

Phoenix Organization for Women Empowerment and Community Development (POWECD) Organization Profile

About Us:

The Phoenix Organization for Women Empowerment and Community Development (POWECD) was established in 2024 as part of the transition and phase-out of Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) from Iraq. All POWECD staff are former local NCA employees from diverse programmes—including Human Resources, Logistics, Finance, Safety and Security, Fundraising, and Programme Management—who remain deeply committed to sustaining NCA's initiatives. As NCA phased out, POWECD ensured the continuity of services by evolving into a locally women-led, rights-based civil society organization. It empowers local women to take ownership of key projects, especially in the Sinjar area, Alqush, and Duhok, where NCA officially transferred its projects.

Since its inception, POWECD has actively engaged with a wide range of stakeholders—including academic institutions such as the University of Duhok's Gender Department, governmental bodies like the Directorate of Combating Violence Against Women (DCVAW), and various national and local NGOs. This collaborative approach promotes gender equality and ensures women's active participation in Iraqi society by enhancing their social, economic, and cultural roles. The organization is dedicated to the prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV), offering survivors comprehensive support services that include social and economic assistance, psychological counseling, legal aid, case management, and capacity-building courses.

Despite limited funding opportunities, POWECD has forged strategic partnerships and signed Memoranda of Understanding with numerous partners—including NGOs, academic institutions, governmental agencies, and private sector actors such as the Banan Foundation in Sinjar, Sinoni Organization for Community Development, Shirian Hospital, and Healium. These alliances have enabled innovative initiatives, including the introduction of virtual reality technology as a novel intervention tool.

Since 2024, POWECD has expanded its operations across the Duhok and Ninewa governorates—including Sinjar, Sinune, and the Sinjar Mountains—and delivers services across five core sectors: GBV prevention and response, women's empowerment, climate change adaptation, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and advocacy.



Vision

Inspired by the resilience of the mythical Phoenix, our vision is to empower conflict-impacted communities—especially women and youth—to rise from the ashes of violence, reclaim their strength, and thrive as integral, empowered members of their communities.

Mission:

POWECD is committed to fostering a society where women, youth, and vulnerable groups overcome adversity, reclaim their rights, and actively participate in sustainable development and peacebuilding. By leveraging volunteerism and targeted programs, we address the unique challenges faced by women and girls, creating safe, inclusive spaces that are free from violence and discrimination. In alignment with national efforts to promote sustainable development, humanitarian response, and equitable resource distribution, we ensure that every community member can rise and thrive like the Phoenix.

Phoenix operates in accordance with the following core values and guiding principles:

Humanitarian Principles:

POWECD upholds the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence across all project cycles. These tenets underpin our commitment to ensuring effective and equitable access to humanitarian assistance for affected communities, particularly marginalized women and girls.

Gender Equality

We affirm that all individuals—regardless of gender identity—deserve equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. POWECD advocates for ending gender-based discrimination and promotes equitable access to economic resources, education, healthcare, leadership roles, and the fair distribution of power across all sectors.

Women Empowerment

We recognize that economic empowerment extends beyond capacity building and income generation. It means ensuring that women have access to opportunities and rights that enable full participation in society. True empowerment involves equipping women with the skills, resources, and agency to make informed decisions and realize their potential as equal community members.

Guiding Ethical Standards in Humanitarian Action

POWECD prioritizes ethical standards—including respect for human dignity, transparency, accountability, and cultural sensitivity—in all aspects of its interventions. By upholding these



principles, we safeguard the rights and dignity of beneficiaries while strengthening the impact and effectiveness of our humanitarian response.

Women, Peace and Security

Committed to advancing the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda, POWECD emphasizes the critical role of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in preventing violence and safeguarding the rights of women and girls in conflict settings. Through active engagement in the UNSCR 1325 network in Iraq, we amplify women's voices in decision-making and promote gender-responsive approaches at all institutional levels.

What We Do:

1- Gender Based Violence

A. Survivor-Centered Approach:

POWECD prioritizes life-saving services grounded in a survivor-centered framework that emphasizes the safety and dignity of survivors. This approach ensures that all survivors of GBV—including women, girls, boys, and men—have equitable access to essential services. It comprehensively addresses survivors' diverse needs, including health care, legal assistance, protection, and security measures.

B. Women and Girls Safe Space (WGSS):

Through the establishment and maintenance of WGSS, POWECD is committed to providing survivors of GBV with secure and dignified access to comprehensive services. These spaces are fully equipped with essential resources and adhere strictly to inter-agency guidelines to guarantee effective support and protection.

C. Data Protection:

Our team is thoroughly trained in using tools such as GBVIMS+ and case management files to protect the data of GBV survivors. We ensure rigorous data security, with the use and sharing of information strictly governed by the survivors' explicit consent.

D. Provision of Case Management:

To ensure survivors of GBV are connected with appropriate and life-saving services, POWECD adheres to the Inter-Agency Case Management Guidelines. This guarantees that services are delivered safely and confidentially while ensuring that all interventions and decisions are made collaboratively with the survivors, respecting their autonomy and agency.



E. Awareness Raising and Community-Based Protection:

Beyond response and risk mitigation, POWECD empowers survivors by enhancing their knowledge of their rights and raising awareness of the indicators of violence. Recognizing the critical role of men and boys, we actively involve them in initiatives that foster accountability and create safe environments for women and girls. Moreover, we mobilize local resources by empowering community volunteers and strengthening grassroots protection mechanisms.

2. Women's Empowerment

A. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

We advocate for gender equality by addressing poverty, fostering resilience, and promoting active participation in accessing and managing resources. When women engage decisively in civil society and political spheres, governance becomes more inclusive, responsive, and transparent, contributing to sustainable peace agreements.

B. Business Development Training and Provision of Micro Grants:

Focusing on women and girls, our initiative promotes financial stability and leadership by providing advanced skills and knowledge. Comprehensive programs offer small business management training combined with in-kind or cash grants and referrals to microfinance institutions, thereby fostering sustainable income generation.

C. Provision of Modern Agricultural Support:

POWECD employs four greenhouses in the Sinjar area equipped with advanced agricultural technologies—including hydroponics and biogas systems powered by solar energy—to empower marginalized women and girls. Beneficiaries participate in comprehensive training sessions and receive essential tools and materials to launch sustainable agricultural ventures.

D. Life Skills and Vocational Training:

POWECD equip motivated youth, who may lack technical skills, with targeted vocational courses aligned with market demands, enabling them either to start their own businesses or secure sustainable employment in the private sector.



3. Advocacy Programs for IDPs, Refugees, Returnees and Host Communities

A. Policy Development and Reform: We implement advocacy campaigns and strategic action plans aimed at promoting the protection and participation of women in peacebuilding processes across all political spheres.

B. Build Alliance and network:

POWECD advocates for women's rights and policy reform, addressing both formal and informal frameworks such as amending Personal Status Law No. 188, establishing mandatory reporting for GBV survivors, and revising exoneration practices. We actively engage in national and regional networks and build strategic alliances with other women-led and women's rights organizations to address shared priorities

C. Capacity building:

Recognizing that advocacy for women's rights extends beyond our own mandate, POWECD collaborates with governmental and academic institutions—including universities, DCAVW, DOLSA, and other women empowerment entities—to strengthen capacities and foster long-term partnerships for advancing gender equity.

4. Mental Health and Psycho-social Support

POWECD integrates and synergizes MHPSS services across all thematic areas through a comprehensive, multi-sectoral, multi-tiered approach that is aligned with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (ISAC) MHPSS guidelines. POWECD structured and non-structured psychosocial support sessions draw upon mental health evidence-based practices of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Virtual Reality Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, as well as Expressive Arts and Play Therapy. POWECD ensures quality and sustainability through regular clinical supervision and strong focus on staff/self-care measures.

5. Climate Change

POWECD recognizes that climate change is not only an environmental crisis but also a threat multiplier for women and vulnerable communities in Iraq. We integrate climate adaptation into our



broader empowerment and development strategy through sustainable, women-led initiatives—such as solar-powered greenhouses and hydroponic agriculture—that reduce environmental stress and improve food security.

As part of a five-year agreement with the Norwegian Church Aid Headquarters, we are managing and expanding a climate-resilient greenhouse project in Sinjar and the Sinjar Mountains. This initiative is expected to directly benefit over 200 women and youth by equipping them with agricultural skills, generating income opportunities, and enhancing climate resilience—empowering them to become stewards of both the land and community recovery.

Administrative Structure of the Association:

A. Board Members

Board members' objectives in Phoenix are summarized as follows:

- Endorsing the annual budget, evaluating periodic financial reports, and managing internal affairs of the Association.
- Defining the Association's strategic objectives, reviewing program plans, and assessing program effectiveness.
- Developing administrative policies to guide the Association's operations.
- Overseeing employee affairs and conducting comprehensive performance reviews.

B. Staff Members

Phoenix Organization is comprised of a team of former NCA staff in Iraq who possess extensive capacity-building training and specialized expertise, positioning them as a highly qualified team to deliver sensitive services such as GBV response, women's empowerment, advocacy, MHPSS, and climate change interventions targeting women and girls, including marginalized populations. Upholding the principles of equal opportunity and gender diversity, Phoenix Organization actively encourages the participation of the new generation, welcoming individuals from all ethnicities and religions to align with its mission and values.



C. Leadership and Key Personnel

The Phoenix Organization consists of 4 sections

Phoenix Organization is a Women Led Organization, and Fatma Shawkat is the Executive Director.

- Security – Deputy Executive Director – Osama Mirkhan
- Programme – Led by Ms. Najea A. Haji
- Grant and Funding Department – led by Mr. Mustafa Abdulrahman
- Logistics, Finance, and Human Resources – Ms. Kurdjeen Abdulkareem

B. Identification information.

- Organization Name: Phoenix Organization for Women Empowerment and Community Development
In Kurdish: فونیکس: یۆ به هیز کردنی ژنان و گهشه بیدانی کۆمهڵگا
In Arabic: منظمة طائر العنقاء لتمكين المرأة
- Office address: Duhok – KRO
- Email Address: phoenixorganization@powecd.org
- Phone Number: 07518001164

Current partnership:

- **Private Donor:** The POWECD Organization has established itself as a trusted implementing partner for donors previously funding NCA. A private donor from Norway has allocated a small grant to the POWECD Organization to cover the rental costs of greenhouses in Sinjar.
- **Healium:** In our pursuit of sustainable community solutions, POWECD has partnered with Healium, a pioneering U.S.-based company specializing in virtual and augmented reality therapies for stress and anxiety reduction. This collaboration, generously supported by private donors, has led to a joint initiative with the University of Duhok, engaging multiple departments including Special Education, Computer Science, Psychology, and the Center for Gender Equality Studies.

The pilot phase focuses on providing innovative, drug-free therapeutic interventions for autistic children—a group significantly underserved in our region. Utilizing Healium's immersive VR experiences, the program aims to alleviate stress and anxiety among these children, offering services free of charge. This initiative not only addresses a critical gap in mental health support but also sets the stage for expanding similar services to other vulnerable groups in future phases.





- **DCVAW:** POWECD Organization has formalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Directorate for Combating Violence Against Women (DCVAW) in Duhok to strengthen staff capacity in advocating for women's rights and responding to GBV.
- **Sunrise Organization:** POWECD Organization has solidified its presence in Sinune through a partnership with Sunrise Organization, jointly managing Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) in the area. This collaboration strategically links the greenhouse initiative with WGSS activities, fostering integrated support for women and girls.

