



2021 Annual Report

Dak Organization for Ezidi Women Development





Our Mission

Building a healthy society free from violence and protect women's justice and human dignity.

Dak Organization for Ezidi Women Development



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This Annual Report is also available on our website, www.dakngo.org

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WHO WE ARE

Dak is a women-led non-governmental organization founded in June 2015 by Ezidi women with a strong belief in women`s rights and gender equality.

The word “Dak” is derived from the Kurdish language meaning “mother”. This served as one of the inspirations for the organization`s name because women are regarded by the Ezidi community as the custodians of Yezidi traditions and culture as well as the main caretakers for the family. Dak is an organization that provides legal assistance to women and advocates for their rights, an organization that works to reintegrate victims of sexual violence and victims of violence in general into their communities who suffered during and after ISIL`s horrific persecution of women during the 2014 genocide, as Dak strives to stand in for them, build their resilience, help individuals in assuming leadership roles in their communities and cultures, and give them the resources and tools they need to realize their full potential as changemakers. The organization works in this direction by providing capacity-building, soft skills, life-skills, educational skills, psychosocial support, case management, and advocacy services through various community-based initiatives, particularly those that highlight the role of women in decision-making and education; Since mothers make a significant contribution in their children`s education, their support helps shape the future of the next generation and the community.

Dak is strengthening the peacebuilding and legal capacities of Ezidi women by hosting workshops and awareness-raising sessions. Looking forward, Dak plans to continue supporting women and returnees through Dak Psychosocial Center in Shariya. Dak`s intervention will have an increased focus on family- and community-based PSS approach, paying special attention to women`s empowerment. In addition, Dak intends to continue supporting the integration of displaced communities in their various host communities through PSS, education, social cohesion, and livelihood support.



OUR OBJECTIVES

- Organizing and unifying women's efforts to support the cause of Ezidi women who have survived sexual violence and are pursuing their material and moral rights.
- Putting pressure on decision-makers to recompense women impacted by sexual violence and to ensure that perpetrators get a just penalty.
- Putting emphasis on and increasing the status and function of women in society. In addition, allowing them to exercise their rights as citizens, employees, and housewives in accordance with the ideals of equality, fairness, equal opportunity, participation, and respect for their dignity.
- Raise women's knowledge of their role and rights and promote their participation in a variety of sectors.
- Seek to integrate women in the local community's development and strive to improve their social position, in addition to enabling them to invest in their creative and productive capacities better.
- seek to overcome legislative, economic, social, cultural, and other obstacles that prevent the full realization of women's rights as stipulated in international covenants, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the guarantee of their rights under the Iraqi constitution.
- Spread a healthy culture among women and work to ensure them access to health care and protection, particularly in the areas of reproductive and sexual health, maternity, and child care.
- Spreading a culture of peace and strengthening the role of women in the processes of peacemaking and peacebuilding.
- Provide women with the skills, knowledge, experiences, capacities, and a variety of services that will allow them to contribute to community development.
- Contribute to literacy for women in the alphabet, legal, cultural, and political fields.
- Develop women's leadership capabilities based on the values of ethical leadership.

HAND IN HAND TOWARDS JUSTICE

“...My lawyer was very helpful with me and she was always with me, she was doing everything to support my case. Psychologically I am much better than before. I now can think about my life and my kids’ future.”

It took Faiza* six months from the day she first talked to her lawyer to be sure that she wanted to file for a divorce. Faiza’s father arranged her marriage before she turned 18-years old. Faiza’s husband treated her violently and one day, he never came home, leaving Faiza to care for the children and to address the challenges caused by her son’s lack of identification. Coping with abandonment, her past experiences of abuse, and the complications of getting her son’s ID, Faiza felt trapped and scared for her life.

With her anxiety keeping her up at night, Faiza sought emotional support from Dak Organization supported by USAID through a legal advocacy pilot program. “She was very afraid,” recalled Gulistan, Faiza’s lawyer at Dak Organization, “Her husband told his father to kidnap their children, and he repeatedly threatened her.” Since her husband left, Faiza moved with her children into her parents’ house. Afraid that her father-in-law would come and take her children, Faiza slept with them every night.

Through the USAID-supported pilot program, Gulistan and other lawyers working at Dak Organization learned about a client-centered approach to legal advocacy, which ensures that their clients make informed decisions about their legal cases. Though Gulistan advised Faiza to seek a divorce, she also took the time to explain to Faiza her options, the multiple steps required in each scenario, and supported her client’s final decisions. Considering the information provided by Gulistan, Faiza decided she was not yet ready to pursue a divorce. Instead, they started the process by obtaining her son’s ID, which is a challenging task without the father present. Going through this experience together helped build trust and confidence between Faiza and Gulistan.

With her son's ID in hand, Faiza gained confidence in herself, her attorney and the legal process, and decided to consider divorce. Filing for divorce as an Iraqi woman is risky and can lead to severe repercussions, including stigma, homelessness, forced marriage, abuse, or even losing custody of one's children. This was not a decision Faiza took lightly. She worried that her father-in-law would violently retaliate once he heard the news. Gulistan understood Faiza's hesitation and supported her through the process by providing her with as much information on her different options as possible.

Finally after six months Faiza made up her mind and with her lawyer she filed for divorce. She recalled, *"The process of getting divorced was very long and needed a lot of visits to court and government offices, but my lawyer was very helpful with me and she was always with me, she was doing everything to support my case. Psychologically I am much better than before. I now can think about my life and my kids' future."*

*Though "Faiza" consented to tell her story, her name was changed to protect her safety and privacy.



OUR WORKING SITES



- Duhok Governorate.
- Nineveh Goernoorate (Sinjar)



Sectors we shed light on



Protection



Health



Livelihood



Education

OUR FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

Our core values are the foundation for our culture, they are our key measures of success and they are the underlying principles of how we work. Dak **release** what no longer serves Well Being, Peace of minds and Goods!

Each letter in the **“Release”** word represents one of our values:

- **R****esponsiveness** We work for all women, whatever their story, background, and profoundly encounter the most complex challenges. We appreciate diversity in every context and are committed to helping women achieve their potential regardless of their background. Each story matters the most as the most complicated one to us as Dak.
- **E****mpowerment** We strive to increase the sense of self-worth and self-confidence of every woman connected in any manner to the Dak. We believe that every woman has the right to have her voice heard, fully respected, and free in making her own choices about how she lives her life.
- **L****impidity** Dak believes the key to gaining the trust of employees, beneficiaries, donors, and stakeholders is through the clarity of our work, which has been a critical criterion of our organization from the beginning.
- **E****quality** Equality and non-discrimination are two significant aspects in a women’s perspective; they’re good for us. Women’s equality ensures a more peaceful and prosperous society for women, men, and children. Inequality in the workplace, policies, organizations, communities, and families gives rise to exclusion and can lead to violence.
- **A****dvocacy** The movement towards a just community requires a social change. Dak movement is committed to identifying barriers to women’s equality through advocating for their health, education, and protection.
- **S****upport** We approve our support with clear, professional policies and procedures to respect the clients and staff confidentiality, safety, and well-being. We are confident that we are conducting a progressive movement to the highest standard of these ethics. We follow up with each client; also maintain and protect all personal information to take a step ahead to obtaining their rights.
- **E****ducation** Education leads to empowerment. We provide women with access to a wide variety of information so that they can make educated decisions. A large part of our work educates the community about women’s issues: safety, violence, and respect. Through education, we can get ahead of these problems.

Building bravery for a brighter future

“Before I was a dead woman, imprisoned at home in two rooms...After meeting with this organization, I changed.”

When her husband left to work overseas, Roj and her three children were left to live with her abusive in-laws, who controlled her life: from mobility and social contacts to accessing money. *“In the beginning, I was very scared of them, they [in-laws] were beating me and beating the children,”* recalled Roj. *Though she dreamt of escaping, the fact that her children did not have identification was a major obstacle. Without identification, the children could not be enrolled in school. “My son lost one year of school. He cried and pleaded with me to tell his father to make his ID.”*

Roj felt helpless until, with assistance from her family, she reached out to the Dak Organization for Ezidi Women Development, with Gulistan in person, and Gulistan took the time to explain the legal process to Roj and reassure her that by applying for her children’s identification cards she was not filing a report against her husband’s family. By working closely with Gulistan and visiting the court, Roj gained more confidence in herself. After a month and a half, when Roj finally received her children’s IDs, tears filled in her eyes. *“I never believed I would get my children’s IDs. When Gulistan said that it will happen without even having their birth certificates, or power of attorney from their father I couldn’t believe it. But it did happen; she didn’t let the school year get away from my children.*

“Just when Gulistan was about to close her case, Roj surprised her by calling and telling her that she wanted to report her in-laws to the police for abuse. “I looked at Gulistan and I trusted her. She was very strong. She was speaking to me and I was getting braver.”

Roj and Gulistan visited the Directorate for Combatting Violence Against Women (DCVAW) office and reported the abuse. Roj bravely gave a statement about all of the abuse she faced in the presence of her husband’s relatives. *“They became defensive and said that they would not take care of me or leave me alone, and that this was about their honor,”* said Roj.

After discussing with Roj and Gulistan, the officer recommended they order her in-laws to sign a pledge to stop abusing her, which they did. The officer warned them that if they abused her again they would risk up to six months in jail.

As Gulistan explained, “[W]hen dealing with my clients, I always explain to them that I will be with them no matter what their decisions are, I will always support them, and I will support and respect their decisions. My role is to raise their awareness legally and to provide them with information and options. Our people have very limited legal information, they don’t know their rights, they don’t know that there are laws that can protect them. It’s my role to explain their rights for them.”

Roj has now enrolled her three children in school and the situation in her in-laws’ home has improved. “[T]hey write their homework and go out to the yard and in the street. My children ask me, “Is this a dream, are we are out of their house?”” With the law on her side, her in-laws have loosened up their restrictions and have started to treat Roj and her children with respect.

The USAID-funded GRPR L&P program trained the Dak Organization lawyers to take a client- and survivor centered approach to legal representation, ensuring that women fully understood their legal rights, the risks and benefits of various options, and that they were actively engaged in making decisions about their cases.



Gulistan - Dak Lawyer

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC in Iraq, 2021

Prior to the government's announcement of the first case of COVID-19, Iraq was experiencing a number of issues. As a country that scored highly in terms of economic, political, social, and environmental fragility, the repercussions of COVID-19 have worsened. In October of 2019, demonstrations against the government erupted over the lack of critical services and employment opportunities. In this context, the COVID-19 outbreak has caused major job losses, price inflation, and worsening destitution. The public and societal repercussions of COVID-19 have been especially severe for women, children, and displaced persons.

Lockdowns around the country have made it difficult for people to subsist, particularly women, young women, and girls, who have lost their source of income. This has increased the prevalence of child labour and early marriage as coping mechanisms. Oxfam's gender analysis reveals that women in three sample areas of the country face an increase in domestic work and caring responsibilities, a heightened risk of GBV, particularly domestic violence, and a greater loss of economic livelihoods due to restrictions on movement and restrictive social norms. Furthermore, they have limited decision-making power and lack access to health and support services. Allegations of suicides and murders inside families, involving a significant number of women and girls, have surfaced in all governorates of Iraq, indicating an increase in domestic abuse. In addition, female-headed households, adolescent girls, mothers under the age of 18, and families suspected of having connections to extremist groups are the most susceptible to GBV risks. Additionally, divorce petitions from women and police complaints against spouses have increased.

Dak intervened through its activities to report received incidents of GBV and domestic violence to authorized organizations and decision-makers in order to minimize the incidence of these crimes within the community. During the course of the project, the Dak Legal Support Center for Women in the Shekhan district focused on 387 cases including domestic violence, case management, court representations, legal awareness, and negotiation. More detail: Throughout the year, its psychosocial centre in Sharya conducted a wide range of activities for ISIS captives and their families, including case management and legal awareness sessions, information sessions on YSL, exchange sessions between different survivors to share experiences as well as family visits about Thee Yazidi Survivors Law.



PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY OUR ORGANIZATION



373 Females of all ages received spreads legal support services.



344 Females received support through women's awareness and empowering activities.



472 Females and males of all ages received PSS support services.



252 Males received support through awareness activities.



26 Volunteers were trained and given capacity building about volunteering and working in organizations.



OUR PROJECTS

Support for psychosocial activities for children affected by conflict-related sexual violence

After all of the devastation created by the terrorist group ISIS, children and women suffered the most in that war. Those youngsters among them have had horrifying experiences, beginning with trauma and sexual abuse and ending with their training in the use of weapons, which necessitated our urgent action to assist them in mental healing.

As a result Dak through this project targeted young male and female survivors between the ages of 6-15 years old, and provided them courses and their mothers in terms of multiple activities through play therapy, such as (Drawing and Theatre play, Playing Music, and Zumba Dance). Besides, some other activities contribute to the development of personalities and the improvement of behaviors, such as (Cognitive-behavioral play therapy, teaching a child new ways of thinking and acting). Activities for their mothers include things like (How to deal with their children and take care of themselves). These activities were carried out for two and a half months, three days a week, three hours a day. Competent trainers led activities, and all necessary materials were given. It's worth mentioning that Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation supported this project.

Project Location

Duhok Governorate, Semel, Sharia.



Total number of beneficiaries

+ 20 including children and their caregivers/ mothers

Number of indirect beneficiaries: 100



Developing and building the capacities of women and girls in Sinjar through workshops and training on women's rights, feminist and leadership concepts.

This project was successfully implemented by Dak Organization and was made possible with the generous support of the Embassy of Canada in Iraq. The project aimed to promote gender equality, empower women and girls, and support press freedom. To achieve these goals, a series of workshops and training sessions were conducted, covering topics such as women's rights, feminism, and leadership principles. Both males and females participated in these activities to ensure equal access to opportunities and benefits.

Through this project, many Yazidi women and girls were empowered to take on leadership roles and advocate for their rights. The workshops and training sessions provided a safe and supportive environment for participants to learn, share experiences, and build networks with one another. The project not only promoted gender equality but also highlighted the importance of press freedom and the role of the media in promoting human rights. Overall, the project had a positive impact on the community and helped to build a more inclusive and equitable society.

Project Location

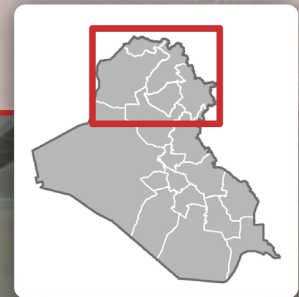
Duhok, and Sinjar.



Total number of beneficiaries

+ 71 24 male and 47 female.

Number of indirect beneficiaries: 497



Supporting awareness-raising about the Yazidi Survivors Law through enhancing the capacity of survivors of CRSV to participate in awareness-raising activities.

The implementation of the YSL (Yazidi Survivors Law) was a crucial step towards providing compensation and financial assistance to survivors of the Yazidi community who had suffered from ISIS captivity. The Dak Organization in partnership with Better World Organization, funded IOM, recognized the importance of raising awareness about this law among CRSV (Conflict-Related Sexual Violence) Yazidi women and girls survivors, their families, and communities. The goal was to ensure that every survivor had access to the information they needed about their rights under the law and where to go to apply for compensation, and to empower survivors to take advantage of the assistance available to them, ultimately helping them to rebuild their lives after the trauma they had endured.

Project Location

Duhok Governorate.



Total number of beneficiaries

+941 706 females
35 males

Number of indirect beneficiaries: 6587



Enhancing the Role of Minority Women in Decision-Making in Dohuk Governorate

The project was implemented by the Dak Organization in partnership with Internews. Its aim was to promote women's participation in decision-making and address the impact of conventions and traditions on women's development, patriarchal dominance, and political parties that prioritize men over women. Women often face harassment in government agencies and political parties where they work and are not always protected or trusted. As a result, women frequently rely on religious beliefs to safeguard their reputations, hindering their ability to advance socially and hold influential positions.

To address these issues, the project included a series of activities, such as workshops that focused on the social and cultural obstacles that women encounter; a partnership was formed with Radio Duhok, which broadcasted four radio series for two months. Also, Hashtags were used to plan a social media campaign alongside promotional videos, which were distributed to activists, media professionals, and female leaders. Continuous news articles and videos were shared on social media to raise awareness of the project's goals. Furthermore, a group of campaigners attended two online workshops aimed at educating children about gender issues and encouraging women to participate in decision-making roles.

Project Location

Duhok Governorate.



Total number of beneficiaries

+ 90 59 females
31 males

Number of indirect beneficiaries: 360



Dak Center for Legal Support in Shekhan District

This project was one of Dak Organization's projects in partnership with MSI and funded by USAID within the Iraq Genocide Recovery and Persecution Response – Learning and Pilots (GRPR L&P) (Legal Advocacy and Gender-Sensitive Negotiation Pilot of Dak Organization for Ezidi Women Development).

The project aimed to support Vulnerable women and girls, including GBV and ISIS survivors, by providing legal, negotiation, and Psychosocial support. Throughout the project, legal support, legal advice, consultation, and full representation in court by three qualified lawyers. Psychosocial support through two social workers, negotiation services by six qualified Negotiators, and legal awareness activities by the project team and online. COVID-19 was one of the biggest challenges for the project. Still, the alternative plan was implemented to complete the project during movement restriction online sessions, awareness, remote case management, and online legal advice and consultation.

Project Location

This project operates in Duhok and Nineveh Governorate in certain places as Shekhan district, Baadra, Mahat, Esian, Beban, and Shekhka.



Total number of beneficiaries

+ 405

373 females and 24 males.



Enhancing Psychosocial and Recreational Support in Sharia centre (in-kind support)

The Dak Organization, in partnership with IOM, implemented a project that aimed to improve the psychological well-being of community members through various sessions and trainings. The project focused on providing psychological support for women, men, and children, including adolescents and children, in PSS sessions, individual sessions, and referral services. The project also aimed to increase social cohesion among IDPs and host community members by involving them in various sport and recreational activities, family and awareness sessions, and workshops on topics such as alternative to violence and suicide prevention. The project also celebrated international days such as Women’s Day, Day of Happiness, Nawroz festival, and World Book and Copyright Day.

Moreover, the project aimed to improve the capacity and confidence of community members by offering life skills development training courses, including sewing, music, and painting. The center provided all necessary equipment for these courses based on the demands of the people. The project also conducted AVP sessions for IDPs and host community women, Little Friend courses, and regular coordination meetings to build a sense of community and promote social cohesion. The project successfully achieved its objectives and provided a positive impact on the psychological well-being of community members, as well as improving their life skills and confidence.

Project Location

Duhok Governorate.



Total number of beneficiaries

+1600 908 females
692 males

Number of indirect beneficiaries: 4800



WHAT WE HAVE IMPROVED FROM LAST YEAR

Since last year, we have been working on the organization's institutional development; we have delved deeply into the current departments and improved them through constant online resource searching and professional training attendance by our donors and partners, which has also helped the staff to strengthen and build their capacities. Their participation in these training have enhanced their skills in the areas of security, psychology, social support, coaching, leadership, finance, measurement and evaluation, leisure, and psychosocial activities. A few examples include suicide prevention, psychological support services, advocacy, the value of women's work, how to interact with people with special needs, remote psychological first aid, leadership, the role of women in decision-making, MHPSS, communication skills and self-care, effective communication, time management, HLP and DWHL, and legal advocacy and pilot program.

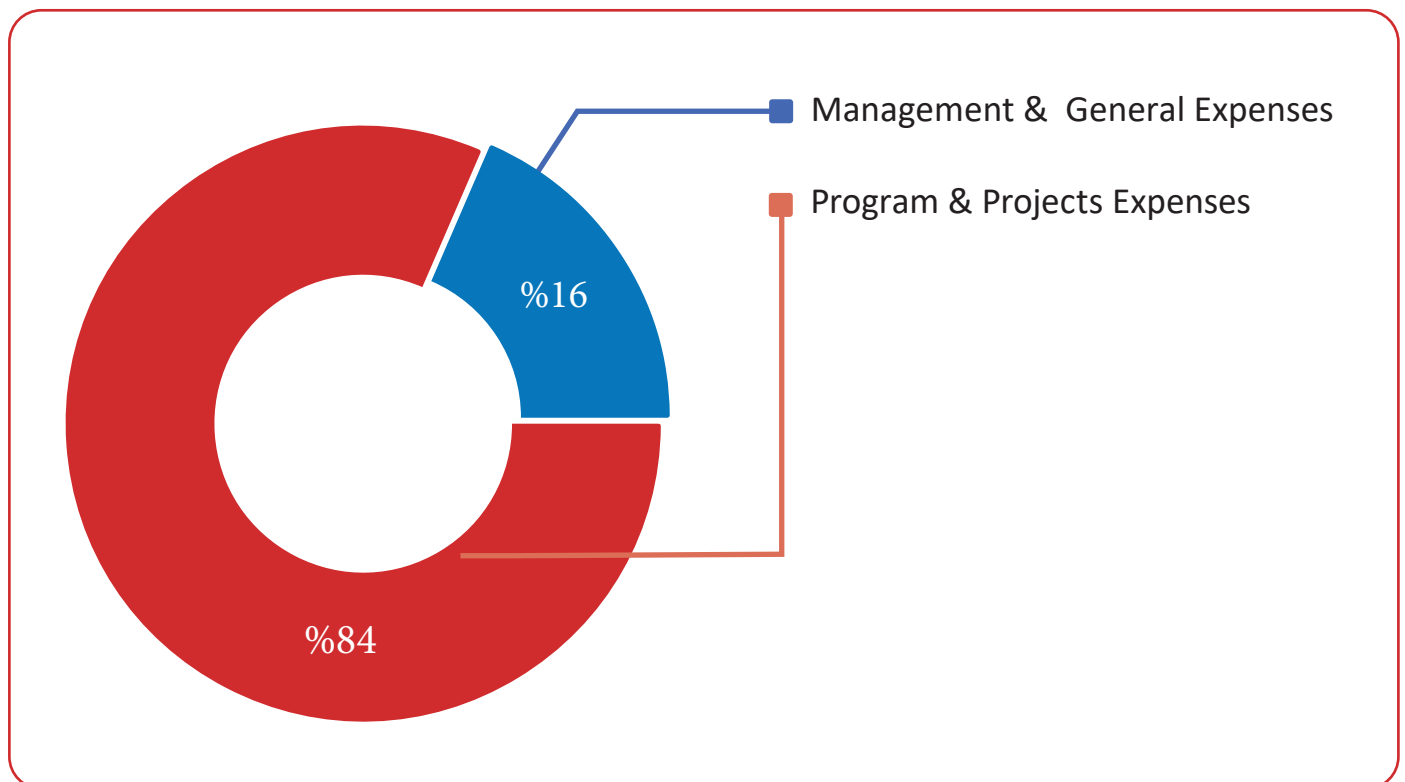
Furthermore, to our primary support for the most vulnerable members of the community, such as females and young men who have been victimized by ISIS, Dak has expanded its focus to include people working in the media and in high positions, as it is essential to include them in order to increase the role of women in decision-making and support all members of the community. Consequently, Dak prioritized the 1325 Resolution and the Yazidi Survivors Law in its activities. Last but not least, Dak joined several national networks and collaborated more closely with the High Council of Women and Development of the Kurdistan Regional Government.



FINANCIAL STATISTICS

In 2020, Dak Organization projects were funded by foundations and donors, either directly or through partnerships. Supporters include the USAID, AUSTRALIAN AID, Canada, IOM, UN Women, UPP, MSI and other partners and donors.

The total expenses for 2021 were **209,642 USD**, and it has been spent as follows:



OUR INITIATIVES OUTSIDE THE IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS

A conference was organized as an initiative by Dak on women, peace, and security on March 2021.

Attendance in a conference in Beirut on transitional justice on November 2021 organized by UPP.

Attendance in a TOT training on GBV in Jordan on November 2021.

A conference on gender equality and strategies for women empowerment in Kurdistan Region on November 2021, arranged by the government.

Attendance in a conference on transitional justice in Sinjar conducted by Youth Bridge NGO.

Interviews with most of TV channels in Kurdistan region (Rudaw, Waar, K24, NRT, Kurdsat..etc) and some of Iraqi TV channels (Sharqia, Soeriya, Hurra...etc).

Attending invitations to workshops, training and conferences for organizations and other parties

Continuously running online campaigns for common issues in the country.

Coordination with other institutions and organizations in order to serve the community, especially women

Participation in festivities like Nawroz, the commemoration of the chemical attack in Halabja, and the day of the Kurdish flag and clothing...



DAK'S MAIN FOCUS IN 2022

The emphasis will be on internal departmental improvements, which will include adding updated and new policies, new departments like security and M&E, and new projects. For instance, we have worked on MHPSS and protection, but livelihood will also be a focus, as will child protection, small businesses, and staff exposure to the practice. Additionally, efforts will be made to strengthen the organization's external image through the creation of new alliances, better coordination, and network growth. Additionally, new areas will be targeted so that we may reach more people and give the services we provide on a national level.



OUR VOLUNTEERS

We believe that encouraging, accepting, and appreciating volunteers among us will significantly improve the work we do to assist us in achieving our objective and accelerate the execution of our strategy. As a consequence, we have provided various workshops and training sessions for our volunteers, as well as the opportunity to work with staff members to build new skills.

Giving presentations, awareness-raising activities, capacity building, computer skill upgrading, and self-confidence courses are among the seminars and training that we give to our volunteers. However, because of the abilities and expertise, they earned with us, some of them have been hired in some of our projects as well as in other locations at the same time.



OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Internews
Local voices. Global change.



INFORMATION/CONTACTS/ONLINE

Official name: Dak Organization for Ezidi Women Development

Year of establishment: 2015

Headquarter: Shariya, Semel, Duhok, Iraq.

We are also active online. You can find us on:

Website: www.dakngo.org

LinkedIn: Dak Organization

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/dak4women>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DakOrganization>

Instagram: [dak.organization](https://www.instagram.com/dak.organization)

Email: info@dakngo.org

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