
MicroCamp Radio in Iraqi Kurdistan

Summary and Perspectives



MicroCamp Radio was in Iraqi Kurdistan from 26th August to 9th October 2017. The team was composed of a coordinator and a radio trainer.

12 radio workshops were held in 9 locations, camps or community centres, with 5 different partner organizations. The participants were IDPs and refugees, of mixed age and mixed gender. Some women-only workshops were held to allow female participants to feel comfortable speaking.

As a result, 103 participants created 12 radio programs which are to be available on the website **radio-activite.fr**.

Here is a summary of our action in the region and future perspectives of the project.

WORKSHOPS HELD

Date	Governorate	Location	Population	Partner	Participants
7/09	Duhok	Bersive camp	IDP Yezidi	UNHCR/Qandil	9
7/09		Bersive camp	IDP Yezidi	UNHCR/Qandil	7
7/09		Domiz camp	Refugees	UNHCR/Qandil	8
11/09	Erbil	Ashti camp	IDP Christians	The Church	5
19/09		Harsham camp	IDP	EJCC/BCF	8
19/09		Harsham camp	IDP	EJCC/BCF	15
08/10		Basirma camp	Refugees	EJCC/BCF	11
22/09		Dararoo Community Center	Refugees & IDP	Judy Organization for Relief and Development	5
22/09		Dararoo Community Center	Refugees & IDP	Judy Organization for Relief and Development	8
05/10		Turak Community Center	Refugees & IDP	Judy Organization for Relief and Development	8
03/10		Suleymanie	Arbat camp	Refugees	CDO
02/10	Ashti camp		IDP	CDO	12
12	3 governorates	9 locations		5 Partner organisations	103 participants

REMINDER ON THE WORKSHOP

The radio workshop gathers around 10 participants during 4 hours, divided in 3 hours training (with breaks) and 1 hour live radio program. Participants are IDPs and refugees of mixed age and mixed gender. The workshop is held close to their place of living, in a camp or community centre. An informal discussion with participants allows to break the ice, know each other and identify the topics that are dear to them and that they wish to talk about. A small technical training is made: how to hold a microphone, to interview someone, to introduce the program...

The workshop ends with a live radio program entirely made by the participants, where they are journalists as well as facilitators and guests. **The carrying out of the radio program is entirely their responsibility:** opening of the program, topic of discussion, who speaks when and to who. When participants can play music, they are encouraged) to perform the musical breaks in the program (singing, drums, saz guitar).

Usually participants make a program for the first time, and they learn by doing. Therefore the program reflects them and the moment they spend, their hesitations, emotions and laughs. It opens a space of dialogue and allows them to create something meaningful together.

The programs are then broadcasted live on the internet, in two languages to reach a wide audience.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

The topics of the radio programs are chosen according to discussion and written by the participants on anonymous papers to keep everyone's privacy. Here are the ones most discussed.

- Education: how to educate children, school facilities, future of children
- Rights of children, children work, child early marriage
- Condition of refugees: displacement, traumatism, psycho-social issues
- The past: before the war, the war
- Return: how to return, situation in areas of origin why, when
- Music: Fairouz, Oum Kalthoum, Saadoun Jaber...
- Cooking: sharing recipes and famous meals
- Daily life in the camp, needs and problems: health, sanitation, food, work
- Going to Europe: reasons to go, life there, expectations
- Kurdistan: context politics, independence, Kurdish patriotism and communities in Iraq.



Radio workshop in Basirma camp. Credit: Marc-Antoine Pelaez

WHAT THE WORKSHOP BRINGS / FEEDBACK

Generally, the workshops are warmly welcomed by participants. It seems that speaking at the radio allows them to address topics that are rarely discussed. Workshops contribute to answer multi-sectoral needs:

- The need to express themselves about what they lived through, how they feel, and their daily life freely and peacefully. The radio workshop enters the category of psychosocial support in this sense.
- The need to spend a moment together discussing and sharing, as an activity of social cohesion.
- The need to learn something, to be trained. Some of them wish to continue with radio or develop other means of expression.
- The need to do creative activities such as music.
- The need to feel that they are heard elsewhere.

It also meets the needs of non-participants:

- The translators, who are often also facilitators, say they learn about the situation of IDPs in a more personal way and it will help them in their daily work with them.
- The camp managers also say it helps them to know more about the feelings of residents and daily life problems.
- Refugees and IDPs who have not participated can hear the program and feel that their situation and feelings are shared.
- The wider audience knows more about the situation of IDPs and refugees “from inside”, in a way that is different from the media.

ISSUES TO BE TACKLED

EXPRESSION / INCLUSIVITY

We observe a certain part of self-censorship in women’s attitude. Some of them won’t speak until they are really confident and valorised. They also sometimes seem to think that their thoughts and feelings should not be shared. *Example: a female participant told us that she had been happy to speak during the program but that she doesn’t want to share it with her family because she believes it is “bad for a woman to speak at the radio”.*

As well, young people (15-20 years-old) dare less speaking compared to adults, as if they thought that their saying is not interesting.

- Women-only workshops are a good way of tackling the problem.
- Taking more time for training with young and female participants enables to make them confident and think about what they wish to say personally.

DURATION OF WORKSHOP

The workshop is sometimes too short to allow everyone to express himself/herself sincerely. It needs time to create trust in a group of participants.

Creating a radio program is also a demanding and difficult exercise. Understanding it and being at ease with it requires that participants have time to formulate their ideas and get used to the idea of being recorded. As an example, a participant told us at the end of a workshop: *"Now I understand the idea of the radio program, tomorrow I'll have a lot more to say!"*

- The workshops' duration needs to be extended, with more breaks. One workshop = one day in the camp is a good format. Making breaks allows them to take time to think about what they individually wish to say, and get topics less general, more personal.
- We also think that the format of several days with the same participants would be fruitful, so that they get to know each other better and more intimately, make radio in several ways and really think collectively.

FOLLOW-UP

Some participants would like to continue with radio training (at least 1/3 of them). Until now it is not possible to follow-up with them, because of the absence of facilitator and material when MicroCamp Radio team leaves the camp.

- There is a need to both train facilitators and let material in order to allow people who wish to continue to go further with radio.

MIXITY OF GROUPS

It is not possible to do mixed groups with IDPs/refugees in camps, because often one camp gathers only one community.

- It seems important to go in urban areas as well, to stress the importance of dialogue between communities.

LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION AND AUDIENCE

The radio program is not listened to by inhabitants of the camp when it is on live, because MicroCamp Radio is not implemented enough locally, before and after its intervention. Often, nobody in the camp is aware that there will be a radio program and participants do not even know what the workshop will be about. After the workshop, participants know how to listen to the program they made, but it is difficult to reach other residents of the camp.

- There is a need to be more implemented locally to reach a wider audience and announce the radio program before: develop local partnerships and follow-up.
- The programs need to be advertised on local social media, because residents use a lot more smartphones than radios, especially youth.



Radio workshop in Domiz camp. Credit : Chalaine Chang for Qandil NGO

PERSPECTIVES

We are convinced of the relevance of the workshop in the regional context of Iraqi Kurdistan. We wish to develop the project to make it even more in accordance with the needs. In a perspective of a “phase II” session, here are ideas to go further.

- Longer workshop: for example one week in one camp, with an everyday broadcast created by participants. It would allow participants to really go further in their self-expression, be more confident, and benefit from a more professional radio training. It would also allow the audience in the camp to listen more often to the radio program and to share practical information about the camp.
- A training of facilitators, amongst IDP/refugee community or amongst staff of community centre. It would allow the workshop to be held in several locations even when MicroCamp Radio team is not in the country, and would contribute to make it more implemented in returnees' areas.
- Letting material: we consider to let material in every location where the workshop is held once and where there is an “in-charge” person, to allow participants to appropriate it.
- Wider implementation: make more local partnerships, be present on the long-term basis in different locations, camps, community centres, urban areas.
- Wider audience: more communication and implementation in the country, with broadcasting partners, the use of mobile application and local social media.