the distribution of brochures during the Mass and the display of banners outlining the provisions of the Pension and Social Security Law for workers.

18- On 19/12/2025, Step participated in the Yazidi holiday ceremony in Khanke sub-district, Duhok Governorate, in cooperation with the Directorate of Yazidi Affairs and the Khanke branch of Lalish Cultural Center. The organization implemented an awareness activity on the benefits of the Social Security Law for workers, including information booths presenting the law's objectives and distributing publications to workers and residents. This activity was part of Step's awareness project supported by the International Labour Organization.

19- From 4–6/12/2025, the Director of Step participated in the Climate Justice Conference held at the Academy of Human Sciences in Baghdad. The conference was organized by Al-Masalla Organization, UPP Organization, and the ICSSI Network, with the participation of numerous Iraqi civil society organizations. The conference aimed to strengthen the role of civil society in addressing environmental challenges and advancing climate justice frameworks.

20- The Director of Step also participated in the annual meeting of the "Masaha" Group, part of the "Initiative" project, organized by the Peace and Freedom Organization in Erbil on 30/11/2025 and 1/12/2025, focusing on the challenges facing civil society organizations in Iraq.

# Activities in 2025

21- On 15/12/2025, the Step Organization for Democracy and Elections organized a short video production competition on workers' rights and the Social Security Law. Five videos were submitted, and a specialized committee selected the two best entries. The winners were awarded financial prizes, and their videos were published on the organization's social media page to raise public awareness.

22- Step also participated in the Sulaymaniyah National Entrepreneurship Summit, held in Sulaymaniyah on 22–23/11/2025. The organization displayed artworks and posters addressing social security for workers at its exhibition booth in cooperation with the Sulaymaniyah Labor Directorate. In addition, Step organized a seminar on “The Importance of Workers’ Registration in Social Security,” attended by a representative of the Social Security Directorate and the Workers’ Trade Union in Sulaymaniyah. This participation was part of a project implemented by Step in cooperation with the Kurdistan Region Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and funded by the International Labour Organization to promote awareness of the Social Security Law for workers.

23- Several Step observers also took part in monitoring violations during the electoral campaign and on both special and general polling days in Duhok for the 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections. The monitoring report results were announced at a press conference in Erbil, prepared by the coalition of national election monitoring networks and organizations in Iraq.

24- On 06/11/2025, Step trained monitors from the Independent Human Rights Commission in Duhok on observers' code of conduct and reporting procedures, in cooperation with Cihan University College of Law. Law students from the university also participated in the workshop.

25- On 05/11/2025, the Director and Deputy Director of Step participated in a dialogue seminar organized by Naz Organization for Women and Child Development at the Kirkuk Governorate building in Kirkuk. The seminar addressed the importance of minority voter participation in the 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections.

# Activities in 2025

26- The Step Organization for Democracy and Elections, in cooperation with the College of Law at Salahaddin University and the Regional Organization for Elections and Civil Peace, organized a seminar titled “Parliamentary Elections: A Study of Current Requirements, Standards, and Challenges” on 04/11/2025 at the College of Law. The seminar included four themes, with Mr. Sarbast Mustafa, Director of Step, presenting a session on “Parliamentary Elections and Guarantees of Electoral Integrity.”

27- On 30/01/2025, Step organized a dialogue session in Mosul bringing together candidates from several political parties and coalitions participating in the 2025 parliamentary elections in Nineveh Governorate, along with a representative of the Independent High Electoral Commission Nineveh Office. The session focused on rejecting hate speech and violence in electoral campaigns and was attended by representatives of political parties and research centers in Nineveh. This activity was part of a project implemented by electoral networks and organizations with support from International IDEA.

28- Step also participated in a conference titled “Decentralization and Federalism Twenty Years After the Adoption of the Constitution,” held in Sulaymaniyah on 25/10/2025 and organized by Vision Foundation for Strategic Studies. The conference included three sessions, and the Director of Step presented a paper in the third session titled “Kurds and the Issue of Constitutional Amendment.” The event was attended by prominent figures, university professors, and researchers from numerous research centers across Iraq.

29- On 22/10/2025, Step, in cooperation with Naz Organization for Women and Child Development, organized a dialogue seminar at the Cultural and Social Center of University of Duhok on minority and component participation in the Iraqi parliamentary elections (2025). The seminar featured two themes: the first addressed the experience of minority quota representation in Iraq, presented by Mr. Sarbast Mustafa; the second focused on the importance of minority participation in elections and voting procedures, presented by electoral trainer Mr. Jang Ismail from the Duhok Office-IHEC . The event brought together representatives of minority communities, academics, specialists, and activists, followed by an open discussion session.

# Activities in 2025

30- The Step Organization for Democracy and Elections, in cooperation with the Al-Furatain Organization for Elections and Democracy, organized a dialogue seminar on 12/10/2025 in Al-Qosh, Nineveh Governorate, focused on minority participation in the 2025 parliamentary elections. The event was part of a project implemented by several organizations in Iraq with support from International IDEA. The seminar included two presentations: the first, "History of Implementing Minority Quotas in Iraq," presented by the Director of Step; and the second, "Voting Procedures," presented by a trainer from the Nineveh Office of the Independent High Electoral Commission. Participants included religious, cultural, and political figures from the region.

31- Step, in cooperation with the Kurdistan Region Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and with support from the International Labour Organization, organized an art competition at Bagi Shar Park in Erbil to raise awareness of the Social Security Law for workers. The event included an exhibition of 20 handmade artworks on the topic, with three winning pieces awarded cash prizes. The program featured musical performances by the artist Rekar Wasfi, a theatrical performance by students from the Duhok Fine Arts Institute, a success story presentation of Mr. Abdurrahman who received a pension through registration in the Social Security program, and the distribution of awareness posters. The open-air event in the center of Erbil was widely praised by attendees.

32- On 01/12/2025, for World Music Day, Step organized an open event in Newroz Square, Duhok, encouraging workers to register and benefit from the Social Security Law. The event included musical performances, distribution of brochures, a video presentation, and display of awareness banners, attracting significant admiration and engagement from participants.

# Photos-2025



# Photos-2025



# Photos-2025



# Photos-2025



# Photos-2025



# Photos-2025



# Board Members 2025-2026

Names	position	Experience
Sarbast M. Amedi	Director	Former chairman of IHEC in Iraq, B.sc in law, M.Sc. in constitutional law.
Dilgash Sadiq Salih	Director assistance and head of legal Dep.	M.Sc. in law and expert in legal issues
Diman Zuhair Sami	projects manger	M.Sc. in Ecology and expert in proposal writing
Rashad Ibrahim Mustafa	Administration and finance	B.Sc. - 10 years of experience in banking and finance affairs, specially with University bank.
Sarah Mahdi Salih	Head of media and relations	B.Sc. in economy and management - Department of accounting. She has experience in social media as well.

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