



**Arts and  
Humanities  
Research Council**



**AHRC GCRF Area-Focused Network + Annual Reporting**

**Annual Report to AHRC from October 2018 to October 2019**

**AHRC GCRF Network + Title: The Nahrein Network**

**AHRC GCRF Network + PI: Professor Eleanor Robson**

**Grant ref: AH/R005370/1**

**Lead Institution: University College London**

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**Date report was shared/is to be shared with relevant board or management groups:**

- **Nahrein Network Management Committee, 10 December 2019 (preliminary draft)**
- **Nahrein Network core team, 21 January 2020 (final draft)**
- **Nahrein Network Management Committee, March 2020 (submitted version)**

**Approved by (AHRC staff):**

### Section 1: Summary of achievements

Please highlight any major achievements over the course of the reporting period. In particular, please highlight any successes or milestones from your project which could be used for case studies, blogs etc

(Max. 750 words)

In the second year of the grant the Nahrein Network fully established itself as an effective and valued project. Key to this was the completion of our team in London, with the appointment of Ms Oana Borlea as project administrator in December 2018. Her competence and good humour in handling the complexities of contracts and financial transfers for devolved projects, and willingness to share good practice with sister Network+ projects, have been central to our ability to deliver our objectives.

In early November 2018 we held a public launch event for our Centre on Culture, History and Humanities for Sustainable Development Centre at the University of Kurdistan Hewler, attended by many colleagues from across Iraqi Kurdistan and northern Iraq. It was organised by our UKH team, Dr Anwar Anaid, Dr Amani Suleiman and Ms Rahma Isma'il, with Professor Eleanor Robson and Dr Mehiyar also attending. Other highlights of our Strand 1 capacity-building work included the first all-Iraq workshop for museum directors, led by co-PI Dr Paul Collins and grantee Dr Jaafar Jotheri, in Karbala (November 2018); a second workshop for young cultural heritage workers at The Station co-working space in Baghdad, led by Dr Kathem, Prof Robson and grantees Mr Ali Al-Makhzomi and Dr Jaafar Jotheri (March 2019); a seminar for Nahrein Network grantees from Kurdistan at the UKH Centre (April 2019); and making major contributions to a report commissioned by the British Council Iraq on developing collaborations between UK and Iraqi universities.

As planned, we expanded the Visiting Scholarships programme beyond Iraq to Iran, Lebanon, and Turkey, with new partners the British Institute at Ankara, the Council for British Research in the Levant and the Iran Heritage Foundation, alongside our existing partner the British Institute for the Study of Iraq. That enabled us to fund a further six Visiting Scholarships in the 12 months covered by this reporting period: three from Iraq, two from Turkey and one from Lebanon. Four Visiting Scholars were hosted at UK institutions during this time, working across the full range of our remit: Dr Alaa Hamdon (Mosul University) at the University of Oxford on remote sensing of war-damaged heritage sites and supporting local communities; Dr Maher al-Helli (Mustansiriyah University) at the University of Sheffield on developing university history teaching; Dr Olcay Muslu Gardner (Mustafa Kemal Hatay University) at SOAS on Turkish heritage music; and Mr Mohammed Jasim (Mosul University) at the British Library on post-conflict university library management.

In the Network's devolved Research Grants scheme (Strand 2), we awarded funding to three large and eight small projects, on top of the four (one large, three small) funded in the first year, two of which are now complete. One has already secured further funding from the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund (see case study below).

In Strand 3, Dr Mehiyar Kathem secured two grants. First, with Network grantees Dr Jaafar Jotheri and Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin he was awarded a grant from the British Academy's Writing Workshops fund, to run a series of workshops for Iraqi researchers on writing grant applications and research articles for international journals. The first was held at Sulaimani Polytechnic University in May 2019. Then, to launch our two-year policy partnership with Chatham House, he and Professor Robson won a UCL Public Policy Expert Engagement grant to hold a high-profile launch event in October 2019. Further Strand 3 work included a presentation to the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Iraq (unfortunately timed to coincide with the run-up to the first Brexit vote in late March 2019)

and continued cultivation of influential relationships with the UK and Iraqi embassies and consulates, UNAMI and UNESCO Iraq, the British Council Iraq and the Iraq British Business Council, as well as the Iraqi Ministries of Culture and of Higher Education.

Last but not least, the core team's research continues to develop through seminar and conference presentations, and publications. Dr Suleiman's research on the economics of tourism in Kurdistan has already led to the submission of an article, while Dr Kathem has had a peer-reviewed paper published on the role of heritage the post-2003 reconstruction of Iraq. Prof Robson's collaboration on Arabic-language capabilities for the open access website Oracc.org and associated cuneiform editing tools has made steady progress.

## Section 2: Project Management and Operations

- i) Please provide details of how the operational and management team has delivered on its planned objectives across the project? How has success been measured and assured?

Please describe how the work of the programme and its approaches has evolved over the funding period, the barriers faced and how the programme has mitigated for and responded to them.

This should include details of the challenges associated with the project and how these challenges were overcome and what measures were in place to ensure a coherent approach across all parties.

*(Max. 1000 words)*

The core team is equally balanced between Erbil and London, with a PI/Co-I, a full-time postdoc, and a part-time administrator in each. In addition, we have one Co-I in Oxford. The operational procedures set up at the start of the project, and reported on last time, continue to function effectively.

The only changes since the last reporting period have been the arrival of our London administrator, Ms Borlea, in December 2018 and departure of her Erbil counterpart in April 2019. As increasing numbers of devolved projects have come onstream, Ms Borlea's role in co-ordinating contracts, payments and documentation within UCL, and with grantees, has been essential to the success of the project. In particular, the mechanism for paying funds to Iraqi universities has proved extremely challenging, as their bank accounts are not set up to receive international payments. A workaround was eventually devised using NGO partners as intermediaries, but there have been long delays to the start-date of several devolved projects as a result.

Meanwhile, due to top-level management changes at UKH, it has not yet been possible to appoint a replacement for Ms Ismail. Although Dr Suleiman has been carrying out administrative tasks for the UKH centre, the vacancy has significantly impacted on the centre's capacity as well as Dr Suleiman's own research time.

- ii) What issues relating to due diligence have arisen during the year? Have any changes been made or learning implemented to assurance processes? Please also include comments on any safeguarding and EDI policies or procedures.

*(Max. 500 words)*

No change on last year, except that UCL retrospectively asked UKH to complete a lengthy due diligence questionnaire. This work was carried out and submitted without further problems. Collaboration and sharing of practice across the Network+ projects — including widespread adoption and adaptation of our start-up questionnaires and report forms for devolved projects — has helped to minimise problems.

The Network does not fund projects on children or vulnerable adults as a matter of policy (clearly stated in our guidance). Our EDI policy is clearly stated on our website and all funding/scholarship applications. Our core team and management committee are majority Middle Eastern and majority female.

**iii)** What changes and learning have you made from the measures have you put in place to identify and mitigate risk?  
(Max. 500 words)

No changes needed; our risk assessment procedures are proving robust so far.

**iv)** Plans for following year; please provide an updated work plan and budget where the plans have diverged from what was set out in the research grant's application and your rationale for doing so  
(Max. 1000 words)

In the period October 2019–September 2020 we plan to:

- Appoint a new administrator for the Research Centre at UKH and enable it to function at full capacity once more
- Embed first-generation grantees into the management structure of the Network
- Continue to be sensitive and reactive to the ever-changing political and security situation in Iraq
- In Strand 1, hold the last of our planned capacity-building workshops, on the basics of conservation materials, at the Iraqi Institute for Conservation of Archaeology and Heritage in Erbil
- Fund and host a further six Visiting Scholars, in March and September 2020
- In Strand 2, award the final tranche of devolved funding in four small grants, in December 2019
- Support currently funded projects to the end of their lifecycle (two have already been completed; a further nine are due to finish within the next reporting period)
- In Strand 3, see the British Academy-funded Iraq Publishing Workshops to completion in December 2019 and consider how to integrate them within the Network's core activities
- Continue the policy collaboration with Chatham House, with two further events, applying for further funding from UCL if appropriate and otherwise drawing from the unspent Services budget (having cancelled the expensive security reports from Pilgrims Group)
- Continue to develop influential advocacy relationships with appropriate UK and Iraqi ministries, embassies, charities and NGOs, with further meetings and events as needed
- Support the PRAXIS project's work on shared learning and continue to support our sister Network+ projects as well as the next generation of Network+ projects

- Continue our own research strands, as follows:
  - Dr Suleiman on the economics of tourism, comparing Kurdistan to a range of other post-conflict countries
  - Dr Kathem on the role of heritage in state-building, examining the internal obstacles and infrastructural barriers to effective development
  - Dr Collins on museum practice, including a temporary exhibition and a major redisplay of the Middle East galleries in the Ashmolean Museum, in the light of his collaborations for the Network
  - Professor Robson on decolonising Middle Eastern antiquity, through continued development of open access, Arabophone editorial software and Oracc.org website, and by supporting Dr Usama Gad's application for British Academy Global Professorship at UCL, on the role of Classics in Egypt, in order to do some collaborative comparative work.
  - Host a round-table panel discussion with Network members on decolonising Middle Eastern heritage, at the British Society Middle Eastern Studies summer conference (June 2020)
- Start financial and strategic planning for the Network's evolution after the end of the current funding period.

### Section 3: Devolved Funding

- i) Please provide an overview of how your Network+ programme has deployed its flexible funding pot over the course of the reporting year.

(Max. 1000 words)

As planned, we advertised and awarded two further rounds of devolved funding in winter 2018 and spring 2019.

In Round 2 (December 2018) we funded one large and three small research projects. In Round 3 (May 2019) we awarded grants to two large and three small research projects.

Details of these projects are on ResearchFish and on our website.

The remaining devolved funding is due to be allocated in the final funding round in late 2019.

- ii) Please also highlight any areas of unanticipated funding used over the course of the reporting year and any areas of where the programme has learnt or developed its knowledge.

(Max. 750 words)

No large changes to report: we have largely kept to plan. Requests were made — and granted — retrospectively for some unanticipated costs from our UK budget (not the devolved funding), primarily for podcasting equipment and website development, which UCL proved unable to meet.

- iii) Do you envisage any changes to your use of the flexible funding for the following year e.g. new unanticipated opportunities which have arisen?

(Max. 750 words)

No — we are keeping to our original plan

#### Section 4: Research Project Development and Strategy

##### i) Capacity Strengthening in relevant DAC listed countries

Please indicate the ways in which your programme has helped to strengthen capacities in DAC listed countries. How has success been measured? What has the programme learned regarding capacity development? And has there been unanticipated capacity development? In what ways has your project aided career development?

(Max. 1000 words)

We identify four forms of capacity strengthening that the Network has fostered over the reporting period.

1. Training and capacity building within devolved projects, particularly in large projects
  - The Thesiger's Tarada project has revived traditional boat-building skills amongst the marsh-dwellers of southern Iraq, as the older generation have been enabled to support and advise currently active boatwrights, while children and young adults observe and assist in the workshops.
  - The Kurdish Cultural Heritage Network has held a vast amount of networking and development events for a great variety of academic, practitioner and decision-maker stakeholders. Their "Pay it forward" programme encourages participants to formally commit, in writing, to pass on their newly gained knowledge and workshop experience to their peers. The PI, Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin, also notes that the project's student interns and volunteers have been developing a wide range of skills, "such as project, event, and financial management; field survey, data collection, research, communication, organization, attention to detail, etc. In addition to experience and skills, the project enriches their CV that improves their job prospect in an increasingly competitive job market."
  - Similarly, the Babylon project led by Dr Ruth Young and Dr Haider Al-Mamori, has provided training for University of Babylon staff and students, the local government antiquities department, and a local NGO in three methods for heritage recording and management (standing buildings analysis, satellite imagery analysis, heritage understandings and interview analysis).
  - When the UK-based PI and Co-I of the Post-Conflict Textile Crafts project were unable to travel to Erbil, members of the project's two local NGO partners, KBAFA and the Kurdish Textile Museum, met without them. This created a new relationship between NGOs in different parts of Iraq, which had previously had no connection to each other, allowing them to develop a small network of producers and crafts traders by sharing resources.



## 2. 'Second-generation' capacity-strengthening events and projects across the Network

Several of the first-generation fundees, in particular Dr Jaafar Jotheri, Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin and also Mr Ali Al-Makhzomy, Dr Olga Babenko, Dr Alaa Hamdon and Dr Maher Al-Helli, have:

- Run workshops, seminars and other events in their home institutions and elsewhere to promote the Network and encourage others to apply for funding;
- Mentored potential applicants in project design and grant-writing;
- Co-organised Strand 1 events with core team members (listed above)

Perhaps most significantly, Dr Jotheri and Dr Mohammed-Amin were co-applicants and co-investigators on Dr Kathem's British Academy Iraq Publishing Workshops grant.

## 3. Visiting Scholarships as 'gateways' out of institutional academic isolation

As we highlighted in our original funding application, Iraq's universities have suffered for many decades now from continuing academic isolation. Our Visiting Scholars scheme was designed to help individual researchers forge meaningful links with UK host institutions but in many cases they are also proving to be gateways to larger-scale inter-university relationships. For instance:

- Dr Alaa Hamdon's VS at the University of Oxford in February-March 2019 led to two return visits to the UK that summer with the newly appointed President of Mosul University to explore possible collaborations with the universities of Bradford, Liverpool and Newcastle
- Dr Maher Al-Helli's VS at the University of Sheffield in April-May 2019 led to a senior delegation from Sheffield paying a visit to Mustansiriyah University to discuss studentships and other collaborations

At a more general level, towards the end of this reporting period, stimulated by a report from British Council Iraq, we started to work with the Iraq-British Business Council and the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education to identify and mitigate infrastructural obstacles to closer collaborations between UK and Iraqi universities — and between each other.

## 4. Career development for Network participants

- Mr Ali Al-Makhzomi's Visiting Scholarship at the University of Reading in Autumn 2018 led to employment on a Cultural Protection Fund project led by the University of Reading in the Iraq Museum. He is responsible for the Iraq part of the project, working in close co-ordination with Museum staff.
- In December 2018, grant co-investigator Dr Abdulameer Al-Hamdani was appointed as Iraq's Minister of Culture
- In 2019, 2018 Grant recipient Dr Jaafar Jotheri was promoted to Dean of the Faculty of Archaeology at Qadissiyah University
- In 2019, 2018 Visiting Scholar & Grant recipient Dr Mohammed-Amin became a member of the UKRI's International Development Peer Review College
- In 2019, 2019 Visiting Scholar Dr Maher Al-Helli was promoted to Professor of History at Mustansiriyah University
- In 2019, 2019 Visiting Scholar Dr Alaa Hamdon was promoted to Director of the Remote Sensing Unit at Mosul University

- At the end of this reporting period Dr Jaafar Jotheri and Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin became members of the Network's Management Committee

## ii) Interdisciplinarity

What is the combination of disciplines which are found within this project? Over the reporting period, have you identified other research areas which need to be represented? How has the formulation of the research agenda/s reflected the different disciplines involved? Have there been opportunities for unanticipated disciplines to be drawn into the project?

(Max. 750 words)

No change from last year — history, languages, digital humanities, museum and heritage studies, development studies, economics, politics and so on. The range of work we carry out and fund is a fair reflection of this disciplinary mix.

## iii) Equitable partnerships

Please indicate the progress you have made this year with regards to partnerships (academic, non-academic, third sector NGO, international in particular the Global South)? For example, please include your approach to forging new partnerships and sustaining existing partnerships? How have these partnerships been supported? How have these partnerships helped shape the research agenda? Please provide evidence of new and improved working relationships, collaboration and level of commitment to collaboration.

What opportunities and challenges have you faced in relation to partnerships, networking and knowledge exchange? How have these influenced how you will work with new and existing partners in the future?

(Max. 1000 words)

Our main partnership is with UKH, plus partnerships with four area-specialist learned societies in the UK to support our Visiting Scholarships programme. These are all unproblematic.

Learning from a variety of intractable challenges in the first year of the project, the Network's other partnerships are now developed on an event-by-event basis, as the fragile situation in Iraq mitigates against lasting relationships in various ways.

First, as noted in last year's report, "revolving doors" at embassies, ministries, and international agencies mitigate against developing lasting relationships. In this reporting period, the UK Deputy Ambassador to Iraq, the Consul-General and the Ambassador's chief political advisor have moved on. So have the entire UNESCO Iraq culture team (including head of mission, Louise Haxthausen, a founder member of the project's management committee), the Ministers of Higher Education and Culture, and



the Iraqi Ambassador to London; the UK Ambassador to Iraq will be leaving his post very shortly. Although new personal relationships can be developed, long-term institutional partnerships are almost impossible to maintain in these circumstances.

Second, volatile political situations in the UK, Iraq and USA have also worked against us during this reporting period. A planned project, to be funded by the FCO, fell victim to Brexit and the loss of the UK's Minister for the Middle East in early 2019. At the same time, a planned training course with the Smithsonian Institute (SI) at the Iraqi Institute for Conservation of Antiquity and Heritage had to be cancelled twice at short notice: first due to the US government shutdown over New Year 2019 (the SI being US government funded) and then again due to political unrest in Iraq in autumn 2019.

We have therefore continued to develop event-based partnerships opportunistically, working variously with:

- The Shia Shrines authority in Karbala to organise a national workshop for museum directors in November 2018
- The Station NGO in Baghdad for a second workshop for young heritage professionals in March 2019
- The Iraq British Business Council to co-host a workshop for university leaders at the Ministry of Higher Education in early October 2019

Our biggest success has been in working with network grantees to put on three British Academy-sponsored Iraq Publishing Workshops, at their home institutions.

#### iv) Engagement and Communications

Please provide an overview of the project's progress over the course of the first year in relation to its engagement and communications strategy. Please include any opportunities and challenges you faced in delivering this strategy and how you overcame them.

(Max. 750 words)

The engagement and communications strategy outlined in our original Pathways to Impact document continues to prove robust and effective.

According to Google Analytics data, the project website ([ucl.ac.uk/nahrein](https://ucl.ac.uk/nahrein)) now receives some 1700 unique page-views a month, up some 46% on the same time the previous year. By far the most popular pages remain those advertising the funding we offer: the pages on Visiting Scholarships, Research Grants and the Iraq Publishing Workshop once again account for fully half of visits to the site, peaking the week before submission deadlines. Where known, 41% of users are in the UK, 25% in Iraq and 8% in Turkey.

We post longer narrative reports to the Network's blog at <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/nahrein/>, in English and/or Arabic. These include guest posts from grantees and Visiting Scholars on their work, as well as reports from the core team on our events, publications, and other activities. We typically post every couple of months.

Twitter remains our most successful communication channel, especially for reaching academics, journalists, diplomats and policy-makers. We post there at least twice a week, often several times a day, and enjoy a great deal of interaction with followers and members of the Network. The Network's Twitter account (@nahreinnetwork) has over 2000 followers and typically earns over 60,000 impressions and over a 28-day period.

Insofar as locations of our audience are known, 30% are in the UK, 16% in the USA and 14% in Iraq. 60% of our audience are male, 40% female.

Facebook remains secondary, with just over 600 followers of our page (facebook.com/nahreinnetwork). We post there about once a week, usually an informational repost from Twitter, typically reaching some 350 viewers. However, fully half of our Facebook followers are in Iraq — slightly more in absolute terms than our Twitter followers in fact — with 16% in the UK and 5% in the USA. The gender split, where known, is 55:43 men:women. It therefore remains an important means of reaching Iraqis in Iraq.

We now have 14 podcasts on Soundcloud.com/nahreinnetwork, hosted, recorded, and edited by Dr Kathem. These interviews typically attract 80–150 listeners each.

It remains harder to capture the interest of professional media in the UK, though several devolved projects and partners have had success with their institutional media teams and local reporters. News items are linked into relevant pages of the project website wherever feasible.

#### v) Sustainability and legacy development

What measures are you developing to plan for sustainability of the project, beyond the duration of the funding?

(Max. 750 words)

Nothing to report yet within this reporting period; plans are in hand for the second half of the project.

### Section 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

How have the approaches and methodologies used by the programme been challenged, adapted and deployed over the course of the reporting period?

(Max. 750 words)

No change on last year; our procedures have proved robust so far

### Section 6 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Optional)

Please indicate the number of applications made and awarded in the table below.

Characteristic		PI (applications)	PI (awards)	Co-I (applications)	Co-I (awards)
Gender	Female	18	4		7
	Male	25	7		29
	Other				
	Not disclosed				1
Age	0 – 29				

Global Challenges Research Fund

	30 – 39																												
	40 – 49																												
	50 – 59																												
	60+																												
	Not disclosed	x	x	x	x																								
Ethnicity	Please describe																												
	Asian British				1																								
	White British		1		1																								
	Other		10		35																								
Disability	Known Disability																												
	No known disability																												
	Not disclosed	X	X	X	X																								
<p><i>If you are unable to provide the information as requested above, please use the space below to explain how your data maps onto the categories above.</i></p> <p>In Iraq, identity politics has been violently weaponised over the past 15 years, to the point of death. As a result, even anonymised requests to reveal ethnicity and religious affiliation (which do not map on to these categories in any case) are met with hostility and suspicion. As a matter of principle, in order to maintain the trust of our partners, we therefore do not request information about protected characteristics for monitoring purposes.</p> <p>For rounds 3 and 4 of our Strand 1 Iraqi Visiting Scholars scheme we kept monitoring data as follows:</p> <table><tr><td></td><td>Applicants</td><td>Awardees</td><td>Success rate</td></tr><tr><td>Male</td><td>17</td><td>4</td><td>24%</td></tr><tr><td>Female</td><td>5</td><td>5</td><td>40%</td></tr><tr><td>Academic</td><td>16</td><td>4</td><td>25%</td></tr><tr><td>Of which ECR</td><td>6</td><td>2</td><td>33%</td></tr><tr><td>Non-academics</td><td>5</td><td>4</td><td>40%</td></tr></table>							Applicants	Awardees	Success rate	Male	17	4	24%	Female	5	5	40%	Academic	16	4	25%	Of which ECR	6	2	33%	Non-academics	5	4	40%
	Applicants	Awardees	Success rate																										
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Of which ECR	6	2	33%																										
Non-academics	5	4	40%																										

### Section 7: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Please provide an update on how the Network is addressing and encouraging gender equality and wider issues of equalities, diversity and inclusion? Please state if you have experienced any challenges during the reporting year and how you overcame these.

(Max. 1000 words)

The Network has a clear equalities and inclusion policy, which is prominent on the website and all grant applications materials. The team itself is gender balanced (3:3) and ethnically diverse, as are our Management Committee (where white British members are in a small

minority) and our Visiting Scholarships committee. Peer reviewers are assigned to large grant applications with EDI in mind.

The monitoring data both reveals and hides some interesting patterns. For the grants scheme round 40% of PI applicants are women, a rate which is sustained (allowing for small sample fluctuations) in success rates. However, 3 of the 4 PIs on our large grants are women: 1 UK-based, 1 Iraqi Kurdish, and 1 Lebanese. Male PIs tend to choose all-male teams, where female PIs tend to have one or more other female Co-Is, leading to the large gender discrepancies in the funded Co-I teams. (Gender data on applicant Co-Is was not collected.) All but two of the PIs funded this year are of Middle Eastern heritage and only one is White British.

The Visiting Scholarships scheme remains male-dominated. Given the challenges for women with caring responsibilities to travel abroad for any length of time, there is little we can do about that, given the budget available. However, the quality of applications from women is significantly better, and without explicitly favouring women we are recruiting proportionally more simply by judging applications on their merits.

Given the sensitivities around ethnicity and religious affiliation, we use geography as a proxy for intrusive questions of diversity. Within Iraq, we ensure that we fund good projects and visiting scholars from across Iraqi Kurdistan, the predominantly Shi'a south and the predominantly Sunni north.

This year three of the small projects we have funded explicitly addresses the challenges of contested ownership of heritage sites from minority and majority perspectives. Two more aim to bring economic renewal to deprived rural communities and three particularly address the integrational challenges of post-Da'esh Mosul and its surroundings.

#### Section 8: Impact of Network Plus project and ODA compliance

- i) Please provide an update on progress in relation to the ODA Compliance Statement and Pathways to Impact plan you provided in your application.

(Max. 500 words)

The Network's focus remains on Iraq, as a DAC-listed Middle Income Country and a Fragile State. In our original ODA compliance statement we aimed to improve the lot of five groups that have been identified as at risk of being 'left behind': youth; women and girls; rural dwellers; those living in conflict-affected areas; and cultural, ethnic and religious minorities.

- improved employability for young humanities graduates (SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 6: Decent Work and Economic Growth) — tackled by three inter-university curriculum development projects (one large, two small) across Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan
- improved inclusion and representation of women and minorities in education, society and the economy (SDG 5: Gender Equality; SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities) — tackled by a variety of small research projects on Baghdad, Kufa, Mosul and Najaf, and by two Visiting Scholarships

- increased local tourism and knowledge economies around rural cultural heritage sites (SDG 14: Life Below Water; SDG 15: Life on Land) — tackled by the large research projects on Babylon and on Heritage Recovery in Erbil's rural periphery, and by three Visiting Scholarships
- better social cohesion in war-damaged communities (SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities; SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) — addressed by three small research projects in Mosul and a large research project on Heritage Recovery in Erbil's rural periphery

We also consider Iraq itself to have been 'left behind' and excluded from economic and social development, by the effects of the past 30 years. A major aim of this year's expansion to Lebanon, Turkey and Iran was to help Iraq's academic reintegration into the region. We have started to address that problem this year by funding a joint Lebanese-Iraqi project on Heritage Recovery in Erbil's rural periphery and an Iraqi-led project on documenting Najaf's heritage, with a Turkish co-investigator.

- i) Please provide a brief overview of the progress made to date towards achieving impact. How is the project beginning to promote the economic development and welfare of the DAC listed country/countries? This can include impact at community, practice and policy level. (*summary of information submitted into Researchfish*)

(Max. 750 words)

Several of the projects funded in 2018–19 are already able to demonstrate significant impact. For instance:

Mr Rashad Salim, PI of the Thesiger's Tarada project, reports a concrete change within the NGO Nature Iraq and other stakeholders in southern Iraq marshland tourism from perceiving traditional boats as old-fashioned and irrelevant towards recognising them as an important asset for the tourism and heritage sector. This shift has potential to create sustainable livelihoods for boatbuilders beyond the life of the projects. New orders have already come in. The projected growth in the use of traditional boats will also have a direct environmental benefit by reducing the pollution, erosion and noise impact resulting from the use of motorboats for Marsh tourism. On a broader level, the project plays a role in cultural and environmental advocacy, using an iconic traditional watercraft to bring attention to the challenges of the rural economy and environment, and to the opportunities that Iraq's distinctive heritage can contribute towards in sectors such as tourism, sports and leisure, arts and design.

At another level altogether, the appointment of project Co-I Dr Abdulameer Al-Hamdani as Minister of Culture, has — while slowing down the delivery of the project's written outputs — enabled the Ministry to start considering sustainable approaches to archaeology and other aspects of its work.

In and around Sulaimaniya the Kurdish Cultural Heritage Network has had a great deal of success in helping local government officials and police to understand the role of heritage in local social and economic development. Their advocacy role in this regard has increasingly turned to advice and consultancy over the protection and development of local heritage.

In Mosul, Professor Husham Hashim of Ninevah University, the PI of the Society in the Wind project, has been selected by the Iraqi Prime Minister's office to serve on the central committee to rebuild Mosul society. The historical and ethnographic findings of the project, especially its work on and in IDP camps around the city, will directly shape the committee's work.

### Section 9: Further and Leveraged Funding

Please provide an overview of any additional funding leveraged in the reporting period to support this project? Please provide the total amount and the sources of funding.

Iraq Publishing Workshops (Dr Mehiyar Kathem) — British Academy, January–December 2019

Heritage and State-Building in Post-conflict Iraq (Dr Mehiyar Kathem and Prof Eleanor Robson to initiate partnership with Chatham House) — UCL Public Policy Expert Engagement Small Grant, September 2019 – March 2020

*Details of further funding for related research or development projects which have been stimulated by your Network + award should be including within your Researchfish submission and should not be included here.*

### Section 10: Sharing learning

Please highlight any learning that you are happy for us to share with other and future Network + award holders:

*(Max. 1000 words)*

The past year's challenges for our project have mostly revolved around relaying our, and UCL's due diligence requirements in the clearest way possible to our applicants and making successful payments to our devolved projects.

To tackle these situations, we have updated section 11 of our application form, 'Invoice & payment requirements', to allow for third parties with the ability to process international payments. We also offer further guidance in a post-award letter aiming to highlight the information needed for setting up the PI's institution as a supplier in the UCL system. This is one of the lessons learned we have shared through the year within the Network+ group and especially during Project Manager/Admin meetings across the network. Following these meetings and under the leadership of Miss Isobel Templer (Nottingham University) the lessons learned have been condensed in an easily accessible format and shared online via a website: <https://gcrfmanagersnetwork.wordpress.com/>

The website covers the managerial and administrative side of running the projects and offers an overview of the practical issues we have faced, and the workarounds implemented.

On a more positive note, we continue to find that project devised and led by Middle Eastern (rather than UK) researchers are on the whole more imaginative, sensitive to local needs, cohesive, and better value for money. We are very glad that the need for UK partnerships was dropped early on and are delighted to be funding several projects with intra-regional

leadership teams (Lebanon-Iraqi Kurdistan, Iraq-Turkey), as well as several collaborations between different Iraqi universities. We would encourage the next generation of Network+ projects to prioritise locally-led solutions to locally-identified challenges.

Equally, our Network has been hugely strengthened by incorporating fundees into the management structure. Importantly, both our core team and our Management Committee are now majority Iraqi/Middle Eastern and majority female.

The Kurdish Cultural Heritage Network's "Pass it Forward" programme, which commits participants to cascading their learning locally, is a practice that we shall be recommending to other projects in our Network.

Finally, we strongly recommend to future Network+ projects a Visiting Scholars scheme, or something like it, as astonishingly effective value for money. Each of our 2-month placements has brought disproportionate and sustained reward, not only for the Scholars themselves but also for the hosts, their respective institutions, and the Network as a whole.

## Case studies

*Case studies are an important evidence resource for AHRC and GCRF. We use them to understand the contribution research can make and to provide important evidence to external bodies about the value of funding in the arts and humanities. We also use them to offer a compelling narrative for those who want to learn more about the AHRC, GCRF and the role of research (especially the arts and humanities) towards international development.*

**Please provide any updates to case studies presented in the last annual report**

**Please provide 2-4 new case studies (400 words maximum word limit for each case study). The case studies can highlight progress and achievements relating to building capacity, creating and sustaining networks and partnerships, exchanging knowledge or effecting change.**

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*Update of 2017-2018 Report Case study*

**Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin's progress following her Visiting Scholarship (Round 1 awardee)**

**Academic hosts: ENMOTIVE project at the University of Glasgow**

**Scholarship Dates: 24/09-23/11/2018**

Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin of Sulaimani Polytechnic University was awarded a Visiting Scholarship, which she undertook during September-November 2018 at the University of Glasgow, by joining the EMOTIVE project.

Following her return from the UK, she aimed to evaluate the impact of the EMOTIVE approach in users' experience, perception, and long-term interest and connection to the Slemani Museum and its collections. The tools and support that the EMOTIVE team provided during and after her placement enabled her to expand her research in this area.





EMOTIVE approaches and tools such as the StoryBoard Editor (SBE) supported a pilot implementation in Slemani Museum, being the first of its kind in any Iraqi museum. As a result, Dr Mohammed-Amin was invited to the public demo of the EMOTIVE project in October 2019 where she got the opportunity to see and experience the outputs of the project and connect to more researchers around the world. She is currently actively expanding her research collaboration with the University of Glasgow.

In addition to expanding the projects for Slemani Museum, the EMOTIVE tools and research findings have enabled Dr Mohammed-Amin to explore other ways of transferring knowledge to the academic world and beyond, to community partners, including government and NGOs. Most recently, her research group was delegated by the Director of the Planning Unit at the Sulaimani Governorate to help with developing a cultural heritage project for Sulaimaniya National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) for the “Cities Without Borders” programme. As part of that, they are planning a city-wide location-based mobile guide that connects the city’s iconic historic buildings together. Her involvement with such a large multi-disciplinary and multi-partner project like EMOTIVE also transferred into the effort of coordinating and managing large grants, via the means of the management and communications processes and tools she became familiar with during her time as a visiting scholar and set the grounds for continuing to expand her work during the coming years.

NB Dr Mohammed-Amin is also the PI of the Kurdish Cultural Heritage Network, funded by a Nahrein Network large grant. In this update to her Visiting Scholarship case study we have endeavoured to separate that work from this focus on the outcomes and updates of her Scholarship placement in Glasgow.

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#### *Update of 2017-2018 Report Case study*

#### **Thesiger’s *Tarada*: Using art to reconnect the archival, local, and archaeological strata of memory of Iraq’s vernacular watercraft heritage**

**PI: Dr Rashad Salim, Safina Projects**

**Duration: 18/06/2018 - 30/11/2019**

Led by renowned Iraqi artist Rashad Salim of Safina Projects, this 9-month project examined the relationship between recent Iraqi marshland boats like the *tarada* canoe made for the British explorer Wilfrid Thesiger in 1952 and ancient boats of comparable form, known from the archaeological record. Current and recent information about Iraq’s marsh canoes was gathered through oral history work with today’s marsh communities, and through studies of Thesiger’s photographic archive in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. This evidence was analysed together with available archaeological data on similar boats, to shed new light on the development of a boat form and craft tradition that endured for millennia but is now endangered.

During 2018-2019 the project concentrated on furthering efforts to revive the ancient boatbuilding practices and spreading awareness about their importance. The team presented images from Wilfred Thesiger’s archive at the official launch of the project in the traditional boatbuilding centre of Huwair, during a community feast in October 2018. More than 40 attendants, including current and retired boatbuilders, local sheikhs and elders,



participated in the launch. The success of the event prompted subsequent sessions of oral history recording and informed the team's research on the *tarada* and related types of *meshouf* canoe. The Nahrein Network grant enabled the reconstruction of one version, while a second grant, with CPF support, enabled the building of a second prototype. The extensive practical skills employed and occasion to practice traditional techniques (since the builders no longer use them in their regular work) enabled the construction of a third boat. The builders completed this third reconstruction in early 2019 and proved the most accurate and elegant replica of Thesiger's *tarada*. All 3 were tarred and decorated during the first part of 2019, in preparation for their maiden voyage.

Consequently, the replicas were the central focus of the Chibayish Festival of Heritage, organised by Nature Iraq. This highly popular event was attended by Dr Abdulameer al-Hamdani (former Co-I on the project and by then Minister of Culture) and other public figures and covered by five satellite TV channels. A social media frenzy followed with very positive publicity results for the event. Two more events were dedicated to documenting the use of the three *taradas* during the rest of the year and their progress was extensively presented to the public and specialist audiences in Iraq and the UK but also the US and Sweden.

Blog post, "Building ancient boats for today's Iraq", by Hannah Lewis of Safina Projects:  
<https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/nahrein/2019/06/11/building-ancient-boats-for-todays-iraq/>

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### *2018-2019 Case Study 1*

## **The Centre on Culture, History and Humanities for Sustainable Development (CCHH)**

**Co-I: Dr Anwar Anaid, University of Kurdistan Hewler**

The Centre on Culture, History and Humanities for Sustainable Development (CCHH) started its activities in September 2018 as part of the Nahrein Network. Based at the University of Kurdistan Hewler (UKH) in Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq, the Centre is an essential element in the implementation of the Nahrein Network's aims and has a vital role in promoting networking and collaboration at the regional level in Iraq. The Centre operates in two streams: research on one side and activities directed at fostering sustainable development of antiquity, cultural heritage and humanities in Iraq, on the other.

Dr Anwar Anaid, one of the Network's co-investigators, directs the Centre, which also employs a full-time post-doctoral researcher, Dr Amani Suleiman, and a part-time administrator. Dr Amani Suleiman's research aims to provide policymakers with the economic data and analysis necessary for understanding the drivers and significance of cultural tourism in the region. By the end of the reporting period she had written two articles on the subject, one in peer-review and another ready for submission.

The centre was officially launched in November 2018. The event provided a great opportunity for Dr Anwar and Professor Robson to introduce the Network to academics, heritage professionals and the media. Mr Lolan Sipan of the Kurdish Textile Museum in Erbil spoke about his work with the Network-funded Post-Conflict Textile Crafts project (PI Dr Neelam Raina of Middlesex University). Speakers particularly encouraged Kurdish and female scholars to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Network. Since then,



the Network has funded 4 projects working in the Kurdistan region (2 large and 2 small grants) — all led by female researchers.

To further the development of local and regional partnerships, the Centre's researchers participate in and organise workshops and seminars. In April 2019 Dr Anwar took part in a workshop organised by the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage (IICAH). The workshop was an opportunity to encourage interdisciplinary research and increase networking efforts. During the same month, CCHH organised a seminar for Nahrein Research Grant awardees to present their progress. This event prompted UKH faculty and staff in attendance to discuss future research projects aimed at promoting sustainable development of cultural heritage in the region.

The Centre also provides important online support for the Network. It currently has a website, Facebook and Twitter pages, all aimed at widening access to information and disseminating calls for applications and Network related news. It currently reaches audiences from Erbil, Baghdad and Sulaimaniya in English, Kurdish and Arabic.

[www.uk.edu.krd/directorateandcentres.php?depid+47](http://www.uk.edu.krd/directorateandcentres.php?depid+47)

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## 2018-2019 Case Study 2

### Postgraduate Teaching Programme: A Scientific, Historical and Intercultural Dialogue

PI: Dr Olga Babenko, University of Kurdistan Hewler

Duration: 02/02/2019 - 31/01/2020

The project aimed to develop an internationally competitive, contextually adapted and culturally aware, best practice postgraduate teaching programme to promote the historical, cultural and artistic heritage of the Kurdistan Region. The programme was developed from data collected from academic and administrative staff of the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr, American Stratford University-Erbil Campus, Lebanese French University, Koya University, University of Zakho and Soran University. Based on the findings, the team developed two versions of a Postgraduate Teaching Certificate – a 60-credit programme for Kurdish educators and a 30-credit cultural programme for international staff employed in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Permission to offer the programme in the UKH in the second semester of academic year 2019-2020 is currently being sought from The Ministry of Higher Education of the Kurdistan Region. The last phase of the project will involve the delivery of the two programmes, and teacher training workshops (up to 6 workshops in different locations in the Kurdistan Region, with internal and external participants).

In April 2019, the team delivered a seminar on the opportunities for funding via the Nahrein Network. Dr Babenko presented a paper titled *Intercultural Competence of a Foreign Language and Literature Instructor: Insights of Teaching in a Multicultural Classroom in Various Cultural Settings* at the International Visible Conference on Education and Applied Linguistics (VESAL), at Tishk International University, Erbil. The paper was also published in the conference proceedings volume.

The next steps will be to deliver workshops on the main themes, *Building up Intercultural Competence of Educators in the Kurdistan Region*, *Kurdish Heritage: History from Economic and Artistic Perspectives*, and *Intellectual Property*, in 6 different universities in the Kurdistan region. Following that the 2 modules of the teaching programmes will be offered as part of the UKH curriculum during 2020. Findings will be published in an academic paper towards the end of the project.

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### 2018-2019 Case Study 3

#### **Museum managers' workshop held at the Imam Hussein Holy Shrine, Karbala (26 November 2018)**

Organized by Dr Paul Collins (Nahrein Network), Dr Alaa Ahmed (Imam Hussein Museum), and Dr Jaafar Jotheri (Qadisiyah University), the workshop brought together 23 representatives of 17 museums from across Iraq, along with interested parties from the Prime Minister's Office, Mosul University, and Najaf University. Although the majority of the museums represented at the workshop are run by the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, a small number are linked to universities or religious institutions with different organisational structures and resources.

The principal aim of the workshop was to bring together museum professionals from across Iraq to assess the current situation and explore opportunities for knowledge exchange, especially around best practice. This was the first occasion that such a meeting has been taken place in Iraq, certainly within the last three decades. This meeting was successful in attracting a large number of Iraq's museum professionals; there was a clear sense that they valued the opportunity not only to meet collectively but to contribute personally. Participants were also keen to be part of an Iraq museums association, which would provide a means for developing future workshops/gatherings.

Although plans for an association have yet to be realised, the meeting helped to establish an informal network: for example, a number of workshop attendees participated in the 'Museums and Cultural Heritage' session of The 2nd International Conference for Research and Protection on the Archaeological Heritage of Iraq at Kufa University (28-29 April 2019); and there has been collaboration between Samawah, Nasiriya and Basrah museum in training and engagement with local universities.

Blog post at <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/nahrein/2019/01/15/report-on-a-workshop-for-managers-of-iraqi-museums/>

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### 2018-2019 Case Study 4

#### **Dr Alaa Hamdon – Round 2 Visiting Scholarships Scheme awardee**

Academic hosts: EAMENA project at the University of Oxford

Scholarship Dates: 4/02-29/03/2019



Dr Alaa Hamdon is a lecturer and researcher at the Remote Sensing Unit of the University of Mosul, Iraq. He was awarded a Nahrein Network Visiting Scholarship at the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa project (EAMENA, <http://eamena.arch.ox.ac.uk>), which he took up in February and March 2019. This two-month placement at the University of Oxford was primarily to help him develop a project on the remote sensing of Hatra, a Roman-period Arab city in the desert south of Mosul that was occupied and badly damaged by ISIS. It also provided ample opportunities for networking, learning and research.

Hamdon visited and participated in several important activities, including a meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Iraq in the House of Commons, where he spoke about cultural heritage destruction in Mosul. Hamdon also spoke at a major fundraising event at the British Library, organised by Book Aid International for rehabilitating and restocking Mosul University Central Library, which was destroyed in the war against the Islamic State. Hamdon is founder of Mosul Book Bridge (<https://mosulbookbridge.org/>) which is working closely with UK based Book Aid International.

During his scholarship, Hamdon gave a presentation on the destruction of Hatra and existing plans for its rehabilitation at the annual conference of the British Association for Near East Archaeology, held at the University of Liverpool in February 2019. Hamdon also participated in Newcastle University's conference on 'Cultural Heritage Protection in Armed Conflict' in March 2019.

Actively participating in such events during Hamdon's scholarship facilitated numerous contacts which were then pursued with a view to supporting Mosul University's efforts to engage internationally. He visited the UK twice after his scholarship to promote UK-Iraq university partnerships. In October 2019, along with the Chancellor of Mosul University, Dr Qusay al Ahmedy – who was invited by the Nahrein Network to speak at Chatham House on cultural policy and heritage in Mosul – Hamdon organised meetings with Liverpool, Newcastle and Bradford Universities. The aim of these meetings was to secure institutional agreements to further strengthen the partnership with Mosul University in the much-needed fields of digital heritage, remote sensing and documentation.

Since his scholarship, Hamdon has been promoted to Director of Mosul University's Remote Sensing Centre.

In April 2019, Hamdon wrote a short piece about his scholarship, EAMENA and the Nahrein Network, and Hatra, which can be found here: <http://eamena.arch.ox.ac.uk/hatra-iraq-and-eamena/>