900 2nd St NE, Suite 216, Washington DC 20002
Office: +1.202.682.0208
www.epic-usa.org

ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2013

http://www.epic-usa.org/

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To Our Stakeholders

It hasn't been a good year for Iraq.

The United Nations reports that at least 8,868 Iraqis were killed in violent attacks across Iraq in 2013, including 7,818 civilians. That makes 2013 the deadliest year in Iraq since 2008. Much of the violence has been attributed to the resurgence of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), now operating as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). By late December, the black flag of al-Qaeda was flying over areas in several provinces; by early January, ISIL was in control of the city of Fallujah and parts of Ramadi in Anbar.

President Obama's response has been predictable: give more military assistance. However, that response ignores the need for fundamental institution-building and civil society-building in Iraq, as well as a real governance strategy—particularly in light of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's abuse of power. The Prime Minister's use of a politicized security services and a pliant judiciary to issue arrest warrants against his chief rivals, including Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi and Minister of Finance Rafi al-Issawi, has alienated millions of Sunnis and sparked a national protest movement. The heavy-handed approach of Iraqi Security Forces has only served to fuel the conflict even further, playing into the hands of militants who are eager to foment sectarian divisions and renewed civil war.

To make matters worse, proposed U.S. spending on Iraq for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 is dangerously low. To name just a few examples, the President's FY2014 budget proposes 70% to 95% cuts in U.S. funding for peace building, human rights, and civil society. Budget pressures are also forcing a key office of the US Embassy in Baghdad that liaisons with Iraqi security agencies and senior officials to reduce their staff from its original strength of 260 to 59 by FY2015, and that has raised serious concerns as to whether that office's mission of security cooperation can be adequately carried out. These proposed cuts come at a time of escalating violence in Iraq and serious reports of human rights violations and abuses of power by Prime Minister Maliki — not to mention Iraq's national parliamentary elections scheduled for next year which will determine Iraq's next Prime Minister. And despite the country's oil wealth, a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line.

Meanwhile, as many as 3 million Iraqis remain displaced, contributing to a regional humanitarian crisis that includes more than 7 million Syrians fleeing internal violence, including over 2 million Syrians – mostly children – who have fled to neighboring countries. These children sit in refugee camps with little access to the education and support that could keep them from subscribing to radical religious and political movements and destabilizing the region in the long term.

Now, these setbacks shouldn't obscure positive changes, particularly continued economic growth in the nation. But with most Western governments choosing to devote scarce resources to short-term efforts in other regions, organizations like EPIC are more needed than ever before to work for the long term. But as resources have been diverted from the country, we've felt more and more like a lone voice on the topic, shouting into the void. There just aren't many other organizations left taking a stance on Iraqi civil society-building.

Accordingly, we feel a great sense of responsibility to do as much as possible to fill this void. In 2013, EPIC did just that, launching a new program in Iraq, a new podcast, a petition, and numerous other initiatives, as well as continuing to be a strong voice on social media and in the development space generally, beating the

TO OUR STAKEHOLDERS

drum for civil society and education in Iraq. We have also worked hard to continue our development as an organization, refining our internal processes, engaging new classes of interns, building a new website, and starting an effort to diversify the composition of the Board. EPIC, and with it all of our stakeholders, have much to be proud of.

But this report is not just about celebrating successes – it is also about looking to challenges that we have grappled with. One of these challenges is debating how engage with the issue of Syrian refugees in Iraq, which has clear relevance to the sociopolitical equilibrium in Iraq, but also involves citizens of a country not core to our mission. Another is staying resolutely non-partisan in a line of work that necessarily intersects a great deal with politics, both in the United States and in Iraq. We have rejected revenue from sources when we have felt that it would compromise our integrity, and will likely have to do so again in the future. In a world of scarce resources, that shows commitment indeed.

Looking forward to 2014, we want to find innovative ways of engaging the U.S. veteran community, continue to build our platform for executing projects within Iraq, and perhaps most crucially, continue to raise our voice in advocating for more responsible national policies. We also seek to further develop its relationship with our stakeholders – to understand what motivates *you*. We all have different reasons why this cause matters to us. On a personal level, I believe that investments now in building the foundation of Iraqi society, particularly by educating its youth, have a direct effect on my own country's future national security. I hope to continue to hear all of your perspectives as well.

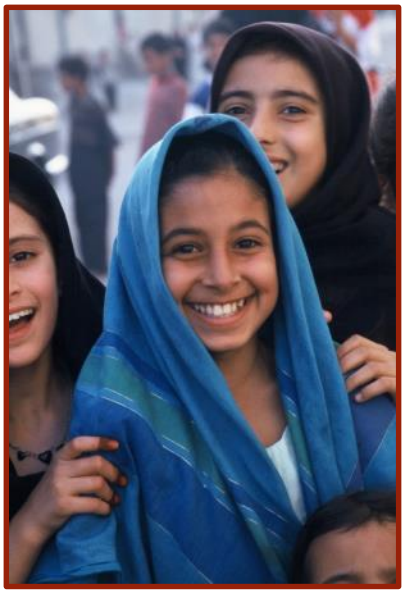
Thank you for your continuing support! Together, we can bend the curve in the other direction and ensure that the futures of millions of Iraqi citizens, as well as the countless other millions around the world who have a stake in peace and stability in the Middle East, look a little brighter.

Here's to a better 2014,

Sören Südhof
President, Board of Directors
March 15, 2014

Introduction to EPIC

The Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) is an independent, politically impartial 501(c)3 charitable organization founded by concerned Americans in 1998. Based in Washington DC, we work to advance peace and democracy in Iraq through public advocacy, field work, and genuine partnerships with Iraqi civil society and the country's youth. EPIC is funded by the contributions of private foundations and individuals like you who share our commitment to building a brighter future for all Iraqis.



More than 57 percent of Iraq's population is under the age of 25, according to recent data from the CIA and United Nations. In war-torn cities like Baghdad, Mosul, and Kirkuk, nearly every resident has experienced traumatic life events such as the violent death of a loved one. A large number of young Iraqis have no immediate prospects and are disenfranchised from the country's political, economic, and social development. Only 4 in 10 continue their education beyond primary school, and of those who enter the workforce, half are unemployed. Iraq's stability (and, in turn, the stability of the Middle East) depends on reversing these trends and creating opportunities for the country's youth to become a force for positive change. In short, preparing them for the future is the most effective way to support Iraq's peace and development.

Following the withdrawal of most Western governmental and institutional resources from the country, EPIC plays a more important role than ever before in its 15-year history. EPIC is dedicated to helping people build a more peaceful, sustainable, democratic society in Iraq. We seek to accomplish this by advocating policies that further Iraq's prospects for peace and democracy, by striving to keep citizens internationally well-informed on the developments in the country, and by running and supporting youth programs and partnerships in Iraq that engage young people in creating a brighter future.

As part of a diverse community of stakeholders who are invested in seeing a brighter future for all Iraqis, EPIC creates and promotes opportunities for young Iraqis to contribute to their country's peace and development. We do this in three ways:

(1) Empower Iraqis: fund, structure, and execute on-the-ground programs that empower Iraqi youth from diverse backgrounds to make a positive difference together.

- ★ Iraqi Youth Hike
- ★ PhotoVoice Iraq: Picturing Change (Phase I)

(2) Educate Americans: facilitate research and information sharing on developments inside Iraq and on lessons learned and best practices in the fields of peace building, education, and youth development.

- ★ The Ground Truth Project
- ★ Various Reports and Analyses, commissioned research, and journalism
- ★ EPIC's blog
- ★ The IRAQ MATTERS Podcast

(3) Enact Policy: advocate for U.S. and international diplomacy and assistance for securing peace and building democratic institutions and processes, including efforts to increase government accountability, strengthen civil society, and improve educational opportunities for current and future generations of Iraqis.

- ★ Iraq Peace & Development NGO Working Group
- ★ Petitions (2003, 2004, 2010, 2013)
- ★ The Future of Iraqi Civil Society Forum (2010)
- ★ Iraq Action Days (2008)
- ★ FACES of Iraq Photo Exhibition (2002 to 2005)
- ★ National Rally to End the Humanitarian Crisis in Iraq (2010)
- ★ Iraq Policy Forums and Advocacy Days (1998 to 2003)

EPIC is building a community of young people who have been impacted by these programs. Maintaining this network will help EPIC better understand the needs and aspirations of Iraq's youth by supporting the development of programs that best serve them. We will also gain valuable knowledge and experience about how to advance innovative ideas in the field of education. With this knowledge, we will be able to empower not only Iraqi youth, but the teachers who work to educate and empower these young people every day.

Update – 2013 Programming

The last year was an extremely active one for EPIC. The organization hit its goals in all programming areas, although our execution did shift in reaction to alarming developments in the public U.S. Congress budgeting discussions. Implementation of Photovoice, originally planned for spring 2013, was delayed to the fall, and EPIC increased its advocacy and research efforts instead. Highlights from the year are described below.

ADVOCACY

- **"Put Iraq Back on the Agenda" Petition**

  EPIC launched and then campaigned for a petition urging the White House to support a long-term strategy that will strengthen civil society and provide opportunities for youth, with a goal of collecting at least 10,000 signatures.

- **In-person advocacy**

  EPIC staff pressed the flesh on the street and on Capitol Hill, trying to convince both citizens and decision-makers that it is worth-while to support peace in Iraq.

RESEARCH

- **Iraq Matters Podcast**

  The Iraq Matters podcast was launched in August 2013, with the intent to supplement the organization's blog in educating our stakeholders and the public about impactful individuals and organizations, important current events and developments in Iraq, and cultural themes. Nine episodes were produced by the end of the year, with over 8,000 unique downloads in the same timeframe.

- **Blog**

  EPIC's blog has been a reliable voice on development issues in Iraq since 2006. It is a source of information both about developments in Iraq and about activity in the development/NGO sector, as well as acting as a medium of communication for EPIC to communicate its view on

current events, supply new analysis, explain current programming, and profile its partners. 2013 was the most active year in EPIC's history, with over 90 posts across the year.

- **Commissioning**

  EPIC commissioned the talented photojournalist Jacob Russell and the journalist Cathy Otten to look into the humanitarian challenges of assisting Syrian refugees in preparing for winter. They reported on conditions that urban-based refugees are facing in Erbil and Sulaimani, and also conditions at two Syrian Refugee Camps, Kawargosk Camp outside Erbil and Arbat Camp outside Sulaimani, in a report titled "Out in the Cold" and available to the public through EPIC's website.

- **Other**

  EPIC has supported research and fact-gathering in several other ad-hoc capacities. For instance, our Executive Director Erik Gustafson visited the Syrian refugee camp in Domiz, reporting on conditions to Refugees International. EPIC has also joined with DC-based George Mason University to document and analyze output from its Photovoice field program.

ON-THE-GROUND

- **PhotoVoice Iraq: Picturing Change**

  The first phase of our PhotoVoice field program began in October, 2013, with the second phase slated to begin in February 2014 and continue through the summer. PhotoVoice was designed in partnership with the American University of Iraq – Sulaimani (AUIS) and the Center for International Education (CIE) and the Center for Global Studies (CGS) at George Mason University to teach young people how to use the power of photography and their own voices to address issues important to them and their country. Like our past field programs, PhotoVoice brings together cohorts of young Iraqi students from a wide range

of sectarian and geographic backgrounds and inspire confidence, communicative ability, and creative problem-solving. It also provides the outside world with a unique view into current realities in the country.

- **Other**

  EPIC has been active in Iraq in several other ad-hoc capacities. For example, in 2013 EPIC acted in an advisory capacity to the American University of Iraq -- Sulaimani, assisting in its outreach to institutions in the United States.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2013, EPIC once again benefited greatly from its internship program, giving twelve interns (several of whom were Iraq war veterans or of Iraqi origin) a chance to contribute to and learn about development programming and advocacy. The organization also began an initiative to reform the Board of Directors, expected to bear fruit in 2014. Finally, EPIC upgraded its website and continued to develop its social media footprint.

EPIC has also begun the process of registering formally as a not-for-profit corporation in Iraq itself. Although a long-duration process, once completed this will enable the organization to engage in new ways within the country.

Board of Directors

SÖREN SÜDHOF

Soren Sudhof graduated from Yale University, where he studied Ethics, Politics, and Economics. A Richard U. Light Fellow, Georg Walter Leitner Fellow, and Fox International Fellow, he explored religious political conflict across Asia and the Middle East, focusing in particular on India and on Iraq, where he spent time in early 2008. He focused on the economic background of these issues, particularly the role of natural resources. Currently, Soren is an investment professional at Parthenon Capital Partners, a director for Vianar Affordable Housing, and is active within the Association of Yale Alumni. In the past, he also worked as strategy consultant for Oliver Wyman, the global management consultancy, and was a part of the original founding team of the Unreasonable Institute in Boulder, CO.

MOHAMMAD ZAKIR

Mohammed Zakir is the President of Acustrategy, a business and data analytics firm he started in Houston in 2008. In the past he has worked for Charles River Associates and Simon-Kucher & Partners and he founded Silk Route Crafts, a venture to promote fair trade and opportunities for women artisans in Pakistan. Mohammed also started and runs an education scholarship program for inner-city youth in Karachi that raises funds from the Pakistani diaspora in the United States. Mohammed belongs to the Dawoodi Bohra group, a small and culturally distinct sect of Shia Muslims based primarily in Western India. He handles public relations for the group's Houston Chapter. Mohammed received his undergraduate degree in Mathematics and Economics from Middlebury College and an MBA from the MIT Sloan School of Management.

BILAL WAHAB

Bilal Wahab is from Iraqi Kurdistan, and is currently a doctoral student at George Mason University where he studies economic and political transition in the petroleum-rich Middle Eastern states. He served as the governance advisor for citizen participation in public decision-making at USAID's Local Governance Program where he worked with local authorities and civil society organizations in five northern Iraqi provinces to promote transparency and accountability toward democratic governance. Prior to that, he worked for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. In the run up to Iraq's first democratic elections, he worked for the International Republican Institute and the American Development Foundation, where he trained election candidates, monitors and journalists. He also taught at Salahaddin University's College of Law and Political Science and College of Education, and spoken at numerous campuses across the United States. His most-cited article appeared in Middle East Quarterly, entitled "How Oil Smuggling Greases Violence in Iraq."

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ANDREW MORTON

A 19-year veteran, Andrew Morton has been an Army officer most of his adult life. During that time, he has served in peace keeping, humanitarian and combat operations throughout the world, including a year in Iraq. Andrew, who now serves as a public affairs officer, worked closely with the Iraqis and the State Department during his tenure in Iraq and witnessed the amazing power of the Iraqi spirit. Andrew worked with international and Pan-Arabic media and the Iraqi Spokesman's office during his time in Iraq. Like so many veterans, his life was changed by his incredible experience with Iraqis he now calls family. Andrew, and his physician wife, now have dedicated themselves to promoting the cause in Iraq through various channels, and Andrew has proudly served as a member of EPIC's Board since the summer of 2009. Passionate about the power of communications, Andrew knows how important it is to keep focus on Iraq's children as Iraq charts its future.

ELENA MCGOVERN

Elena McGovern is an Abu Dhabi-based Middle East analyst with CyberPoint International. She has previously held analytic roles at the Eurasia Group, Business Monitor International, and the Stimson Center where her focuses were on Middle East regional security issues and the geopolitics of energy. Elena holds an M.A. in Strategic Studies and International Economics from Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, DC, and a B.A. in International Relations from Lehigh University.

ERIK GUSTAFSON

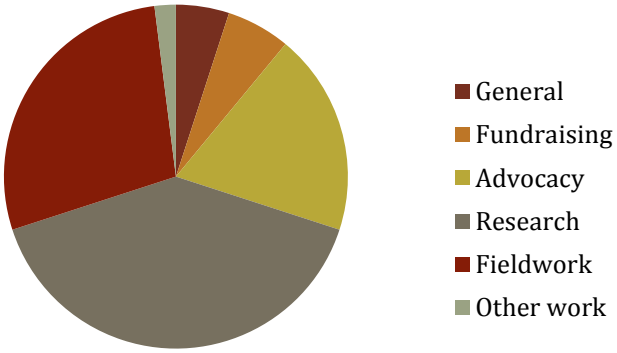
Erik K. Gustafson is Executive Director of the Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC), an organization he founded in 1998. Gustafson is a U.S. Army veteran of the 1991 Gulf War. Witnessing the consequences of war has fueled a life-long passion for peacebuilding, human rights work and humanitarian advocacy. Following his military service, he attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison to pursue a degree in education. While there, he led the Madison chapter of the East Timor Action Network, supporting East Timor's right to self-determination. In 1997 and 1999, he traveled to Iraq to investigate the deterioration of humanitarian conditions under Saddam Hussein's regime and the most comprehensive economic sanctions ever imposed in the history of the United Nations. In 1998, Gustafson moved to Washington DC and established EPIC to improve humanitarian conditions and promote human rights in Iraq. Under his leadership, Gustafson has hosted dozens of policy forums and led humanitarian advocacy on Iraq in Washington DC. In 2008, he organized Iraq Action Days, which helped generate $1.8 billion in funding for war-affected Iraqis and other vulnerable persons worldwide. From early 2009 to late 2010, Gustafson took a sabbatical from EPIC to spend time in Iraq. Based in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, he worked with DePaul University's International Human Rights Law Institute (IHRLI), directing a countrywide professional development program for Iraqi human rights defenders. Participants included organizations from 9 of Iraq's 18 provinces including Baghdad, Basra, Najaf, Anbar, Kirkuk, and Erbil. Since his return from Iraq, Gustafson has focused on implementing EPIC's new strategic plan of research, advocacy, and field work to serve young people and educators in Iraq and the region.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Financial Summary

1.1 Total Expenses

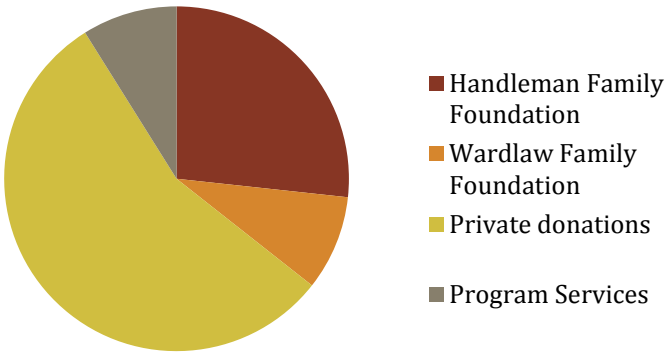
$118,090



$5,904	Management, General Administration & Organizational Development (5%)
$7,085	Fundraising (6%)
$22,438	Advocacy (19%)
$47,236	Research: EPIC's blog, IRAQ MATTERS podcast, commissioned reports, etc. (40%)
$33,065	Fieldwork: PHOTOVOICE IRAQ (28%)
$2,362	Other work (2%)

1.2 Total Revenue

$112,300



$30,000	Handleman Family Foundation (27%)
$10,000	Wardlaw Family Foundation (9%)
$62,300	Private donations (56%)
$10,000	Program Services (Rental income) (9%)

Special Thanks

We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the following donors, our "Gold Circle" of supporters, who deserve an outsized share of credit for making this year of growth and impact possible.

Scott Handleman

B Wardlaw

Ruth Wilson

Cindy Fogleman

Lyal Gustafson

To support EPIC and become a "Gold Circle" supporter, please contact our Board President, Soren Sudhof, at *Soren.Sudhof@epic-usa.org* or our director, Erik Gustafson, at *ekg@epic-usa.org.*

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact Information

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