



Youth Empowerment and Local Authorities Training Advances Peace and Security Agenda and Combats Violent Extremism

Erbil, 2 May 2025 – A two-day training workshop held in Erbil and co-organized by Un Ponte Per (UPP), the Agency for Peacebuilding (AP), and the Ashur Relief and Development Foundation (ARD) brought together 40 participants from five Iraqi governorates – Baghdad, Nineveh, Anbar, Diyala, and Basra. The training targeted youth volunteers and local authority representatives, aiming to strengthen their capacity to promote peace, resolve conflicts, and counter violent extremism through the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda.

Day One introduced the five key pillars of the YPS agenda and explored the role of youth in conflict prevention and resolution. Participants engaged in sessions on peacebuilding fundamentals, conflict dynamics within communities, and practical tools for conflict analysis, including actor mapping, identifying interests, and exploring resolution pathways.

Day Two focused on inclusive governance and participatory approaches. Interactive sessions emphasized youth engagement in decision-making, post-conflict recovery, and grassroots peace initiatives. Participants examined power dynamics, shared best practices for community involvement, and developed skills to sustain meaningful participation.

The training was delivered under the **Ru'yat al Shabab (Youth Vision)** project, highlighting Iraq's young population as a vital driver of peace and development.

Focusing on the central role of youth in building peace and security, Ru'yat al-Shabab, is a project implemented by the Agency for Peacebuilding, in partnership with Un Ponte Per (UPP) and the Ashor Iraqi Foundation for Relief and Development (ARD); it explores how young people can play a leading part in countering extremism and promoting the Youth, Peace, and Security agenda in Iraq.

Discussions emphasized the importance of both material and non-material forms of empowerment – such as education, employment, health, and security – to enable young people to fully participate in sustainable development processes. Special focus was placed on inclusion of marginalized groups and equipping youth for leadership roles in political, social, and cultural life.

Raed Mikhaeel Shabeh, UPP's Iraq Director, reaffirmed the organization's long-standing commitment:

"Since its founding, UPP has supported Iraqi youth through diverse programs that serve both young people and their communities. The Youth Vision project, implemented with AP and ARD, plays a pivotal role in empowering youth and advancing peacebuilding and anti-extremism efforts in Baghdad, Nineveh, Basra, Anbar, and Diyala."

He continued:

"This workshop is especially valuable in promoting dialogue between youth and local authorities, creating networks that help reduce violence, prevent extremism, and contribute to long-term stability."



Duha Mustafa, a volunteer from Baghdad, shared her perspective:

"These workshops create real opportunities for youth to engage in dialogue and peacebuilding. After years of division, they help us open a new chapter focused on unity and cooperation."

Giulia Ferraro, Project Manager from the Agency for Peacebuilding, added:

"This training brings together 40 youth and local authority representatives to promote social cohesion and counter non-violent extremism. Funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the project fosters open dialogue and collective problem-solving. It's encouraging to see such high levels of engagement and willingness to work toward peace."

About UPP

Un Ponte Per (UPP) is an Italian organization established in Baghdad in 1991 to support the Iraqi people and stand by them against injustice and wars. The organization works in various fields, including health, education, reconstruction, as well as peacebuilding and social cohesion programs, to encourage young people to engage in sports, artistic, and community activities. The organization has worked in many aspects and in several provinces of Iraq and continues to work in various provinces to enhance "the role of minorities in civil society, the role of youth in driving change, the role of women in peacebuilding, as well as in the fields of peacebuilding and peaceful coexistence, in addition to culture, art, archaeology, heritage, livelihoods, providing job opportunities for youth, empowering activists, and enhancing mental and reproductive health, as well as in reconstruction.

About AP

The Agency for Peacebuilding (AP) is a think-and-do organisation committed to bridging the gap between research and practice in peacebuilding. AP aims to contribute to more peaceful and just societies by preventing and transforming violent conflict and creating spaces for dialogue and cooperation across sectors and divides. AP's vision is of a world where conflicts can be transformed without violence and where peace can be promoted through inclusive, innovative sustainable means.

About ARD

the ARD: is a local non-governmental civil society organization concerned with community issues in Iraq, working in the field of relief, development and peacebuilding in Diyala, Babylon, Nineveh, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din governorates.