



Sparda

سپارده

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

2025 has been a year of both challenge and progress for Sparda. Across Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, young people continue to navigate a complex reality shaped by economic uncertainty, limited job opportunities, and evolving social pressures. Yet, within this context, we have also witnessed resilience, creativity, and a strong desire among youth to shape a better future.

At Sparda, we remain committed to unlocking that potential.

As we close another impactful year, I am proud to reflect on a period defined by growth, resilience, and a deepened commitment to our mission of empowering youth and women while fostering peaceful and inclusive communities. Building on the foundations of the previous year, 2025 has been a time of both consolidation and new beginnings, where we strengthened ongoing initiatives while stepping into new spaces of impact.

Over the past year, we have expanded our efforts to empower young people through education, entrepreneurship, and job creation. Through our youth hubs in Chamchamal, Ranya, and Halabja, we have continued to create safe and inclusive spaces where youth, especially women, can develop skills, build businesses, and engage constructively in their communities.

This year, we successfully finalized the last phases of the Yalla Chamchamal: Save Water! project, implemented with the support of the International Organization for Migration, ensuring that its outcomes are not only sustained but carried forward by the communities themselves. At the same time, we embraced a new and meaningful initiative through the My Voice, My Vote project, implemented in partnership with Women for Women International. By creating safe spaces for dialogue, learning, and confidence-building, we witnessed inspiring examples of women stepping forward to claim their voice and role in shaping their communities.

Our Communities Connector Project, supported by SPARK, also reached new heights this year, expanding both its reach and depth of engagement. By bringing together youth, educators, government officials, and community stakeholders, we continued to strengthen social cohesion and promote locally led solutions to complex challenges, advancing peace through moderation and reinforcing community resilience. The trust built through these efforts remains one of our most valuable achievements.

MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

None of this would have been possible without the trust and collaboration of our partners. We are grateful to our donors, government counterparts, and implementing partners who share our vision of a stable, inclusive, and prosperous society. Together, we are demonstrating that investing in youth is not only a social priority, but a cornerstone of sustainable peace and economic development.

At the same time, we recognize the challenges. Funding constraints, shifting political dynamics, and structural barriers to employment continue to affect the communities we serve. These realities require us to remain adaptive, innovative, and focused on long-term sustainability. In 2025, we have taken important steps to further strengthen our organizational systems, enhance program quality, and explore new models that link social impact with economic opportunity. As we look ahead to 2026, our ambition is clear: to scale our impact, deepen our partnerships, and further position Sparda as a leading organization in youth empowerment and peacebuilding in Iraq and the KR-I.

We will continue to invest in solutions that are locally driven, evidence-based, and designed for lasting change. We believe in a future where young people are not seen as a risk, but as leaders of transformation. At Sparda, we are proud to stand alongside them on that journey.



Raheil Aziz
Founder & Director,
Sparda Organization

ABOUT ORGANIZATION

Who is Sparda

Sparda is a locally established non-profit organization founded in 2023 by a group of young professionals who share a deep commitment to creating positive alternatives for youth and women across Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. Built on the values of trust, empowerment, and inclusion, Sparda provides a platform where individuals can learn, grow, and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Through education, entrepreneurship, and job creation initiatives, we work to enhance security, stability, and social cohesion by addressing the root causes of unemployment, marginalization, and extremism. Our programs bring together youth, women, educators, parents, and government actors in a collaborative effort to build a more resilient and equitable society.

At the heart of Sparda's work lies the belief that sustainable change begins with empowerment—giving people not only the skills but also the confidence and environment they need to lead. Whether through our youth hubs, training programs, or community projects, Sparda continues to be a bridge between local aspirations and meaningful opportunities for a brighter, more inclusive future.



ABOUT ORGANIZATION



Mission

Security and stability through education, entrepreneurship and job creation for youth and women.

Vision

Rebuild Iraq and promote peace by giving young people an active role and perspective.

ABOUT ORGANIZATION

Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Context Overview

Iraq is a country rich in history and cultural diversity, but decades of conflict, political instability, and economic hardship have weakened public services, limited opportunities, and increased social vulnerability across many communities.

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), while relatively more stable, continues to face major socio-economic challenges, particularly unemployment and limited access to development opportunities for youth and women. These challenges are often more severe in rural and underserved areas, where infrastructure is weaker and access to training, education, and employment is limited.

In such environments, communities are more exposed to negative trends such as irregular migration, school dropout, gender-based violence, and vulnerability to extremist narratives. At the same time, climate change and water scarcity are creating additional pressure, especially on rural livelihoods.

These realities highlight the urgent need for community-based solutions that strengthen resilience, empower youth and women, and create positive alternatives. In this context, Sparda plays an important role by supporting local communities through education, awareness, skill development, and engagement activities that build social cohesion and expand opportunities—particularly in areas most at risk of marginalization and instability.

ABOUT ORGANIZATION

Why Youth and Women

Women and youth represent the largest and most vital groups in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, yet they are also among the most affected by unemployment, limited opportunities, and social inequality—especially in rural and underserved areas. Many young people lack access to skills development, safe spaces, and career pathways, increasing risks such as irregular migration and vulnerability to harmful influences.

At the same time, women often face additional barriers linked to social norms, limited mobility, and unequal access to education, protection, and economic opportunities, which restricts their ability to participate fully in society and contribute to community development.

Real, lasting change in any society depends on the active participation of its youth and women, as they bring energy, innovation, and diverse perspectives. Without empowering these groups, efforts toward development and social progress cannot be fully achieved.

This is why Sparda prioritizes women and youth as key drivers of resilience, inclusion, and long-term community stability in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**Total Beneficiaries
in 2025: + 3,269**



Youth and women reached through vocational trainings: 612



Parents reached through awareness sessions: 602



Community Outreach Through Campaign: 718



Educators reached through trainings: 752



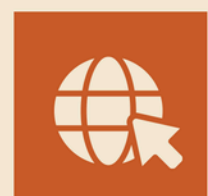
Educators and stakeholders events participants: 367



Youth & women events participants: 218



**Online Views: 740.1 k - Facebook
2.0m - Instagram**



YOUTH HUBS

Description

Sparda has co-established and manages three vibrant community hubs across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq — in Halabja, Chamchamal, and Ranya. More than just spaces for youth and women, these hubs have become dynamic meeting points for everyone shaping the next generation — parents, teachers, university professors, and government officials. They gather here to exchange ideas, attend seminars, and participate in awareness sessions that strengthen the link between home, school, and society.

The hubs were strategically established in areas more exposed to radicalisation and violent extremism risks, ensuring that our resources reach the communities that need them most. Within these safe and inclusive environments, Sparda designs and delivers a wide range of initiatives — from skill-building and professional development training to community dialogues and educational programs. Each hub acts as a catalyst for learning, understanding, and collaboration, fostering a culture of peace and resilience where youth and those who guide them can grow together and drive positive change across their communities.

The youth hubs host a range of activities organized by Sparda in collaboration with local organizations. These community-focused efforts run separately from the ongoing projects, as shown below:



PROJECT 1: YALLA CHAMCHAMAL - SAVE WATER

Description

Yalla Chamchamal: Save Water! is a climate awareness and community resilience project funded by IOM and implemented by Sparda in Chamchamal, under the Climate Action for Resilience and Sustainability (CARS) initiative. The project addresses growing water scarcity and environmental challenges that are affecting daily life, livelihoods, and long-term stability in the area.

During the reporting period in 2025, Sparda continued implementing the project through a combination of youth-led campaigning, community awareness activities, and engagement with local authorities. A key component of the project was a two-month public awareness campaign led by trained youth campaigners, aiming to encourage practical water-saving behaviors and increase public understanding of climate change impacts.

Through both online and offline outreach, the campaign achieved strong visibility. By February 2025, it reached over 49,000 online accounts, generated more than 70,000 video views, and engaged 367 community members through direct awareness activities in schools and workplaces.

In addition, Sparda supported capacity-building efforts for local institutions by delivering a two-day training for staff from the Chamchamal General Directorate for Water, strengthening their knowledge of sustainable water management and climate resilience approaches. Sparda also organized a high-level masterclass and follow-up roundtable discussion with the local steering committee, bringing together decision-makers and stakeholders to discuss water scarcity challenges and promote coordinated local action.

The project concluded with a final public awareness event titled “Water for Life, and Life for Chamchamal,” which created a space for dialogue between youth, government representatives, and community members to highlight the urgency of water conservation and encourage long-term solutions.

PROJECT 1: YALLA CHAMCHAMAL - SAVE WATER

Key Results

Youth Engagement & Capacity Building

- 18 youth participated in the leadership bootcamp (50% female)
- 6 youth campaigners were selected and trained (4 female, 2 male)
- 6-day intensive Campaign Design & Implementation training delivered for the selected campaigners
- Event management training delivered: 4-day training for campaigners

Community Outreach (Offline)

- 384 people engaged through offline awareness activities
 - 328 students reached through high school and university awareness sessions
 - 56 public and private sector workers reached through workplace awareness sessions
- 8 offline awareness events delivered (5 in schools/universities, 3 in workplaces)

Digital Outreach (Online)

- 49,000+ accounts reached through online campaigning
- 70,000+ video views generated
- 95,000 impressions achieved
- 24 online awareness posts produced (10 reels/videos + 14 photo albums)

Government & Stakeholder Engagement

- 28 government staff trained through a two-day capacity-building program
- 6 steering committee members trained through a water scarcity masterclass
- 1 roundtable discussion conducted with key stakeholders

Public Engagement Events

- Final awareness event delivered: “Water for Life, and Life for Chamchamal”

PROJECT 1: YALLA CHAMCHAMAL - SAVE WATER



PROJECT 2 : COMMUNITIES CONNECTOR

Description

The Communities Connector Project, an initiative funded by the Dutch international organization SPARK and implemented by Sparda under the broader Network of Change 2 (NoC2) programme, backed by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NLMFA), is designed to foster empowerment and connectivity among local community actors in Chamchamal, Halabja, and Ranya.

This ambitious project includes a range of activities, including trainings, masterclasses, seminars, events, and awareness sessions at Sparda's youth hubs. Its primary focus is on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PVE) by offering positive alternatives to radicalization and violent paths to the youth and women of those areas.

A diverse array of participants are at the heart of this endeavor. The project benefits not only youth and women, by providing them with opportunities that steer them away from violent extremism, but also parents, high school teachers, university professors, and government officials; who gain valuable guidance and opportunities through their involvement. Each of these stakeholders brings unique perspectives and contributions, creating a dynamic, multifaceted approach to community development.

By engaging this broad spectrum of actors, the project aims to cultivate a robust network of informed and proactive individuals dedicated to the sustained growth and stability of their communities. The impact of this project lies in equipping youth and women with future-oriented perspectives and helping them avoid violent pathways, while also fostering more resilient and tolerant community members and government institutions.

The Communities Connector Project is built around four key pillars: Youth pillar, Educator pillar, parents pillar, and the Government pillar.

PROJECT 2 : COMMUNITIES CONNECTOR

Pillars

1. Youth pillar

The Youth Pillar focuses on offering positive alternatives by empowering young people through one-day vocational trainings held at Sparda's youth hubs in Halabja, Chamchamal, and Ranya. These sessions are designed and facilitated by peers who have been trained as Trainers of Trainers (ToT), creating a cycle of shared learning and leadership.

The trainings equip participants with essential skills and tools to prepare them for the (digital) job market, while also opening up opportunities for personal and professional growth. Trainings offered under this pillar include practical and market-oriented topics such as CV Writing with Canva and AI, Entrepreneurship & Design Thinking, Photography and Editing, Brand Marketing, and Art of Selling, among others.

The target audience is youth from the region, ages 18 to 30, both male and female, and primarily recent graduates who benefit from gaining hands-on skills to build a brighter future and the opportunity for a brighter road ahead.

Project Impact: Through these activities, the program strengthens resilience among youth, reducing the risks of radicalization and violent extremism by opening pathways to constructive opportunities. By fostering a sense of purpose and equipping them with employable skills, the initiative contributes to building a safer, more prosperous future for young people and their communities in the region.



PROJECT 2 : COMMUNITIES CONNECTOR

2. Educators pillar

Research shows that there are often early warning signs before an individual begins to follow a harmful or destructive path. Under this pillar, high school teachers and university professors in Chamchamal, Halabja, and Ranya are equipped with the skills and tools needed to recognize early indicators of radicalization among students.

The educators selected by Sparda to attend these trainings are selected from risky schools and institutions, who possess a strong understanding of their students' social and cultural context. Schools and universities are carefully chosen based on research identifying the most vulnerable and at-risk locations and in collaboration with the Directorates of the schools and council of the universities. Sparda delivers regular one-day PVE trainings, as well as more intensive four-day sessions for higher-risk cases. The trainings focuses on understanding radicalization and identifying its early signals, building participants' foundational knowledge of radicalization, enabling them to recognize early warning signs and how to deal with them properly and in a soft approach.

The program empowers educators to refer at-risk students to social workers for timely support and intervention. To complement this, safe spaces are established within schools and universities, providing consultation sessions where students can seek guidance in a supportive environment.

Community Impact: These activities strengthen the role of educators as frontline protectors of youth against radicalization and violent extremism. By fostering trust and creating accessible safe spaces, the initiative not only helps prevent escalation but also builds a more proactive and supportive educational environment. This contributes to greater stability and resilience within both schools and the wider community.

PROJECT 2 : COMMUNITIES CONNECTOR

3. Parents pillar

The Parents' Pillar empowers families through awareness sessions conducted at high schools by respected local figures. These sessions help parents understand the risks of radicalization and violent extremism, while also guiding them on how to recognize early warning signs in their children.

The awareness sessions provide participants with practical tools to recognize early signs of radicalization among their children and to promote peaceful conflict resolution within both the school and family environment. By creating spaces for open dialogue, the program strengthens parental involvement in safeguarding their children's well-being, creating a safer environment for the youth of the area to stay away from danger.

Parents selected by Sparda to participate in these sessions are often from high-risk contexts, identified based on their physical location as well as broader social and political circumstances.

Community Impact: These efforts foster stronger bonds between parents and their children, contributing to a more cohesive and supportive community. By equipping parents with knowledge and awareness, the program not only helps protect young people from harmful influences but also strengthens trust and collaboration across families and schools, creating a safer environment for the entire community by having a stronger family resilience.



PROJECT 2 : COMMUNITIES CONNECTOR

4. Government pillar

The Government Pillar focuses on strengthening institutional leadership by equipping local officials in Chamchamal, Halabja, and Ranya with the knowledge and tools needed to address the challenges of radicalization and violent extremism.

Through this initiative, Sparda has organized masterclasses that empower government officials to design local PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism) action plans, creating comprehensive roadmaps for supporting youth and women in their communities. These masterclasses also provided a platform to discuss the challenges faced by young people in each city, while exploring viable solutions tailored to the local context. The dialogues emphasized strategies for preventing violent extremism and fostering a culture of peace and moderation among youth.

Community Impact: By building the capacity of local leaders, the program enables them to develop effective policies and strategies that directly support youth and women. These actions contribute to more secure and stable regions, helping prevent radicalization while paving the way for a safer and brighter future for the entire community.



PROJECT 2 : COMMUNITIES CONNECTOR

Key Results

Educator Recruitment & Preparation

- Recruitment of educators for PVE trainings: 169 educators
- Training Needs Assessment (TNA) participants: 164 educators
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) Participants: 164 educators

Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) Trainings

- 1-day PVE trainings delivered: 581 educators
- 4-day PVE trainings delivered: 171 educators

Community Engagement

- Parents awareness sessions delivered: 602 parents

Youth Vocational Training

- Peer-to-peer trainings delivered by youth trainers (ToTs): 612 participants

Youth and women event

- Youth dialogues and events delivered: 218 participants

Educators and stakeholders event

- Networking and advocacy activities for educators and stakeholders: 367 participants

PROJECT 3 : MY VOICE, MY VOTE

Description

My Voice, My Vote was a civic engagement project funded by Women for Women International and implemented by Sparda between August and December 2025 in the Raparin region, with a focus on Ranya and surrounding areas including Qaladze, Sangasar, Hajiawa, and Chwarqurna. The project aimed to strengthen the capacity and confidence of young women, particularly first-time female voters, to participate meaningfully in political and civic life.

The project began with an open call for applications, followed by a bootcamp to select motivated young women campaigners. The selected participants then received trainings on political awareness, voting rights, and campaign design, equipping them with the knowledge and practical skills needed to lead awareness activities in their communities.

Following the trainings, the campaigners designed and implemented a three-month awareness campaign combining both online and in-person outreach. The campaign produced original videos, infographics, and public messaging focused on women's voting rights and the importance of political participation. In addition, Sparda supported the organization of six community awareness sessions across the Raparin region, reaching 349 participants. Each session concluded with a public commitment activity, where participants were encouraged to sign a pledge to vote, and 120 women signed the pledge.

Through strong online outreach and strategic dissemination, the campaign generated 447,774 total views, and reached an estimated 13,299 first-time female voters and their male relatives in the Raparin region. The project demonstrated the importance of locally-led civic engagement initiatives in strengthening women's participation and building long-term political awareness in underserved communities.

PROJECT 3 : MY VOICE, MY VOTE

Key Results

Participant Recruitment & Capacity Building

- 50 applications received from young women across the Raparin region
- 23 young women participated in the bootcamp selection process
- 10 campaigners were selected and trained (aged 18–26)
 - 2-day Political Awareness & Rights Training delivered
 - 5-day Campaign Design & Implementation Training delivered

Campaign Implementation

- 3-month awareness campaign implemented (October – December 2025)
- Campaign combined both online and offline outreach
- Campaign content included videos, testimonies, infographics, and education materials

Community Outreach (Offline)

- 6 community awareness sessions conducted
- 349 participants reached through in-person sessions
 - 306 female participants
 - 43 male participants
- 120 women signed a public pledge to vote

Digital Outreach (Online)

- 52 social media posts published
- 447,774 total views generated across campaign content
- Estimated reach: 13,299 first-time female voters and their male relatives in the Raparin region

Impact Highlights

- Increased awareness for women in the area of the voting process from 22% to 59.3%
- Increased intention for women in the area to vote in the future from 25.4% to 67.8%
- 47.5% of women in the area's respondents said the campaign increased their motivation to vote
- 45.8% women in the area said it helped them overcome barriers to voting

PROJECT 3 : MY VOICE, MY VOTE



ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Sparda Staff Development

At Sparda, we recognize that a strong, adaptable, and well-prepared team is the foundation for delivering meaningful and sustainable impact. We therefore place a high priority on continuous staff development to ensure our team remains responsive to evolving challenges at both local and international levels.

In September 2025, Sparda organized a two-day capacity-building activity for its staff in Sulaymaniyah. These sessions were designed to strengthen the team's readiness for upcoming projects, organizational growth, and increasingly complex operating environments. The trainings focused on enhancing core professional competencies, strategic thinking, and adaptability in the face of shifting political dynamics, climate-related challenges, and broader socio-economic changes.

The activity also created space for collaborative learning and internal reflection, including brainstorming on how to strengthen engagement with local private sector actors. This is part of Sparda's ongoing efforts to promote sustainability and build stronger, locally rooted partnerships.



PARTNERS

Donors/ international partners:



Kingdom of the Netherlands

spark



**UK International
Development**

Partnership | Progress | Prosperity



WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL

منظمة نساء من أجل نساء العالم



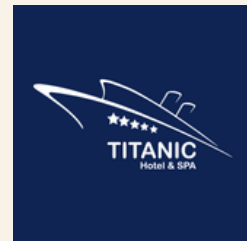
Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

 **IOM**
UN MIGRATION

PARTNERS



KRI public institutes:



Local private partners:









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