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# ANNUAL REPORT 2019



# WHO WE ARE

Un Ponte Per (UPP) is an international solidarity association and NGO founded in 1991 immediately after the Iraq war. Its focus has always been the solidarity for the Iraqi population affected by the war. Originally called “Un Ponte Per Baghdad”, the association later became known as “Un Ponte Per” (A bridge to) after expanding its work into Serbia, Kosovo and other Middle Eastern and Mediterranean countries.

UPP’s goal is the prevention of armed and violent conflict, particularly in the Middle East, through a series of information campaigns, cultural exchanges, cooperation projects, peace building programmes and the creation of social justice networks. UPP refuses to accept war as a way of settling national and international disputes, and is working to facilitate peaceful and fair coexistence through interaction of different cultures, languages, religions and traditions in order to build social cohesion.

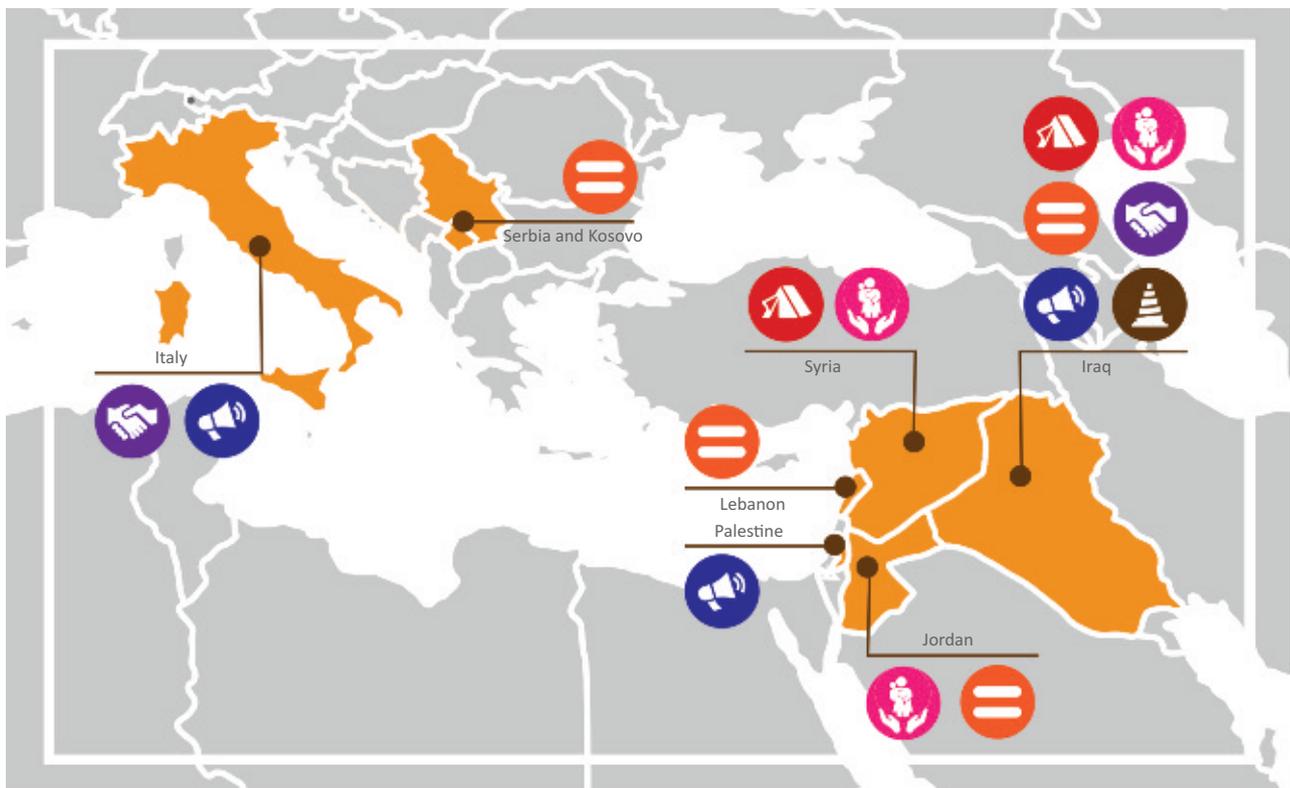
In addressing the underlying causes of war, UPP prioritises human rights protection and concrete support for those who promote and protect fundamental rights and freedoms, whether they are people, movements, organisations or informal groups. As a result, UPP’s interventions to assist and support war-affected populations are inseparable from the commitment to build and strengthen ties between Italian and European civil societies and those of the countries where the organisation operates. This commitment is achieved through advocacy campaigns, exchanges of culture and best practices, joint projects, coalition building and actions to strengthen the organisational, structural and participatory capacities of the civil societies with whom it comes into.

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*Cover photo:  
The Annual Conference of the Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity  
Initiative (ICSSI), organized in Baghdad on the occasion of  
the 10th anniversary of the birth of the network.  
Photo by Arianna Pagani.*

# WHAT WE DO

Since its foundation 29 years ago, the work of Un Ponte Per has evolved in direct response to the changing contexts in which it was operating, while upholding the same key aims: the promotion of peace and human rights and conflict prevention. Just as unwavering is the organisation's commitment to ensuring the highest possible standards for all its projects, with a special focus on the right of beneficiary communities and populations' to self-determination and the importance of partnerships, respect for subjectivities and, most importantly of all, respect for the political and social beliefs of the people and organisations with whom it cooperates.



# OUR HISTORY

1991

**Un Ponte Per (UPP)** was founded as a solidarity campaign for victims of the Gulf War, with the name “**Un Ponte Per Baghdad**”. In the first year and a half, 250 million Lire were raised for medicines and the creation of a water purification plant for 50,000 people living in the south of the country.

1993

Support for the Iraqi population continued with school materials distributed to **5,000 boys and girls**, and funds were raised to rebuild the drinking water purification Centres in Bassora.

1994

The international campaign “**Silence kills. Embargo is war**” was launched in condemnation of the embargo’s devastating impact on Iraq’s civilian population.

1994

When UPP launched a new campaign: “**Un Ponte Per Diyarbakir**,” many volunteer delegations traveled to Turkey to defend the rights of the Kurds. These acts of solidarity continued for over 10 years, including UPP’s 2001 fund-raising campaign for the foundation of a Safe House for women and children in Dogubayazit.

1995

Another campaign - “**Sinbad, with Bassora’s children**” - funded a healthcare unit equipped for the treatment of more than 10,000 boys and girls every year. The “**Nacbar**” medical sponsorship project was launched, and is still active today under the name “**Farah**”.

1997

Another bridge of solidarity was built with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon: “**Un Ponte Per Shatila**.” One of the initiatives was the “**Family Happiness**” child sponsorship programme which is still active today.

1998

UPP organised 4 **Volunteer Human Shields for Peace** in Iraq delegations, made up of men and women activists, volunteers and journalists, all determined to oppose the bombing campaigns.

1999

Another campaign was launched to limit the devastating effects of war in ex-Yugoslavia and the NATO bombardments. The “**Un Ponte Per Belgrade**” campaign enabled the establishment of healthcare structures, the provision of medicines to national health facilities and aid to more than 10,000 IDPs. The “**Svetlost**” child sponsorship project was launched, and is still active today.

2000

UPP imported and distributed **Iraqi dates** in direct violation of the embargo imposed on the country. Italy’s first embargo violation, this was an important act of national civil disobedience and a key moment in the Association’s history, an approach which was to be repeated in the years to come.

2002 UPP protests against the looming second Gulf War through a series of awareness campaigns and initiatives: ranging from the **“Don’t cut the rope”** campaign, to a photography exhibition entitled **“The other face of war”**, as well as the fund-raising and awareness campaign **“Are you sure this war is making you feel safer?”**.

2004 Baghdad hosts the foundation of **“Occupation Watch”**, an international information website tracking the impact of war in Iraq, which later became the Italian **“Iraqi Observatory”** portal. The **“Free Peace”** campaign was launched following the kidnapping of 3 UPP workers - two young Italians and an Iraqi - and garnered great international solidarity.

2004 UPP launches **“The house of books”**, a 10-year project in support of the Baghdad National Library and Historical Archive, which were seriously damaged by fire in 2003. Buildings were rebuilt, books were restored and programmes were set up for the digitalisation of the library, including training courses for local staff.

2006 After the Israeli attacks on Lebanese and Palestinian civilians in Lebanon, UPP launched a campaign in response to the humanitarian crisis and organised distribution of basic necessities.

2006 UPP, together with several Italian organisations, launched a project to create meeting opportunities for Civil Society Organisations from the north and south of the Mediterranean region, to promote peace, justice, human rights and democracy. For 3 years, dozens of activists, organisations and Civil Society networks were able to exchange ideas thanks to the **“Medlink - Mediterranean Links”** conference, to respond to the need to relaunch dialogue and joint work.



2009 UPP’s commitment to supporting Iraqi Civil Society’s concerns, reached an important milestone with the birth of the **“Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative”**, an international coalition founded with the aim of giving voice to the demands of social justice and the campaigns promoted by Iraqi men and women activists and associations.

2011 The **Programme to protect religious minorities** was launched in Iraq to promote dialogue and coexistence. UPP rebuilt schools and started educational programmes. However, the intervention had to stop three years later, with the occupation by Daesh of Mosul and the Nineveh Plain, where the organisation was active.

2012 UPP began working in response to the biggest humanitarian crisis ever seen in the Middle East: the war in Syria. Programmes were launched to ensure **psychosocial support, protection of women and humanitarian relief** distributions to Syrian refugees in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon.

2014 After Daesh’s occupation of vast areas in Iraq, UPP set up a **Humanitarian Relief and Health Programme** for Iraqi IDPs. When the occupied areas were liberated in late 2017 and IDP communities returned home, the focus shifted to social cohesion and peacebuilding.

2015 A new initiative was launched, this time known as **“Un Ponte Per... Syria”**. UPP has built strong links with the Kurdish Red Crescent in the north east of the country, setting up a series of humanitarian relief and medicine distributions. In the years to come the programme was expanded to help deal with the humanitarian crisis during the fight to liberate Raqqa from Daesh, with a network of clinics and ambulances. UPP continues to work with the partner in north-eastern Syria for the protection of women and children and to rebuild the health system, even if the fighting has ended.

# PHOTOS



1

The activities carried out during 2019, told through some of the most beautiful images that accompanied the work of Un Ponte Per.

1. **Iraq, Plain of Nineveh. September 2019.** The works for the inauguration of one of the renovated schools, thanks to the Bridging Communities project in Nineveh Plain.

2. **Iraq, Governorate of Mosul. March 2019.** Psycho-social support group in one of the three assistance centres set up to offer mental health, reproductive health and psycho-social activity services to women in the community, thanks to the Salamtak project.

3. **Jordan, Duliel. May 2019.** Activities within the Peer Counseling programme of the Enaya project, to support people with disabilities. Photo by Zahraa' El Dakar.

4. **Iraq, Baghdad. January 2019.** The Annual Conference of the Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI), organized in Baghdad on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the birth of the network. Photo by Arianna Pagani.

5. **Lebanon, Beirut, Shatila Camp. October 2019.** Recovery classes for Syrian and Palestinian children and young people held thanks to private supporters.

6. **Syria. November 2019.** The humanitarian aid load for the population displaced during the Turkish offensive in North East Syria, sent by the Italian Cooperation and delivered by Un Ponte Per: winter tents, blankets and hygiene kits for more than 2,500 people.



2



# SYRIA



## RESPONDING TO HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

After 9 years, the war in Syria is still raging. Even in the North-East area, where UPP operates since 2015, the situation worsened in 2019 because of the military offensive launched by Turkey in October, which killed many civilians and provoked a new wave of internal displacement. More than 70.000 people fled from the border with Turkey, declared a “safe zone” by the Government of Ankara, and repeatedly hit by aerial bombardments and fighting on the ground. The refugee camps of the North East, already exasperated by previous internal migratory waves, found themselves in the middle of winter with a new humanitarian emergency to manage, and new camps were quickly set up by the Autonomous Administration of the area. During the offensive, many health centres were damaged, including some of the Kurdish Red Crescent (KRC) that UPP had helped build over the years, as well as ambulances and hospitals. The emergency forced all international actors present in the field, including UPP, to evacuate their international

personnel in October 2019, and to reformulate their cooperation interventions from outside. UPP continued to operate in Syria whenever possible thanks to local staff and partners on the field.

UPP started working in the northeast of the country in 2015 in collaboration with many local partners such as the Kurdish Red Crescent (KRC), women’s organizations like Mala Jin and Arab Women Organization, and the youth association DOZ. After helping to rebuild the local health system, including the Raqqa National Hospital, UPP now manages 15 clinics and health centres in both major cities in the north-east and refugee camps, focusing its efforts on prevention, community medicine, the protection of the most vulnerable, in particular children and women by fighting Gender-Based Violence, as well as ecology.

# HEALTH

Starting in Raqqa, UPP launched various important initiatives in support of the civilian population. Thanks to the “**Darna**” (Our house) project, financed by the *Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development (AICS)* and entered its second phase, the ordinary activities of the Raqqa hospital continued regularly, offering free assistance all day, every day, to around 300 patients. Simultaneously, mobile clinic continued to provide healthcare assistance to women and children living in rural areas surrounding Raqqa and more difficult to reach. Despite the military escalation started by Turkey in October 2019, and the resulting new humanitarian crisis, building restoration works of the in-town public hospital was completed, which the maternity and paediatrics wards were rebuilt during 2018. However, due to the new crisis, part of Darna II's resources have been mobilised to support the local civilian population both from the health services point of view, creating a temporary emergency room for the population victims of the fighting, and from the medicines and medical personnel point of view. In June 2019, a new health waste management protocol has been designed and implemented in the structure. Due to the worsening security conditions following the Turkish offensive, the intervention priorities of medical staff moved from planned training to live-saving activities and support to the local displaced population.

UPP focused its efforts on the protection sector, by mapping Gender-Based Violence existing services and by implementing awareness-raising sessions and sensitisation. An assessment was conducted in order to implement new campaigns, and an operational team was set up to provide GBV protection to displaced women in the urban and rural areas of Raqqa, particularly at risk given the precariousness of the current situation.

In the Al Hol refugee camp, UPP launched the **Iraqi Refugee and IDPs Basic Health Program**, funded by the *French Foreign Ministry* and started in January 2019, thanks to which 14.000 consultations were guaranteed in addition to medical and paramedical support. The intervention was led in a very delicate and vulnerable place such as Al Hol camp, originally established to host Iraqi IDPs fleeing Daesh's occupation of Mosul in 2014, but which later also hosted Syrian refugees. UPP carried out some health promotion campaigns and rehabilitated some clinical structures,

equipped with mobility aids. In the second half of January, the humanitarian emergency in Hajin worsened and several thousands of internally displaced people arrived at Al Hol camp within few days, increasing the number of residents in the camp to an all-time high of over 34.000 people. The humanitarian emergency of February and March ended in correspondence of the storming of Baghouz, last Daesh's bulwark in the area. Moreover, due to the overcrowding condition in the camps, the situation remains still difficult. During the crisis, thanks to this intervention UPP, in collaboration with KRC, continued to provide assistance to new people hosted in the camp, where was created a medical point with a specialised team composed of 2 doctors, 2 nurses, 2 paramedics available all day, every day. At the end of the intervention, an “operational desk” was launched for the triage of emergency cases and the organisation of ambulances, and 2 “ORS corners” (Oral Rehydration Solution) were set up to provide immediate assistance to children and girls suffering from diarrhea - which has created numerous problems in the field - through the oral administration of rehydrating solutions. The medical staff was trained in emergency management of child diarrhea according to World Health Organisation protocols, and a specific campaign for the prevention of the phenomenon was carried out within the camp.

Thanks to the **Provision of primary health care and emergency services to Iraqi refugees and IDPs in Al Hol Camp project**, funded by *WHO*, UPP continued its intervention in Al Hol camp throughout 2019. At the end of 2016, UPP started a health care program which over the years has seen the birth of a clinic with three wards: general, gynaecological and paediatric. Despite all difficulties posed by the Turkish offensive in October 2019, the rehabilitation work of the clinic was completed, which allowed to reorganise and expand the existing maternity ward, and to add a post-partum room and a triage space. Training courses have been carried out with the clinic's staff on gender-based violence, practices of breastfeeding and neonatal nutrition, the protection of minors in emergencies, which have involved 30 members of the health and non-sanitary staff. Several campaigns were conducted for the prevention of infections, especially diarrhea, involving over 12.000 people. Nearly 50.000 consultations were provided, reaching as many people.

**Life-saving health assistance to the population in NES project**, funded by *ECHO* and launched in response to the humanitarian crisis triggered by the fight for Raqqa in 2017, continued and reached its third phase. UPP set up some Medical Centres for the stabilisation of the wounded, which later became medical struc-

tures once the emergency ended. Phase II, in 2018, allowed to set up generic clinics also in Areesha and Kasrah camps, in addition to 21 operating ambulances in Raqqa, Tabqa and Deir ez-Zor areas. Phase III, which started in April and continued throughout 2019, had as its objective the improvement of basic health care services and the transportation of patients by ambulance, and the strengthening of prevention in the field of health. From April to December, the intervention supported a total of 104.491 medical services in every project's venues. On 15th September a new emergency clinic (Emergency Health Post - EHP) was inaugurated in the Mahmoudli displaced camp, which carried out 4,023 medical consultations until December, continuing to operate despite the emergency. Concerning patient transportation and the related ambulance system, 2,234 were total transfers. Since 9th October, due to the Turkish military operation on the territories of north-east Syria, the project actions have contributed decisively to the response to the emergency, by mobilising 16 ambulances and mobile health units, located between combat zones, hospitals, and informal camps created in the area of Hassakeh for the population fleeing from war zones. Concerning the outreach and prevention activities, the Community Health Workers working in the health centre based in Raqqa carried out 449 home visits related to maternal care protocols-Children and conducted two health prevention campaigns in the Areesha camp with 1,678 visits in tents. The works planned by the project about improving the outpatient structure of Areesha and the installation of a new container for health prevention and protection activities within the community are ongoing and will be concluded in January 2020. On the protection work, 65 alerts and transfers of protection cases were made by the Areesha Basic Health Centre from the beginning of the project.

From the basic health services point of view, the **Linking Emergency Assistance and Response in Northeast Syria (LEARN)** project, supported by *OFDA*, was continued. Thanks to this project, health centres were built in Hassakeh, Tel Temer and Washokhani camp, established after the Turkish offensive. UPP activated a rapid response mechanism in order to face the emergency and support the capabilities of surgery departments in the emergency rooms of the Hassakeh and Tel Temer hospitals, which received the largest number of injured people during the conflict. Ambulance systems were improved and 12 Community Health Workers and 8 Protection Outreach Workers were hired in order to facilitate the referral in the hospitals. UPP attempted to ensure the rapid supply of

medicines and medical equipment in the main hospitals in the area, keeping paediatrics' and gynaecology services in the clinics managed with the project functioning. When the emergency ceased, the camp's clinic in Washokhani was expanded and stabilised, and it is currently still operational for the displaced population.

In late 2018, UPP launched **Provision of essential quality PHC services to children, women and vulnerable population in NES**, a project funded by *UNICEF* to reduce mortality rates for women and children by improving access to healthcare. During 2019 the intervention continued, with the increase of the health services made available in the clinics created and by training Community Health Workers - CHWs. Following the Turkish offensive, however, the work of CHWs was reassigned to the places where it was most necessary to provide assistance to the displaced population.

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*Pag. 8:  
Syria, Raqqa. Settembre 2018.  
Photo: Alessio Romenzi.*

*Pag. 11:  
Syria, Amuda. Ottobre 2018.  
Photo: Arianna Pagani.*

# PROTECTION

The **protection and empowerment of women and the provision of reproductive health services** were the focus of a project funded by *UNFPA*, launched in late 2017 and active throughout 2018 and 2019. As is always the case, women and children are by far the most vulnerable in war zones: as well as suffering the consequences of deprivation and displacement, there is typically a surge in cases of domestic violence, sexual abuse, forced and early marriage. In 2019 UPP continued to support the maternity wards in the hospitals of Tabqa, Ras El Ain and Manbij, which had been used as military bases or warehouses by Daesh during the occupation, and 2 clinics in Ras El Ain e Darbasye that guaranteed 18.813 consultations during the 4 first months. More than 4000 assisted births were carried out safely, with medical monitoring and application of international standards. UPP planned to continue the training programs on antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal care, which, however, had to be suspended because of the war offensive.

From April 2018, a specific component of the project was dedicated to **supporting four “Mala Jin or Beit Mara’a”, the Women’s Houses** present in the area, and their respective social workers who play a key role in assisting victims of abuse and gender-based violence (forced and early marriage, domestic violence, deprivation of resources). In the same locations, UPP supports the psycho-social counsellors of the Kurdish Red Crescent in order to provide an integrated service both in clinics and in women’s homes, with a focus on the mental health of women and girls.

As every year UPP, the Women’s House and other local partners contributed to 16 Days of Activism – a global initiative – by organising training, round tables, radio programs and other public events to raise awareness of gender-based violence and women’s empowerment. The project workers welcomed 179 cases of women survived from gender-based violence, providing them psycho-social support subsequently referred to legal or medical services. UPP also continued to conduct training on PSEA and GBV, as well as planning weekly visits to the homes of women in Qamishlo, Ras Al Ain, Maabada and Hassakeh as part of the process of strengthening psycho-social support services, improved confidentiality and case reference systems to health facilities. After the start of the war emergency, GBV services in women’s homes were



heavily conditioned, and legal referrals that, especially in Ras Al Ain, operated at full capacity, were interrupted. During the emergency, local workers and operators worked daily in improvised centres for displaced persons in schools and public buildings. They supported displaced people by ensuring firstly psychological aid, by continuing some activities related to raising awareness of reproductive health and violence.

## ECOLOGY, MUNICIPALITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

In 2019, the **Municipality Program** coordinated by the *National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI)* and funded by *MAECI*, started in 2017 in order to support the Municipalities based in North-East Syria, was successfully concluded. After some meetings with local authorities to identify institutional stakeholders and to establish a framework of the current regulatory system and to identify local priorities, the project promoted some exchanges between delegations of representatives of ANCI, Italian Municipalities and Syrian Municipalities, which have travelled to both Iraqi Kurdistan and Italy, for comparison on possible good practices, common challenges and to build paths for future collaborations. The Syrian local administration had also the opportunity to know closely the functioning of Italian municipalities and local authorities, studying their mechanisms and adapting them to their needs. In April 2019, some micro-projects were launched, supported by various bodies, to help to strengthen the public services of the Syrian entities involved. This was an important intervention of official dialogue with the autonomous municipalities of north-east Syria.

In 2019, with the support of the *Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB)*, a programme was launched for the **safe management of hazardous hospital waste and to strengthen the sustainable and ecological management** of municipal solid waste. The project, launched in March 2019, sees the collaboration not only of the Kurdish Red Crescent (KRC) but also of the Department of Municipalities and the Health Department of the Jazeera Region. The main objectives of this intervention were to support local authorities in NES in the hospital waste management by training the hospital's personnel in waste segre-

gation and the construction of hazardous medical waste disposal areas. In addition, the project aimed at strengthening the capacities of the Department of Municipalities and the Environment to manage municipal solid waste with an ecological and eco-sustainable approach, increasing and improving existing recycling practices. For this purpose, two hospital waste disposal areas were built in the cities of Hasake and Qamishlo, and two municipal vehicles were equipped for the safe health waste transportation from hospitals in Qamishlo, Amuda and Hasake to specialized disposal areas. The training material was prepared for the medical, paramedical and staff in charge of waste management in the hospitals involved in the project, but the training was suspended following the Turkish attack. In September UPP organised a workshop about sustainable management of municipal solid waste and recycling practices, led by an expert in waste and environmental protection of the Italian association "A Sud". Representatives of local authorities from seven municipalities in the area took part, as well as various civil society associations with which UPP has been working for years. A delegation of three representatives from the municipalities of the Jazeera region was finally accompanied by UPP in a training visit organised by AMB in Barcelona, where several urban waste disposal and recycling centres were visited, and different solutions explored.

The same local partner with which environmental campaigns are carried out on the territory, DOZ International, has received support from UPP to organize activities on social cohesion with the Qamishlo Social Forum, including a Peace Festival on 21st September with hundreds of people on the occasion of the International Day of Peace.

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Pag. 12:  
Syria, Amuda. October 2018.  
Photo: Arianna Pagani



# IRAQ



## WITH IRAQI YOUTH TO BUILD ANOTHER IRAQ

Since October 2019, Iraq has been crowded by a youth protest movement unique in the country's history: hundreds of thousands of young Iraqis have taken to the streets with massive demonstrations, mostly nonviolent and with high female participation. They demanded economic reforms, the fight against corruption, but above all the end of the political system based on sectarianism. After the first few weeks, mobilizations were channelled into forms of civil disobedience characterised by peaceful occupation of bridges, roads leading to oil infrastructures, ports and government buildings, strikes, closure of markets.

Un Ponte Per immediately took action to monitor the respect of protesters' rights and to ask the Iraqi Government to stop the violent repression, taking action towards international institutions to report cases of disappearances and indiscriminate arrests of activists.

In 30 years of work alongside the Iraqi population, the support to civil society organizations has been the main thread that has distinguished the intervention of Un Ponte Per in the country, with the objective of improving its capacity to promote human rights and protect fundamental freedoms, contrast violence between communities and continuous violations of women's rights, and defend the environmental and cultural heritage.

In January 2019 in Baghdad UPP celebrated the tenth anniversary of the **Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI)**, a coalition of Iraqi and international civil society organisations, groups and individuals, whose annual conference is attended by hundreds of activists, journalists, trade unionists, women's associations and NGO members from all over the country. As part of this process, UPP contributes to the organisa-

tion of advocacy and awareness raising campaigns in Europe. Among the most important ones: "Kahramana" (the women's political role), "Save the Tigris and the Iraqi Marshes" (preservation of the Tigris River and Mesopotamian Marshes), "Save Iraqi Heritage" (preservation of Iraqi cultural heritage), "Workers Rights", "Freedom of Expression" (freedom of press and information), "Sports and Arts for Peace" (sports and arts as instruments of peace), "LAONF and PVE" (nonviolence and prevention of violent extremism). These demands have been brought to the European Union in advocacy meetings and through the participation of UPP in the writing and implementation process of the current EU Iraq Strategy.

In the same direction, the *EU-funded Mesopotamian Youth for Democratic Governance, Social Cohesion and Reconciliation project works to strengthen the participation of young people in democratic and peacebuilding processes* by supporting the two local platforms of the Iraqi Social Forum (Baghdad) and the Kurdistan Social Forum (Erbil). More than 20 civil society organisations and hundreds of independent activists have been involved in 10 working groups across the country, working on issues such as social justice and human rights, protection of displaced communities and minorities, promotion of peace journalism and tolerance in the media, environmental rights and protection of cultural heritage, and women's participation in political processes. The project also included the opening of a Cultural Centre in Nassiriya, which carried out joint visits of Kurdish and Iraqi activists to the Mesopotamian marshes during the year as part of the Save The Tigris campaign. At the same time the 4 Councils for Social Cohesion, created at the end of 2018, continued their activities of coordination by civil society organisations and involvement of local authorities and religious leaders to discuss and implement the decisions taken in the Social Forums.

From the ICSSI coalition was born *Paths of coexistence in Mesopotamia and the Middle East*, a three-year programme launched in 2017 thanks to the support of the *Fondation Assistance Internationale (FAI)* with the goal of overcoming the fundamentalist tendencies inspired by Daesh, building trust between communities by developing a shared sense of belonging through a shared cultural and environmental heritage (Mesopotamia); and encouraging a joint territory management approach in full respect of coexistence practices and agreements. Local teams and civil society groups have set up forums in ten Iraqi cities and one city in Syria, along the Tigris and Euphrates, working on promotion campaigns for social cohesion, human rights and protection of cultural and

environmental heritage, and turning competitive factors into collaboration reasons. In parallel, the project supported the first Mesopotamian Water Forum, organized in Sulaymaniyah in April 2019, during which activists and civil society organizations from Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey discussed, comparing their experiences and perspectives: at the heart of the debate is the water, as an instrument of peace.

At the end of 2019, in order to consolidate the experience of this programme, UPP supported two important initiatives, thanks to the contribution of *CCFD-Terre solidaire*, to strengthen relations between groups of young activists and local associations involved in environmental and cultural heritage protection: with "Fostering solidarity to protect the shared rivers of Mesopotamia", together with "Save the Tigris Campaign", we are working on the constitution and training of a group of activists in the city of Basra for the protection of the Euphrates River; with "Youth and Women, key actors in preserving the Cultural Heritage in Iraq", together with the ICSSI network and the Iraqi Social Forum, we have established a group of volunteers properly trained in activities and campaigns to protect the cultural heritage of Dhi Qar. Activities will continue during 2020.



# BUILDING PEACE AND OVERCOMING FUNDAMENTALISMS

Throughout 2019, UPP's work continued in promoting peace and social cohesion between different communities. In parallel with the psycho-social support and protection of the most vulnerable categories of the population, UPP has never stopped working together with the communities for the reconstruction of the social fabric, deeply disrupted by the occupation by Daesh militias, especially on the Nineveh Plain, where the city of Mosul is located, the Iraq's former Islamic State stronghold. Aside from damage to infrastructures, the consequences for the country's social fabric are beyond measure. Divisions between communities increase the risk of permanent low-intensity conflict, and could prevent a transition to sustainable peace in the future.

**The Bridging Communities in Niniveh Plain** project, supported by *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)* with funds from the German Federal Ministry For Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), was launched in December 2017 and it is now in its second phase. Through this project, UPP operates in an area with a particularly diverse population, comprising Christians, Yazidis, Kaka'i,

Muslims, Turkmans and Shabak communities. Thanks to an in-depth listening, followed by careful analysis of each community's notions of peace and justice, multiple activities have been done to facilitate dialogue between the various ethnic-religious groups and to encourage the participation of young people in the decision-making process, with a special focus on the role of women, as catalysts of change, and on schools as a vehicle for Peace Education.

In the 4 Peace Centres established it has been carried out the "Conflict Prevention Teams" (CPTs) work: CPTs are groups of young trained on negotiation and mediation, peace journalism, interfaith dialogue, the participation of women in peacebuilding processes. They organized initiatives and campaigns aimed at the non-violent transformation of conflicts, in collaboration with local and religious authorities and with the security forces, and members of the local police forces were trained on the prevention of conflicts with civilians. More than 8,000 people took part in the following activities: round tables, radio programs, specific initiatives on women's empowerment and interreligious dialogue, especially during Ramadan and the re-

ligious holidays of the different communities. In Mosul, were also laid the foundations of the first Ninewa Peace Forum, with a preparatory assembly that saw the participation of over 100 activists from all over the country.

Furthermore, in the second half of 2019, the project's peacebuilding work was followed by activities aimed at promoting Peace Education. Since September, 7 schools have been completely renovated and equipped in the most remote and marginal villages in the area, and summer schools and Peace Education courses have been created, involving about 2,900 students and 340 teachers. In collaboration with the volunteers of UPP's Education Group Italy, together with local experts and the Nineveh School Department, a common methodology was finalized and training on Peace Education techniques and tools was launched for 25 Iraqi educators. An ad hoc manual was created for the occasion.

In this same framework, in the Nineveh Plain, UPP launched the **Ma'an Salam** (United for Peace) project in March 2019, financed by *Malteser International with funds from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)*. The project aims to strengthen social cohesion between communities through artistic, socio-cultural, and educational activities and preventing new conflicts through a Peace Education program in public schools. During the year, 3 youth centers equipped with sports facilities were opened and within them literacy courses, recreational, sporting, and artistic activities were promoted, involving over 1,140 participants. On the occasion of Christmas 2019, which was not celebrated, in solidarity with the more than 300 victims of the repression of youth protests organized throughout Iraq, initiatives were promoted between the different religious communities, which exchanged messages of peace and flowers.

Activities are still ongoing in the **Community centre** of Sulaumaniyah, in the Arbat district, opened thanks to UNDP support. At the centre the Kurdish, Iraqi, and Syrian communities are working together to promote awareness activities on gender-based violence and the management and mediation of inter-community conflict. In 2019 were carried out recreational and sporting activities, together with language classes and cultural events involving more than 1,300 people. In addition, within the Centre, a team of psychologists and lawyers offers regular services of psychosocial support, legal assistance and to combat gender-based violence.

This peacebuilding experience has enabled UPP to launch a national study program to prevent the rise of fundamentalisms. With the support of the *NOVACT association and the Catalan Cooperation Agency (ACCD)*, the **Iraqi Observatory for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (OPEV)** was founded, were Iraqi researchers and activists work coordinated by the nonviolent movement Iraqi LAONF and the Peace and Freedom Organization. During 2019, advocacy and research work were intensified thanks to the participation of researchers and activists in the investigation of the causes that lead to violent extremism, done to identify possible prevention strategies: two studies were carried out and presented in different Iraqi universities, while community representatives took part in regional meetings on the topic. Furthermore, thanks to a specific focus on Syrian refugee people in the Sulaymaniyah area, were organized radio programs, awareness campaigns, training courses for educators on non-violent conflict management methodologies, and on sport as a tool to combat violence.

Furthermore, the **Youth Extremists for Peace (YEP)** project has been implemented, thanks to the support of *UNFPA*, to strengthen the participation and capacities of young people to work on the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) and to promote an agreement between the civil society organizations gathered in OPEV and the national authorities to the implementation of a National Action Plan on PVE. During the year there were meetings and assemblies that involved 6,900 activists from all over the country, starting from the cities involved in the protests, and seminars that brought together experts, researchers, university professors, and representatives of institutions of Iraqi Kurdistan to analyze the root causes of violent extremism in Iraq.

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Pag. 16:  
*Iraq, Ninewa Governorate. June 2019.*  
Photo: Un Ponte Per.

Pag. 18:  
*Iraq, Ninewa Governorate. March 2019.*  
Photo: Un Ponte Per.



## NEW BEGINNINGS WITH WOMEN

Even in 2019, UPP carried out a programme for reproductive health, psychosocial assistance and the protection of gender-based violence victims, with a special focus on women and children returnees going home after the Daesh defeat in the Nineveh Plains. UPP rebuilt healthcare clinics and trained social workers, school teachers and psychologists in psychosocial assistance.

The three-year occupation and violence, had a devastating impact on the city of Mosul and on the other cities and villages in the area. Damage to infrastructures, including healthcare, are beyond measure. Hundreds of thousands of people have lost everything they owned and returned to their homes looted, burned, or completely destroyed. In addition to the material damages, people had to start their lives from scratch, often without sufficient means nor certainties for the future. This condition can seriously undermine the mental health of men, women and children, with damages that can last over the years, or even for life if the trauma is not treated with due care.

In this context, from late 2018 was launched the **Salamtak** (Your Health) project, financed by the *Italian*

*Agency for Cooperation and Development (AICS)*. During 14 months, 3 Health Primary Centres were rebuilt and the Hospital in western Mosul equipped, even thanks to the donations of people. 4,369 women and young girls in Mosul, Nimrud, and Bashiqa had access to reproductive health services, while the psychosocial support involved 3,514 people through support groups and 1,012 through individual consulting. Moreover, 101 among doctors, paramedics, and gynecologists from the Nineveh Directorate of Health (DoH) were involved in training programs on mental and reproductive health protocols, including training in response to cases of gender-based violence. Awareness campaigns involved 6,713 people.

In the same time, thanks to the **Nissa** (Women) project, now at its second phase and funded by *OCHA (IHF)* and *UNFPA*, between January and November 2019 UPP has set up and supported 6 “Safe Spaces”: 5 of which in Mosul and 1 in the IDPs camp of Salamiyah. In the “Safe Spaces” of Mosul, a team of specialized staff provided women and girls with access to the support necessary to face and overcome gender-based violence situations: 2,645 cases of gender-

based violence were managed, 6,776 people benefited from psychosocial support services, 13,426 people involved in prevention campaigns, 266 people trained on GBV, Psychological First Aid, violence case management protocols, PSEA, Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault, including health personnel. 501 adolescent girls were involved in structured psychosocial support activities.

Important work was also done in the IDPs Salamiyah camp, where were strengthened activities to prevent and combat gender-based violence, involving also men and boys: 147 of GBV were managed in the “Safe Spaces”, 556 people received psychosocial support, 195 people trained, 1,498 participated in recreational activities, while 1,648 were involved in awareness campaigns.

## SYRIAN REFUGEES IN IRAQ

UPP has been working on the Iraqi-Syrian border since the start of the Syrian crisis in 2011, welcoming and assisting people fleeing war, distributing basic necessities and - from late 2012 - launching a special long-term **Program for psychosocial support for Syrian refugees in camps** in and around Erbil and Dohuk. In 2019, the work focused on 4 refugee camps in Erbil Governorate intending to improve the mental health conditions and psychosocial vulnerability of Syrian refugees in the area and training the staff of the Directorate of Health (DoH). In 12 months, 2,158 people were treated through psychiatric support services, while 1,774 people had access to individual and group sessions, 1,287 involved in group support sessions, psycho-education and psychosocial activities, 1,682 were visited at home by the community workers. The training involved, in addition to the 18 staff members, 196 people including school’s teachers working in the camps, the medical staff of the Directorate of Health of the Governorate of Erbil and protection partners.

## LIVELIHOOD

In 2019 UPP supported through the livelihood projects **Darfat** (Opportunities) and **Nozhin** (New Beginning) the vocational training and employment of young people from vulnerable population groups in the Governorate of Sulaymaniyah, starting with Syrian refugees in the camps.

The **Vocational Training Centre** created in 2017 with funds from the *Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI)* within the Deir Maryam al-Adhra Monastery, continued its activities in 2019 strengthening its services also thanks to the Nozin project with funds from the Autonomous Province of Bolzano: vocational training courses (welding, graphics, hairdressing, accounting) and Arabic and English language courses were organised for about 90 boys and girls.

Thanks to the **Darfat** project, supported with funds from the *Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)*, training courses were organised in various fields: electrical engineering, PVC processing, use of sound and lighting systems for concerts, non-formal education and production of radio programmes. Moreover, a training programme on the different professional figures working in the humanitarian aid field (project management and administration, communication, logistics) was activated, which ended with paid internships in local and international NGOs and the subsequent hiring of some of the young people involved. All 98 participants were given the opportunity to carry out a paid internship in local companies. To these were added two training courses in the textile sector addressed to 16 Syrian refugee women in the Barika camp and 10 women in the Sulaymaniyah shelter, who were able to use an equipped textile workshop and then sell their products on local channels and through UPP's online shop. At the end of the training course, the Syrian refugees followed two additional training modules on Business Development and Design, held online by trainers from a famous Italian fashion brand.

# JORDAN



## PROTECTION AND INCLUSION

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, UPP has been active in Jordan with support, counseling, protection and assistance programmes for refugee families from Syria. During 2019, UPP's work focused on protecting and combating social exclusion, with a particular focus on mental health and physical disability.

In particular, in the Governorates of Amman, Zarqa, Ma'an and Karak, thanks to the **Enaya** (Let's take care) project funded by *OCHA*, UPP has been active in ensuring access to a full range of protection services for the most vulnerable members of the Syrian refugee and Jordanian host communities. The activities carried out in the first 8 months of the year reached 2,036 people, of which 1,234 women and girls, providing legal support, guidance and accompaniment in the regularization processes for the refugee population, up to the protection of victims of violence through the creation of a hotline to deal with emergencies and provide immediate assistance to women. **Enaya - Phase Two**, funded by the *Waldensian Church*, aims to contribute to the creation of decent and sustainable employment opportunities for people with disabilities belonging to the most marginalized sections of society, facilitating their access to on-the-job vocational training and involvement in income-

generating activities.

Attention to vulnerable communities is the common thread that also runs through the **Sawa** (Together) intervention, supported by the *Waldensian Church*, a programme launched mid-year in the Governorate of Amman to protect people with disabilities belonging to the most vulnerable sections of the Syrian and Jordanian refugee community, through integrated rehabilitation services, psychosocial support, empowerment and inclusion, with a specific focus on Paralympic sports and Peer Counselling activities.

At the same time, the start-up actions of four new projects have been completed, whose activities will be carried out during 2020. **Promoting the economic and social empowerment of vulnerable women in Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt**, a project in consortium with *ARCS Culture Solidali*, funded by the *Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)* and designed to promote the social and economic empowerment of the vulnerable Syrian refugee and Jordanian women population through training courses and access to microcredit funds.

**Jayeen**, supported by *OCHA* and the *Jordanian Hu-*

manitarian Fund (JHF) with the aim to fight social exclusion and support people with disabilities through integrated rehabilitation services, psychosocial support, empowerment and a specific focus on children with disabilities through play therapy techniques. Finally, **Rihlat Amani** (My safe travel), supported by the *Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)* to combat gender-based violence and violence against children with disabilities through integrated mental health and protection services.

As part of the National **Programme for the Universal Civil Service**, 4 young Italian volunteers were selected and trained to participate in initiatives to promote integration and coexistence between refugee communities (Syrian, Sudanese and Somali), the Jordanian community and other minorities in the Governorate of Amman, and to support people with mental disorders in the Governorate of Zarqa. All activities will take place during 2020.



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Pag. 20:  
Jordan, Russeifeh. March 2019.  
Photo: Leen Jarrar.

Pag. 21:  
Jordan, Amman. May 2019.  
Photo : Leen Jarrar.

# LEBANON



## EDUCATION

At the end of 2019, as part of the second trial period with the Volunteer Peace Corps, a program funded by the Italian Government (Department for Youth Policies and the Universal Civic Service together with the Presidency of the Council of Ministers), 6 young Italian volunteers, 3 girls and 3 boys, got involved in the “Dealing with the Future 2” project. The objective: to promote, among the local education teams, the Peace Education methodologies and approaches; to support the development of a pedagogy oriented to children needs; to increase social inclusion and non-discrimination among young Palestinian and Syrian refugees, together with young Lebanese thanks to the promotion of sensitive awareness campaigns and other community-based initiatives with a focus on Peacebuilding and the memory of Lebanese civil war.

From April 2019 to January 2020, over 10 months, the “Education Without Borders” project was still active and it involved 4 young Italian volunteers. They continued informal education programmes for Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian children in the Palestinian refugee camps of Shatila and Bourj el-Barajneh. The volunteers taught English in kindergartens and in afternoon remedial classes, in addition to having supported the recreational and homework activities.

## SPORT AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

For the second year, together with other 8 associations and sport clubs, UPP supported the **Basket Beats Borders** initiative: a basketball female project that involves young Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian girls living in Shatila camp, together with other grassroots basketball teams based in Rome. The initiative aims to promote the exchange of good practice and it highlights the attention on how is living inside a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. In particular, in 2019, after a summer exchange held in the Basque region, Un Ponte Per coordinated the Italian delegation traveling to Beirut. UPP also organized a workshop with Sport Against Violence Iraq to talk about Sport and Peacebuilding and women's role in Sport. Finally, it supported the good practices exchange among the activists.

# PALESTINE



# SERBIA & KOSOVO



## INTERVENTI CIVILI DI PACE

The presence of international volunteers, especially in the rural areas of the West Bank, is considered a way of limiting the violence of settlers and the abuses inflicted by the Israeli army, thus protecting the lives of Palestinian civilians and farmers. Since 2010 UPP is a partner of this project, engaging groups of young men and women volunteers who travel there every October during the olive harvest. Once back in Italy, they organise the material collected, promote awareness-raising events and manage the blog: <https://raccolgiendolapace.wordpress.com/>

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*Pag. 22:  
Lebanon, Beirut. Sempptember 2019.  
Photo: UPP.*

*Pag. 23:  
Palestine, Burin. October 2019.  
Photo: ICP.*

*Pag. 23:  
Serbia, Kraljevo. August 2019.  
Photo: Kraljevo Red Coss.*

## FLOODING IN SERBIA

In June 2019 heavy rainfall and subsequent floods devastated the central Serbia. A state of emergency was also declared in the city of Kraljevo where UPP has been working for 20 years together with the *Kraljevo Red Cross* with the **Svetlost** (Light on Invisible Children) Sponsorship programme.

Un Ponte Per immediately launched a fund-raising campaign towards its own supporters, which allowed to support the local partner in helping the affected families with basic necessities.

## GREENHOUSES OF SOLIDARITY

Thanks to the generosity of the organisation's many supporters, in 2019 UPP was able to donate **5 more greenhouses**, in addition to the 15 provided in previous years, so that vulnerable families involved in the **Svetlost** child sponsorship programme can grow their own fruit and vegetables.

# SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMMES

## FAMILY HAPPINESS

The project **Family Happiness** supports school attendance for Palestinian youth in Lebanese refugee camps. Primary attention goes to orphaned children, or those who struggle with serious social or health conditions. The project is implemented in collaboration with the Palestinian NGO, *Beit Atfal Assomoud*, which has been active in the camp since 1974, and which also works to provide health and social support in 10 of the 12 other camps in Lebanon. Since 2013, the program has expanded to reach Syrian children and adolescents, as well as Syrian-Palestinian refugees in the country, with daycare and nurseries, temporary classrooms, trainings, and healthcare services.

## FARAH

The project, **Farah** (Joy), aims at supplying medical assistance and care, and follows the treatment of Iraqi minors suffering from chronic or serious illnesses. The program provides support from a distance for minority children living in the country, and is carried out in collaboration with the Kurdish-Iraqi organization, *Yaum al-Hurriyya*. The medicine provided is purchased locally, and local partners ensure its distribution to families. The children who participate in the project generally reside in small villages in the area, particularly those which are more remote, far from the main hospitals in the region.

## SVETLOST

The project, **Svetlost** (Light on invisible children), aims to provide support to displaced families from Kosovo, both in southern Serbia and to those who have returned but are still struggling with poverty and hardship. In 2010, the project was relaunched, thanks to the book and DVD, 'The Scream from Kosovo', which, through powerful testimonies and videos, describes the living conditions of refugees from Serbia and Kosovo 10 years after the conflict in 1999. Since the beginning of 2011, in collaboration with the Monastery of Decani, the project has also extended to the Serbian communities in Kosovo.

# ITALY & EUROPE



## REVERSING THE ROUTE OF DISCRIMINATION

Throughout 2019, UPP implemented **DIMMI: Tell me your migrant Tale** project, designed to address the underlying causes of xenophobia and intolerance in Italy using grassroots cultural tools, to facilitate training and to help people view differences as an important resource. Thanks to funding from the *Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development (AICS)*, the project involved 46 associations from 9 different Italian regions (Piemonte, Lombardy, Veneto, Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna, Marche, Lazio, Campania and Sicily) with a series of workshops and training courses relating to the prevention of xenophobia and story-telling techniques, designed for students in secondary school and university, their teachers and professors, migrants and the local communities of the regions involved in the project.

Among the activities, a dedicated storytelling platform “Incontri” ([www.dimmidistoriemigranti.it/incontri/](http://www.dimmidistoriemigranti.it/incontri/)) and a national “Multimedia migrant diaries” competition, to gather and publish personal stories told by foreign people who are living or have lived in Italy, to preserve migrant experiences which would otherwise be forgotten, and challenge migration stereotypes through eye-witness accounts.

Moreover, throughout the year, UPP launched an important project to combat anti-muslim racism, **Stop Islamophobia** (<https://stop-islamophobia.eu>) in partnership with 6 organizations from Italy, France, Spain, Great Britain and Holland, with the support of the *European Union*. The aim of this international collective work is dual. The first is to provide new analysis on the impact of the “structural drivers” (policies, laws, political discourse and media) in normalising Islamophobia, to aid national and European authorities to adopt human rights-based best practices by the attempt to understand the origins of these hate attitudes in the regions of study. The second aim is to strengthen (Muslim) civil society’s capacity to mobilise and combat Islamophobia through cooperation, capacity building, organisation within communities, networks, and organisations. In this context, UPP cooperated with 10 out of the main Italian universities, organizing workshops for 375 students and public events involving 500 participants, to increase awareness among the young generation of what Islamophobia really is and how it can be combated. At the same time, UPP organized mutual exchanges with Muslim communities and civil society organisations, as well as events with 150 teachers from primary and secondary schools.



## CULTURAL SENSITIVITY TRAINING

Every year, UPP's Peace Education training programmes give young men and women the tools they need to become aware citizens who fully respect different cultures, with the school as the perfect starting place for the building of understanding and integration.

In the academic year 2019, UPP's **Peace Education Group** has been mainly working in the Italian regions of Campania, Lazio, Tuscany and Piemonte thanks to the work of the respective Local Committees. Information sessions, workshops and meetings were organised for more than 2,500 students, on issues ranging from human rights to hate speech and differences as a resource.

In this context, UPP provided active support to the foundation of **Tavolo Saltamuri** a network of organisations and associations across the country dedicated to creating a common sense based on meaningful values and knowledge starting with schools, neighborhoods and regions, in order to create a society able to cope with and welcome change, diversity and inclusion.

Particular attention has been given to the creation of **school twinnings**, designed to connect Italian schoolboys and schoolgirls with their counterparts in countries where UPP has projects, like Iraq and Lebanon. Through the exchange of video presentations, Skype calls and emails, they have been able to get to know each other, going beyond stereotypes by discovering the common problems they face.

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*Pag. 26:  
Italy, Turin. March 2019.  
Photo: Benedetta Sanna.*

# CAMPAIGNS & ADVOCACY

## IN DEFENCE OF

Also in 2019, UPP consolidated its commitment to the defence of men and women human rights activists through the network **In Defence of - Working for Human Rights and those who fight for them**, having been a key player in its very foundation. One of the themes at the centre of this year's work is the criminalization of solidarity, started with the civil society organizations that are involved in the rescue of migrants from the sea, a main example was the case of Carola Rackete; the denunciation of the effects of the two security decrees in terms of restricting the space of civic accessibility for movements and associations, also with the production of a document, as a contribution of the network In Difesa Di for the Universal Periodic Review.

## DISARMAMENT AND 'SBILANCIAMOCI!'

UPP Italy plays an active role in the **Italian Network for Disarmament** and promotes disarmament and arms monitoring and the **"Sbilanciamoci!"** Campaign (NB. this is a plea for a government spending review with a move away from defence spending), for a fair economy and a different development model. In 2018 UPP was involved in various initiatives, including the promotion of the "Think again Italy" campaign for nuclear disarmament towards the Treaty for the Ban of Nuclear Weapons; the publication of the "Sbilanciamoci! Report 2019".

## EPLO

UPP is active in Brussels as part of the **European Peacebuilding Liason Office (EPLO)**, the platform for independent Civil Society which unites NGOs, networks and think-tanks dedicated to peacebuilding through civil interventions and the prevention of violent conflicts. They organise

campaigns and advocacy meetings and distribute policy papers in order to pressurise the EU and its members to reinforce its role as a soft-power in foreign policy, its efforts to prevent conflicts and the civilian components of its common security and defence missions. Specifically, UPP contributed to the preparation of the EU's Iraq strategy and is consulted during its implementation.

## BDS CAMPAIGN

UPP is part of the **Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)** initiative, which encourages the academic and cultural boycott of Israeli institutions and the economic boycott of all Israeli products, starting with those coming from illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as a form of non-violent protest against the human rights violations and breach of the Geneva Conventions and UN Resolutions committed by Israel. The campaign, launched by Palestinian Civil Society in 2005 and inspired by the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, was re-launched in Italy in 2009 with the committed support of UPP.

## SOLIDARITY WITH EXILES

UPP is part of the **European-Mediterranean Movement for Solidarity with Exiles**, which tackles issues relating to migration, exile and human rights through a series of solidarity initiatives, public condemnations and advocacy work across Europe. The idea stems from an initiative launched by Samusocial International and UPP's partner organisation *Amel* in Lebanon. The Movement has organised international meetings in Paris, Athens, Beirut and Rome, with constant support from UPP.

# ACCOUNTABILITY



During 2019, the UPP community focused on strengthening the reflection around accountability which informs our work. Issues surrounding accountability were engaged with in both discourse and practice, as we made an active commitment to improve our skills and procedures in this sense.

The past year has stimulated a debate within civil society organisations concerning the legitimacy of their intervention within specific contexts in which such intervention takes place, especially when humanitarian and social workers do not share the same cultural background as the communities they engage with. Such debate brought up the necessity to analyse the effectiveness of our work over decades, to the extent it fails to achieve the expected results in terms of social justice, equity, equality and redressing the power balance.

Since 2017 UPP has taken steps in implementing international requirements on accountability. Such necessity was first brought up when we took part in a study realised by a researcher from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, concerning accountability in CSOs. More specifically, the focus of such research was on self-regulation processes adopted by third sector organisations. A formal request to develop accountability procedures and practices- which appears to be consistent with our initial reflection- stems from the reform of national policy on third sector organisations approved by the Italian Parliament in recent years. UPP has worked to meet such request ever since, especially for what concerns upward account-

ability (which is to say, towards donors and national bodies) and peer accountability (this regarding civil society and other organisations involved in the same sector), the latter being regarded upon through a mainly financial-economic lenses.

Accountability is a rather complex legal and social concept which can hardly be translated in Italian. It consists in a primarily moral (and only secondly juridical) duty to fully account for your work, including such work's effects at different levels (last but not least, the social and ethical one, including transparency of the aims pursued).

Transparency and accountability aren't the same thing, despite being closely linked to each other and despite the existence of a mutually inclusive relation between the two (accountability includes transparency and transparency includes accountability).

UPP is a highly structured and organised agent which operates through a dense network of activities, many of which involve legal processes. It also contributes to influence social processes, individuals and situations, thus continuously engaging with vulnerability in different forms and at multiple stages.

Our vision centers around the development of mutual self-determination and involvement of all stakeholders in decision-making processes which design work practices and goals. UPP has therefore had to carefully analyse its hubs and deepen its awareness of the skills which necessarily have to be improved in order to address, reduce and eliminate the risks and potential diversions connected to our work practice.

For what concerns transparency and so-called downward accountability (which is to say, the one concerning our relation to service users and anyone taking part in the activities we promote), UPP has developed its own methodology, as well as operational mechanisms, aimed at effectively engage with and respond to feedback and complaints regarding our work. The effectiveness of such measures and processes was evaluated as thoroughly as possible. Legal, socio-economic, cultural and gender perspectives were taken in to account in order to assess the actual feasibility and adequacy of such measures.

Overall we reject the notion of downward accountability as it suggests the existence of top-down relations between us (as a CSO) and "outsider" receiving communities and individuals whose role is supposedly that of passively benefit from humanitarian aid and services.

The kind of relations we promote is necessarily two-way, interrelated and open to dialogue, as we believe such elements to be paramount in establishing genuinely accountable relations. In the vision promoted by UPP, the people we engage with, and who will be in turn service users, project leaders, and rightful keepers of our action and of its real aims at the local level, are all to be identified as agents at the receiving end of upward accountability processes.

It is within such framework that we as UPP community made active commitment to enhance our skills and deepen our understanding of effective self-monitoring and self-evaluation procedures surrounding our action. At the core of such reflection and engagement is not barely a necessity to evaluate our professional performance. Rather, they are oriented to assess the resilience of logics underpinning the processes of change we strive to support. M&E must produce continuous input to improve our capacity to meet the demands of local populations and to mould our action consistently with their aspirations and values. Transparency and consistency are paramount at each and every stage of decision making processes, practice, assessment and self-evaluation procedures. In order to meet such goals we granted a 30 hours per person learning program would be attended by staff members both in the various missions and in the headquarters.

One key step in ensuring accountability regards Data Protection. In order to meet such goal we put in practice both the strict 679/2016 EU regulation (also known as GDPR), of which we nonetheless appreciate the core principle of "determination to protect" at any stage and in all circumstances; and the praxis developed within the humanitarian sector. It has to be said that, within our field, a significant commitment has been made to produce theoretical frameworks and

compelling mechanisms to achieve this goal. As UPP we disclose guidelines informing our aims and practices so to share such information with the individuals and communities we provide help for, as well as for people who apply to work with us and with anyone who happens to take steps onto and across the bridges we build, regardless of whether they come in need of help or aiming at providing it.

Moreover, UPP has since 2017 regularly published reports of all national and international public funding we received, specifying their financial volume as well as the purpose they are spent on. For many years we have regularly been producing financial statements so to ensure transparency in the management of the funding we receive. Such statements include graphic representation of financial figures so to increase the clarity of the highlight.

Another measure for the promotion of accountability we have adopted consists in the creation and ongoing improvement of direct, straightforward and accessible feedback & complaint procedures by which anyone who comes in contact with UPP can express criticism regarding our work. Such procedures are so designed to ensure anonymity to the complaint's author, and a straightforward management of the complaint itself, so that whatever issues it concerns, such issues will be addressed and dealt with in reasonable time. The core principle underpinning this second aspect is one we firmly believe in: delayed response to injustice undermines justice itself.

The sum and combination of these elements (visibility, transparency in disclosing what deontological ethics underpin our practice, as well as ensuring the accessibility and clarity of such information ; the creation and monitoring of contexts and procedures within which anyone coming in contact with our action can safely express criticism, make suggestions, or bring relevant issues to our attention; a strong commitment to openness and willingness to engage in dialogue over aims and practices of our action; transparency in accounting for our use of private and public funding; a deep awareness of the transformative (distorsivi) effects which our action might trigger, and a just-as-deep awareness in pursuing them; careful monitoring of such effects in order to ensure the consistency of our action with UPP institutional aims; a commitment to take every measure against the risk of acting as a competitor to local CSOs and human rights defenders; willingness to strongly relate UPP institutional goals to the aspirations of local populations and groups; shrinking the focus on our interests as an organisation as much as possible, and reducing the amount of dedication we employ or such goal to the extent it is feasible, represent the fulfilment of our though firm progress in pursuing legitimacy and responsibility.

# LOCAL COMMITTEES

In Italy, UPP activities are implemented by staff at HQ in Rome as well as by a network of Local Committees across the country. Run entirely by volunteers, these Committees have diversified their work over the years on the basis of their specific locations, networks and skill- sets of the volunteers who dedicate their time and efforts to UPP's various areas of work. Today the organisation counts 5 Local Committees in Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto, Tuscany and Campania. There is also a dedicated UPP Education Group, working in schools in the fields of cultural interaction and Education for Peace, which, thanks to its members, works in all the Local Committee sites and in Rome.

## MONZA & BRIANZA

Workshops with migrants.  
Intercultural activities.  
Participation in territorial anti-racism and anti-Fascist networks.

## TURIN

Youth twinnings Italy/Lebanon/Iraq.  
Peace-building initiatives in collaboration with the 'Sereno Regis' Study Centre.  
Organisation of initiatives during the UN International Days for Palestine.

## PADUA

Participation in the refuge cities network for Human Rights defenders with "In Defence Of".  
Collaboration with the Centre for Human Rights Studies at Padua University.  
Cultural exchanges between young Italians and Iraqis.  
Promotion of artistic expression in the cooperation field.

## NAPLES

Civil Peace Corps in "La Terra dei fuochi" (NB. Literally "The land of Fires", a vast area in southern Italy famous for massive landfill fires which generate dangerous levels of air pollution).  
Anti-Mafia initiatives in collaboration with *Libera*.  
Education for peace through workshops and school visits.

## TUSCANY

Education for Peace, interventions and workshops in schools  
Intercultural activities.  
Anti-discrimination Observatory.  
Organisation of activities in support of the Israeli Anti-Apartheid Week (IAW) as part of the BDS Campaign.



## NATIONAL NETWORKS

Associazione delle organizzazioni italiane di cooperazione e solidarietà internazionale (AOI)  
Collettiva  
Forum italiano dei movimenti per l'acqua  
La Gabbianella  
Municipio dei Beni Comuni e Progetto Rebeldia (Pisa)  
Osservatorio Solidarietà della Carta di Milano  
Piattaforma ONG italiane Mediterraneo e Medio Oriente  
Rete della Pace  
Rete Italiana Disarmo  
Rete Kurdistan per la solidarietà con il popolo curdo  
Rete romana di solidarietà con il popolo palestinese  
Sbilanciamoci!  
Soci Banca Etica  
Tavolo Interventi Civili di Pace  
Tavolo Saltamuri

## INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

European Commission's Humanitarian aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) partners  
European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)  
EU Human Rights Defenders Relocation Platform (EUTRP)  
Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI)  
NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq (NCCI)  
North East Syria Forum  
Save the Tigris Campaign  
Syrian INGO Regional Forum (SIRF)  
World Social Forum - International Council

# INFORMATIONS

**Official Name:** Associazione Un Ponte Per (UPP)

**Year of establishment:** 1991

**ONLUS:** Recognized by the "Anagrafe delle Onlus" AGEDRLAZ Prot. n° 0022455 del 27/03/2015

**NGO:** Recognized by AICS - the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development (Decreto n° 2016/337/000281/5)

**VAT number:** 04734481007

**Fiscal Code:** 96232290583

**Framework Partnership Agreement** with the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO)

**International Partners:** UNICEF, UNFPA, UNESCO, UNHCR, European Commission, ECHO, UNDP, UNOPS, OCHA, CARITAS Switzerland, Swiss Cooperation, AICS - the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development, Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, French Foreign Ministry - Action Humanitaire France, Malteser International.

**Italian Local Authorities:** 10 Regions, 20 Provinces, 50 Municipalities.

**Annual Budget 2017:** € 17.961.163

# ONLINE

[www.unponteper.it](http://www.unponteper.it)

Facebook: @unponteper

Twitter: @UnPontePer

Instagram: @unponteper

YouTube: unponteper

Linkedin: un-ponte-per

# DONATIONS

*Bank current account:*

Account name: Un Ponte Per...

Bank name: Banca Etica

IBAN: IT 09 T 05018 03200 0000 11007903

SWIFT: CCRTIT2T84A

*Online:*

<https://fundfacility.it/unponteper>

# CONTACTS

## UPP ITALY

### Headquarter

Via Angelo Poliziano 18-20-22  
00184, Rome, Italy  
Tel: +390644702906  
Fax: +390644703172  
info@unponteper.it

### Pisa Office

Piazza Giuseppe Garibaldi 33  
56124, Pisa, Italy  
toscana@unponteper.it

### Italian committees:

Milan and Monza: monza@unponteper.it  
Turin: torino@unponteper.it  
Padua: padova@unponteper.it  
Tuscany: toscana@unponteper.it  
Naples: napoli@unponteper.it

## UPP IRAQ (KRG)

### Erbil Branch

Qasil Rustum st. n. 240/8/520  
Ainkawa, Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq  
erbil@unponteper.it

### Dohuk Branch

KRO road, close to Sheelan Hospital, Shirin Street n. 2  
Dohuk, Kurdistan Region of Iraq  
dohuk@unponteper.it

### Sulaymaniyah Branch

Sulaymaniyah city, Ashti 106,  
Alley 59, House No. 10 (KR I)-Iraq  
sulaymaniya@unponteper.it

### Baghdad Branch

Karrada, Baghdad  
baghdad@unponteper.it

## UPP JORDAN

### Amman Branch

Al-Shariaah College St. 46 Amman,  
Amman 11191, Jordan  
amman@unponteper.it  
Facebook: @upp.jordan

## UPP LEBANON

### Beirut Branch

Furn al-Shebbak, Antoine Saad Farah Building 757  
Beirut, Lebanon  
beirut@unponteper.it

## UPP SYRIA

### Amuda Branch

Syria

*Produced by Un Ponte Per in September 2020.  
Translated by: Sara Porru, Edoardo Cuccagna,  
Silvia Bigando, Franchini Alice.*

