
BAGHDAD UNESCO CITY OF LITERATURE

December 2019

MEMBERSHIP

MONITORING REPORT

UNESCO
Creative
Cities Network



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Baghdad
CITY OF LITERATURE

Designated
UNESCO Creative City
in 2015



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2015 , following intensive efforts and an extensive and all-inclusive application supported by the Mayoralty of Baghdad, the Ministry of Culture, the Iraqi Writers Union, the Iraqi National Commission for UNESCO, Baghdad was designated a UNESCO Creative City of Literature. Thus, it became the first City of Literature in Asia and the Arab region .

Naturally, Baghdad has welcomed this designation not only because it recognizes its history as the capital of the country that has produced the first literary documents in the world, but also because it comes at a very special time in its life: long decades of dictatorship, wars, international sanctions, occupation, civil war and war on terror, which caused the destruction of the city's infrastructure, the looting of its museums, the burning of its libraries, the shattering of its ecosystem and, of course, the disruption of its social cohesion. Hence, the first project that we launched upon designation was Project Oxygen for Creative Spaces. Our aim was to maximize the creative spaces in the city, bring normalcy, spread the culture of beauty and peace, and involve as many people as possible. We felt that the city needed oxygen after the suffocating years of war and terror, and we envisioned that a Creative Space (CS) can be anything that we may carve out from the city within which creativity can work out: a corner, a street, a coffee shop, a berth, a hall, an unfrequented building, a stage, a public park, a restaurant, or even a river. Project Oxygen became the underlying subtext in all the initiatives and projects we implemented in the last four years of the city's designation

The High Committee for Baghdad City of Literature (HCCoL) is headed by the Mayor of Baghdad and it includes representatives from the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, the Iraqi Media Network, the House of Wisdom, the Iraqi Writers' Union, and the Baghdadi Cultural Saloons. The main job of the High Committee is the endorsement of projects and the provision of financial resources .

Our Main Office is located in the House of Wisdom beside its Universal Library. It includes an executive director, a public relations officer, a human resources officer, a designer, a cameraman, and a film editor. The office runs eight various platforms that organize weekly literary and cultural activities. These platforms are The Creativity Platform, The Book Club, The Woman's Cultural Club, The Literary Translation Club, The Folklore Platform, The Theatre Workshop, the Cinema Club (Ru'ya), and the Kids Workshop. The managers of these platforms include well-known writers, academics, poets translators, artists, critics, and educators. The activities of the platforms are mainly organized in City Hall every Thursday but sometimes they are shifted to other venues in the city. In the last four years, we executed all the city's local and international projects and organized more than one hundred public events that were attended by thousands of the city's citizens .

It must be acknowledged that the designation has provided the city with a paradigm to reinvent itself and redirect its strategic plans afresh. It has also created momentum for local, urban development in the themes of literature, tourism, culture, and cultural industries. Locally, it has provided the basis for the recreation of the city's common identity and the ground for its sustainable development. Globally, it has provided a great incentive to implement local policies integrating culture and creativity in local development plans through collaboration with the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Indeed, the designation has tremendously assisted in focusing the city's efforts on its new common mission and we look forward to a more creative and prosperous future .

2. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. Name of the city :

Baghdad

1.2. Country:

IRAQ

1.3. Creative field of designation :

Literature

1.4. Date of designation :

December 2015

1.5. Date of submission of the current report :

December 30th , 2019

1.6. Entity responsible for the report :

Baghdad City of Literature-UNESCO, Main Office
Mayorality of Baghdad

1.7. Previous reports submitted and dates :

N/A

1.8. Focal points of contact :

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3. CONTRIBUTION TO THE NETWORK'S GLOBAL MANAGEMENT

3.1. Number of UCCN annual meetings attended in the last four years (please note that a regular participation in these meetings is compulsory):

N/A

3.2. Hosting of a UCCN annual meeting and dates

N/A

3.3. Hosting of a working or coordination meeting addressed to one or more specific UCCN creative field representatives

Cities of Literature Subnetwork Annual Meetings
Iowa City, USA ,2018

3.4. Hosting of an international conference or meeting on specific issues salient to the Creative Cities with a large participation of members of the Network

None

3.5. Financial and/or in-kind support provided to UNESCO's ,Secretariat in order to ensure the management communication and visibility of the UCCN (type of contribution, estimated value, main objectives, and dates):

None

3.6. Membership of the Steering Group and period .

None

3.7. Participation in the evaluation of applications

1. 2017, number of applications : 13
2. 2019, number of applications : 18



4. MAJOR INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE UCCN



The UNESCO Creative Cities Network objectives

1. Strengthen international cooperation between cities that have recognized creativity as a strategic factor of their sustainable development
2. Stimulate and enhance initiatives led by member cities to make creativity an essential component of urban development, notably through partnerships involving the public and private sectors and civil society
3. Strengthen the creation, production, distribution and dissemination of cultural activities, goods and services
4. Develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector
5. Improve access to and participation in cultural life as well as the enjoyment of cultural goods and services notably for marginalized or vulnerable groups and individuals
6. Fully integrate culture and creativity into local development strategies and plans

4.1. Spring of Creativity Festival

UCCNOs 3,4,5,6

SDGs 8,9,11

This festival has been initiated immediately upon the UNESCO designation of Baghdad as City of Literature in December 2015 . Presently it is organized every March annually. The first season was organized in 2016 and the third was organized in 2018 . It aims at navigating possibilities of developing synergetic initiatives and promoting cross-sectoral interactions between literature and various other creative fields, music mainly, but it also includes activities that involve literature and gastronomy, crafts and folkloric arts, design and fashion. Every year we organize the festival in a new venue in the city to maximize creative spaces and furnish them with culture and creativity: in 2016 , we organized it in a hall in the institute for traditional crafts and public arts, in 2017 , in a Cultural café, and in 2018, in Utaifiya berth. The festival also aims at the promotion of cultural industries

See video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cl86i98HqJE>





وزارة الثقافة
 دائرة العلاقات الثقافية العامة
 بغداد مدينة الابداع الأدبي-اليونسكو
 Ministry of Culture
 General Directorate for Cultural Relations
 Baghdad City of Literature-UNESCO

مهرجان ربيع الابداع الثالث
**THE THIRD SPRING OF
 CREATIVITY FESTIVAL**

مرسى العطفية ، 15 ايار 2018
 Utaifiya Berth, May 15, 2018



• Spring of Creativity Festival

4.2. The Literary Boat

UCCNOs 3,4,5,6

SDGs 6,11,14

This project is launched in 2016 . It aims at exploiting the river as a creative space and utilizing it in promoting literature to bring unity, identity, inclusion, peace, beauty, and tolerance to the multi-ethnic population of the city. The river, in this context, is conceived as a unifying element that gives the city its everlasting identity. It is conceived not as a divide or barrier, but as a fine thread that stitches the two halves of the city, indeed, a source of life, identity, and creativity. Literary readings and music performances are organized onboard the boat which crosses the city from south to north. The project also aims at highlighting the dangers to which the waters of the river are exposed and turns the spotlight on the cultural centers and institutions built on its banks throughout the years with the hope of energizing their cultural role. It also aims at promoting cultural and literary tourism in the city

See videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZAxPG-LPvM>

And: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Diw5rpEIakw>





The Literary Boat

4.3. The Cultural Supper UCCNOs 3,4,5,6 SDGs 8,9,11

This project is launched in 2018 . It aims at promoting reading and the book industry in the city's restaurants especially the ones that proclaim culture as an essential part of their design. A review of the latest books published in the city is organized inside a restaurant. The review is done by a group of writers and academics with the aim of promoting both the books and the restaurant. A video of the whole session is recorded and displayed on the city's YouTube channel .

See videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpY07Y1uKuQ>

And https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_atQ1857-5I



4.4.The Night of Mutanabi Festival

UCCNOs 3,4,5,6

SDGs 8,9,11

This festival has been organized in June 2019 . Mutanabi Street is the cultural heart of the city where all the bookshops and various libraries are located. It represents the heart of the cultural center in the city of Baghdad. Every Friday thousands meet there to attend book bazaars, poetry recitations, artistic exhibitions, literary lectures, socio-cultural discussions, and various other activities. The street is also the place where the major publishers in the city are located. Due to the very special circumstances of the city in recent decades, life in the street has begun to end shortly afternoon. The street has lost its nightlife. Indeed, the street is completely deserted at night, which means huge losses and unnecessary delays in the publishing business and the book industry. This festival has been organized to bring nightlife to the street. At night, we organized a huge book bazaar in the street, poetry recitations, and music performances to encourage businesses to open at night and motivate the .population to visit the street during night time
Thousands attended the festival and the festival was a huge success. We feel that if Mutanabi regains its nightlife, the entire commercial center of the city will bloom. Hence, we will repeat this festival regularly until we achieve our objective .





Before



After

The Night of Mutanabi Festival

4.5. One-Hour Reading

UCCNOs 3,4,5,6
SDGs 4,8,9,11

This initiative was launched in 2018 as part of the activities of the city's Book Club to promote reading. Copies of books are made available to the audience in advance in coordination with writers. The audience is normally made of young high school or university students. They read and discuss books with writers in every session. Readings are normally organized in parks and various other public spaces.



4.6. Baghdad Peace Festival for Sung Poems

UCCNOs 3,4,5,6

SDGs 11,16

This Festival was organized in 2017 . It aimed at promoting peace by celebrating Iraqi sung poems that make an essential part of our traditional singing of maqam. The festival took place in Qishla, an ancient fortress in the center of the city, at night to revive nightlife in the city after long years of night curfew because of war and terrorist violence. It was broadcast attended by hundreds and was broadcast live on national TV

See Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFgTDmJK_1c



4.6. Baghdad Literary Festival: "The Metropolis of Literature, the Literature of the Metropolis"

UCCNOs 3,4,5,6

SDGs 8,11

This festival was organized in 2019 to mark the World Metropolitan Day. Various papers that tackle issues such as the creative city of literature, literature and the city, urban architecture, urban planning, cultural tourism, street theatre, history, mythology, and culture in the metropolitan spaces were discussed. Writers, artists, and academics from the University of Baghdad, the University of Mustansiriyah and Nahrain University actively took part in the festival and serious discussions with the audience, who were mainly senior citizens of the city, followed every session. Very important recommendations, that lauded the city of literature paradigm and the city's concerted efforts to implement it in order to achieve sustainable development in Baghdad, were made in the end

See video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4zkm6OEAkQ>



4.8. The City's Literary Clubs and Cultural Platforms

UCCNOs 2,3,4,5,6
SDGs 4,5,8,11

This project was initiated in 2017. It aims at creating permanent literary clubs, workshops, and cultural platforms that focus on creativity and address cultural and literary issues. In the last four years, we created four clubs [the Book Club, the Woman's Cultural Club, the Literary Translation Club, the Cinema Club], two workshops [the Kids Workshop, the Theatre Workshop], and two platforms [Creativity Platform and the Folklore and Popular Arts Platform]. Two of these platforms focus on Film and Craft and Folk Arts and their relationship to Literature. The others focus on women, children's culture, literary translation, street theatre, creativity and creators, books and reading. Every week one of these platforms organizes a public event in which a creator is hosted to speak directly to the city's population. Every event is followed by a Q&A session where the audience is encouraged to discuss cultural and creative issues with all guests. All events are normally organized in City Hall, but many of them were organized in other venues and public spaces in the city. These platforms organized more than one hundred events in the last four years

No	Platform	Commencement	Objectives	Events
1	Creativity	2017	Creativity& Creators	27
2	The Book Club	2017	Books & the Book Industry	27
3	Woman's Cultural Club	2018	Gender Equality	20
4	The Theatre Workshop	2019	Street Theatre	6
5	Literary Translation Club	2019	Translation Across Cultures	6
6	Cinema Club (Ru'ya)	2019	Films	7
7	The Kids Workshop	2019	Children's Culture	6
8	Folklore & Popular Arts	2019	Crafts & Popular Arts	7
9	Total		106	

5. MAJOR INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED THROUGH INTER-CITY COOPERATION TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE UCCN

5.1. Baghdad International Flowers Festival UCCNOs 1,2,3,4,5,6 SDGs 11,13,15,17

This festival is organized every April annually. Its 9th season was organized in 2017 . It aims at promoting eco-awareness, the protection of the environment, love of beauty, culture, and peace. Thousands of flower exhibits and flower designs from various townships in Baghdad and abroad are put in display to the public in one of the largest parks in the city. Throughout the festival, various literary activities are organized to promote the cooperation between literature, design, craft and folkloric arts, music, gastronomy, fashion, and dance



See videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i90xvWiYfUQ>

And: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzFHFwM0ZAc>



5.2. The Lanterns of Hope: A Poetry Project for Iraqi Youth, Iowa City (USA)

UCCNOs 1,2,3,5,6

SDGs 4,10,11,17

This project was launched in collaboration with the International Writing Program (IWP) in Iowa City. The aim was to encourage youth, ages 16 to 23 , to creatively communicate their visions for the future of the country. It sought to make their voices heard, allowing them a say in the way the world sees the country, and to help give them confidence and mentorship as emerging writers. We engaged six distinguished poets—five Iraqis writing in Arabic and Kurdish, and one American writing in English and translating from the Kurdish—to act as mentors and advisers throughout the process. This local team of advisers, along with a number of literary organizations in Iraq, assisted in promoting the program and selecting entries for publication. A selection of poems was chosen to be anthologized in an e-book and printed in a limited soft-cover edition. All work was translated into English, Arabic, and Kurdish, to further highlight the value of the diversity of languages and cultures within our society. The project culminated in a recognition ceremony honoring all the participants and celebrating the anthology's publication in 2016 .



5.3. Baghdad International Book Fair

UCCNOs 1,2,3,4,5,6

SDGs 4,10,11,17

The Baghdad International Book Fair has been running since 1978 and is counted as one of the largest book fairs in the Middle East. In 2019, on an area of more than 10000 square meters, more than 650 publishing houses from 23 different countries have participated and exhibited more than two million books. In 2018 , 600 publishing houses from 18 countries have participated. Baghdad City of Literature has partnered with the Fair and organized numerous public events during these two sessions including poetry readings, lectures, seminars, book signings, workshops, and music and theatre performances .

See video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJ4PJVXcuM4>



5.4. Snapshots from Cities of Literature during Reykjavik Reads Festival (Iceland)

An exhibition of words and images from eighteen Creative Cities of Literature-UNESCO, including Baghdad, during the Reykjavik Reads Festival. We supplied a poem and a photo of the city that were displayed in City Hall, Reykjavik for three weeks in October 2016 .

5.5. The Literary Tram Poetry Project, Ulyanovsk (Russia)

A project that promotes literature through public reading in public transport. Baghdad participated and our Executive Director, Sadek Mohammed, attended the event personally and read poetry in public places with the population of the City of Ulyanovsk .

5.6. Bus Poetry, Tartu (Estonia)

A selection of texts from 12 Cities of Literature, including Baghdad, printed on transparent window stickers in Tartu public buses. The cities chose the texts that were translated into Estonian and the poetry stickers were designed in Tartu UNESCO City of Literature

5.7. Poetic Encounters, Heidelberg (Germany) & Fabriano . (Italy)

A project initiated by Heidelberg City of Literature and Fabriano City of Crafts and Folk Art where 51 poets and 30 translators from 28 UNESCO Cities of Literature have come together to produce a World Poetry Book celebrating the linguistic diversity and the vital place of literature in world cultures through poetic expressions. All poems have been written or printed on beautiful handcrafted, folio-sized paper from Fabriano City of

Crafts and Folk Art. The paper had been sent from Fabriano via Heidelberg to all UNESCO Cities of Literature worldwide and, after being filled with literary works, via Heidelberg all the way back to Fabriano where the unique book has been bound. The book has been presented as a gift to the Mayors of Krakow and Katowice by the mayors of Heidelberg and Fabriano at a special presentation during the annual meeting of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network .

5.8. World Poetry Day at UNESCO Cities of Literature Granada (Spain)

A project initiated by Granada City of Literature to simultaneously celebrate World Poetry Day, March 21 , in 14 UNESCO Creative Cities of Literature (Baghdad, Barcelona, Krakow, Dublin, Edinburgh, Granada, Heidelberg, Iowa City, Ljubljana, Nottingham, Óbidos, Prague, Reykjavik, and Tartu). The participating cities joined together to organize public events marking the day simultaneously. Baghdad organized various events throughout the day in Mutanabi Street, the Baghdadi Cultural center and the Baghdad Cultural Houses, where scores of poets participated. The events were attended by hundreds from all classes of the population of the city and all events in Baghdad and the other Cities of Literature were disseminated via social media

See videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sr3G7riVPAU&t=249s>

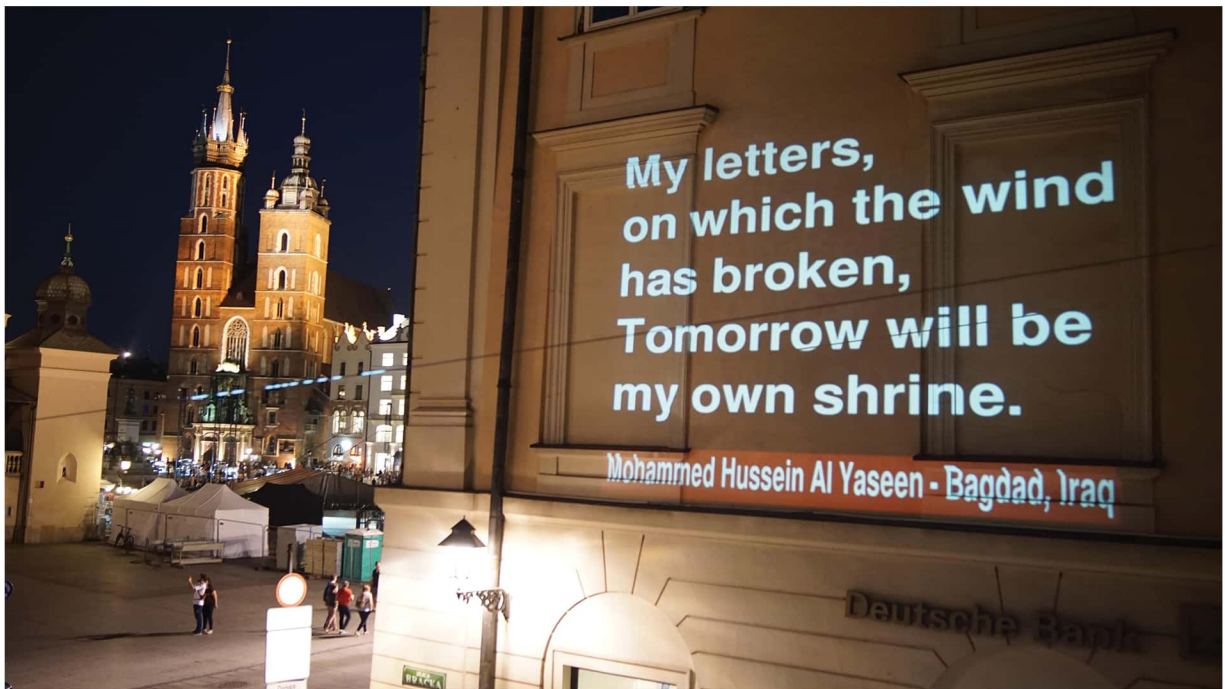
And: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnHM7YQypsE>

And: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nx1T26WYeLQ>



5.9. Project Multipoetry 2018 , Krakow (Poland).

A project initiated by Krakow City of Literature in which a poem by the prominent Iraqi poet, Mohammed Hussein Al Yasin, is presented in Krakow as part of the project. The poem was projected onto the sides of buildings in Krakow city center. Almost all cities of literature took part in this project in 2018 .



6. Proposed Action Plan for the Forthcoming Mid-term Period of Four Years

In the coming four years, we will continue a number of the projects and initiatives which we started in our first plan. Our choice to continue with these projects stems from the fact that they have great potentials in achieving the SDGs and the objectives of the UCCN. We also feel that in a city with a population of more than nine million inhabitants, we need to run our projects more than one round to reach as many people as possible. The projects that will continue in the coming four years include the following: The Literary Boat, the Cultural Supper, One-Hour Reading, and the Night of Mutanabi Festival, Baghdad International Flowers Festivals, Baghdad International Book Fair and the Creative Platforms .

6.1 . Presentation of a maximum of three initiatives programs or projects aimed at achieving the objectives of the Network locally

6.1.1 The Cultural Taxi

This project is designed to promote and energize the ,cultural and literary tourism in the city. In its first stage a writer is taken by the cultural taxi to visit and spotlight a cultural or a literary site in the city. A cultural or literary site may mean a cultural café, a city gate, a cultural center, an archeological site, a museum, an old city gate, an old city fortress, etc. The whole journey will be videoed and published on the city's YouTube channel. The final result of the project is to design an Uber-like touristic transportation service in the city with a platform that can be accessed via its website and mobile apps .

6.1.2. Baghdad Literary Museum

A literary museum will be established in the city of Baghdad that will chronicle the major achievements of the Baghdadi Writers, their literary documents, the major schools and movements and the major literary periods in the Baghdadi history of literature. The museum will also include a multimedia lecture room and a library. It is meant to reinforce the unifying collective identity of the city and acquaint the new generations with the literary history of the city .

6.1.3. The Secrets of Writing: A Radio Program

In collaboration with the city's local radio station Baghdad City of Literature will produce a radio program entitled "The Secrets of Writing." The program interviews the major writers of the city and seeks to unravel the intricacies of the writing process. The aim is to uncover to the population of the city, especially the young aspiring writers all the elements of the writing process: How do writers write? What is involved in the writing process? When do writers write? What secrets are involved in any writing process? The interviewees may also comment on texts sent by the audience and give advice to hone new skills .

6.2. Presentation of a maximum of three initiatives programs or projects aimed at achieving the objectives of the Network on an international level, particularly those involving other member cities in the Network

6.2.1. Baghdad Residency Program

Starting from 2020, Baghdad City of Literature will start its first residency program. International writers, literary translators, musicians, filmmakers, artists, photographers, and journalists, preferably from UNESCO Cities of

Literature, will be hosted in Baghdad and provided with a platform to showcase their works and talents interconnect with their peers in the city and get a firsthand experience with the life and the population of the city. They will also be given a working place to start a new work or finish an old one. The residency is intended to develop and promote literature and the other neighboring arts by providing support to mobility. It will cover all costs (tickets, accommodation, food transportation) and participants will be paid an honorary stipend at the end of its duration

6.2.2 The Literary Flying Carpet

This project seeks to host international writers from Cities of Literature and other cities via Skype to read their literary works in front of the Baghdadi audience. All works will be translated into Arabic in advance and handed out to the audience. Every reading will be followed by a Q&A session where writers will directly interact with the audience. Selected works will be published in a separate book after the end of the first season of the project

6.2.3 My Pen is My Voice-Arab Women Literature Festival .

Baghdad City of Literature, in collaboration with Elbarlament German Organization, will organize the First Arab Women Literature Festival. The Festival is meant to highlight all aspects of female writing in the Arab region. Female authors from Iraq, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya Lebanon, Jordan, Yemen, Egypt, and Syria will showcase their works and talents. Various public readings, seminars, discussion panels and creative writing workshops for young female writers will be organized and many Arab and international writers will take part too

6.3. Estimated annual budget for implementing the proposed action plan

This project seeks to host international writers from Cities of Literature and other cities via Skype to read their literary works in front of the Baghdadi audience. All works will be translated into Arabic in advance and handed out to the audience. Every reading will be followed by a Q&A session where writers will directly interact with the audience. Selected works will be published in a separate book after the end of the first season of the project.

No	Purpose	Amount
1	Permanent Programs & Events	\$ 20000
2	New Projects & Initiatives	\$ 50000
3	Office Managements & Platforms' Events	\$ 10000
4	Participation in UNESCO & Sub Network Meetings	\$ 10000
5	Promotion & Visibility	\$ 10000
6	Total	\$ 100000

6.4. Plan for communication and awareness

Since the designation of our city, the Baghdad UNESCO City of Literature office was well-aware of the importance of maintaining a strong relationship with the media and the media outlets. Hence, not a single event, we organized throughout the last four years, was not covered by newspapers or broadcasted, sometimes even live, on satellite TVs working in the city. Hundreds of articles covering our weekly platforms and other activities were published in the city's daily newspapers and scores of news pieces were broadcasted by Iraqi National satellite TV and various other TV channels working in the city. The public relations branch in Baghdad City of Literature was highly active also in promoting our office's activities on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. In the last four years, we have produced

more than 160 videos covering all our activities, projects, and programs. All videos are published on the city's YouTube channel. In the coming four years, we intend to reinforce this and, indeed, reinforce our partnership with the Iraqi Media Network to gain more visibility and reach all ranks of the population of the city. Our new plan includes a new agreement which we have finalized with the Iraqi Telecommunication and Post Company to create new stamps celebrating the designation of Baghdad as a UNESCO City of Literature and its projects, a campaign to use digital billboards in every township in the city to promote our projects and our various other activities, and newsletters to reach as many people as possible .

