ASUDA
For Combating Violence against Women

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

2025



Asuda for Combating Violence againts Women is a registered non-profit non-governmental organization registered by license no. 759 the KRG on 5 May 2001 and the Iraqi Government by license no. 276 on 13 October 2011.

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WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

As Asuda marks its 24th year, our commitment to empowering women and combating gender-based violence remains stronger than ever. Over the past few years, we have undergone significant restructuring and organizational development, enabling us to expand our reach and impact with the support of our dedicated donors and partners.

Today, Asuda operates across Iraq, including Sulaymaniyah, Ninewa, Duhok, Erbil, Halabja, Ranya, Thi-Qar, and Baghdad, extending beyond the Kurdistan Region. Our Listening Centers in Sulaymaniyah, Duhok, Halabja, Thi-Qar, and Ranya provide essential support to GBV survivors.

While Asuda's primary focus remains on combating violence against women and supporting GBV survivors, we have expanded our efforts to assist women in vulnerable communities, including refugees and IDPs. offering legal aid, social services, and emergency relief.



Women Empowerment project for IDPs in 2009.

Since 2014, Asuda has been at the forefront of supporting Yezidi women who survived ISIS captivity, providing financial, medical, legal, and social assistance while documenting their stories. This vital work reflects our unwavering dedication to justice and healing.



Asuda's staff field visit to Yazidi's camps in 2014.

Our journey has been one of resilience and dedication, providing vital support to survivors, advocating for stronger legal protections, and challenging societal norms. While the fight against gender-based violence remains challenging, our partnerships with civil society, government, and international allies have expanded our reach and impact. Every survivor's voice inspires us, reminding us that each victory brings us closer to a just society.

Looking ahead, Asuda is committed to enhancing survivor support services, amplifying advocacy efforts, and ensuring women's rights remain a priority in policy and society. We invite you to join us in creating a future where every woman lives free from fear and violence.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



KHANIM LATIF

Director

“ The pain pushed me to start reading about women’s rights and equality between men and women. I promised myself I have to do something ”

Khanim Latif has defied convention since she was 12, speaking out when her sister was forced into early marriage. As a liberal activist in Iraqi Kurdistan, Khanim risks her life to defend equality and provide a refuge for women escaping gender-based violence.

Based in Sulaymaniyah, Khanim leads Asuda, the first independent NGO in Iraq focused on violence against women. Despite nearly two decades of work, Khanim observes worsening conditions for women, with rising honor killings, increased domestic violence due to economic instability, and a growing refugee crisis exacerbating issues like child marriage and sex trafficking.

Over the years, Khanim and her team have assisted 10,000 women, providing legal, medical, psychological care, and livelihood support. They’ve also established a hotline for counseling and offered socio-psychological and legal support to displaced women and girls.

The work is extremely challenging, says Khanim. Every day she confronts violence in a society that largely condones it. Khanim not only cares for survivors and protects those at risk, she tries to change minds about the value of women and girls.

Her advocacy began when her sister was forced into marriage, and it remains personal.

Khanim refused to stay silent, taking her first steps toward what would become a lifelong fight for women's rights and gender equality. The pain pushed me to start reading about women’s rights and equality. I promised myself I have to do something," Khanim recalls.

Khanim studied law, political science, and social work, becoming an expert on gender-based violence. In 2002, she opened Kurdistan’s first independent women’s shelter. Despite facing media campaigns and threats to her safety, Khanim remains undeterred. "I’ve always been different," she says. "I’ve steeled myself against critics. I know what I’m doing is right, and the urgency of this work drives me".

OUR HISTORY

A PIONEER IN WOMEN'S PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY

Founded in 2000 and officially registered in 2001, Asuda has been at the forefront of combating violence against women in Iraq.

In 2002, Asuda opened **Iraq's first women's shelter**, providing protection, counseling, legal aid, and rehabilitation to survivors of domestic violence and honor-related killings. Expanding its reach, another shelter was established in Kalar (Garmiyan) in 2006.

Operating a shelter for survivors came with significant risks. Asuda's staff faced direct threats, including a gunshot attack from the family of a resident. Yet, despite these dangers, Asuda remained steadfast in its mission, refusing to be intimidated or deterred from supporting survivors.

To further support survivors, Asuda launched its telephone **hotline (110)** in 2008, offering counseling, referrals, and legal guidance to victims of violence.

For 14 years, Asuda operated these shelters until government-run facilities became available. After their closure, Asuda continued its mission by referring cases to governmental shelters, ensuring survivors still receive the support they need.

LISTENING CENTERS: EXPANDING SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS

After the closure of its shelters in 2014, Asuda established Listening Centers to continue providing essential services to survivors. The first center opened in Sulaymaniyah, followed by Erbil and Duhok. These centers are staffed with skilled case manager, psychologists, and lawyers, offering psychosocial support, legal advice, court representation, cash assistance, livelihood programs, and group sessions.

Due to their success and high impact—serving hundreds of survivors annually, Asuda has expanded its Listening Centers to Sulaymaniyah, Halabja, Ranya, Duhok, and Thi-Qar. In other areas, Asuda deploys mobile teams to ensure wide coverage and reach those in need across Iraq.



In front of Asuda's Office and the built in Shelter.



Bullet trace on Asuda's shelter window.

OUR VISION

"A society where women and girls live free from violence, discrimination, and fear, where their rights are protected, their voices are heard, and they have equal opportunities to thrive."



Asuda's vision is a world where women and girls enjoy dignity and equal rights and access to resources and opportunities, where all forms of discrimination and marginalisations have been eliminated, and where violence plays no part in their lives.

Core Values

- Empowerment
- Equality & Integrity
- No Space for Violence
- Accountability & Confidentiality

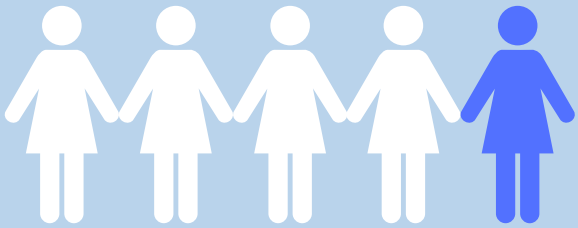
OUR TEAM

While Asuda provides equal employment opportunities to all qualified candidates, qualified female staff are given priority. Certain key positions, such as the Director, are designated exclusively for women to ensure strong female leadership. Below is Asuda staff breakdown by gender.

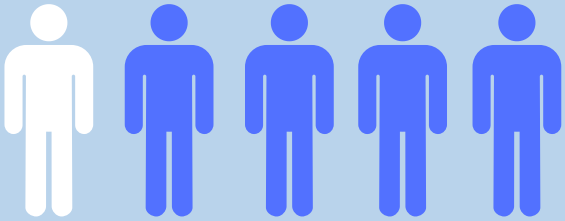


Asuda Team
35 Full-Time Staff
10 Part-Time Staff
20 Volunteers

89%



11%



ACHIEVEMENTS

1 First Women Shelter in Kurdistan, Iraq

In 2001, Asuda opened the first women shelter in Iraq and Kurdistan in 2002, based in Sulaymaniyah.

2 KRG's recognition to the role of Civil Society NGOs

As a result of the work of NGOs, including Asuda, the KRG started to take action to respond to women's rights issues.

3 Protection of hundreds of women in Kurdistan and Iraq & Awareness raising

During 24 years of work, Asuda protected hundreds of women and girls from honor killing and other forms of abuse.



4 Amendment of several relevant laws

Together with other Civil Society Organizations, Asuda was able to suggest the amendment of several relevant laws.

5 Increased mainstream media coverage of women issues

Media outlets are now providing extensive coverage on women's rights issues as a result of NGOs work

6 Expanding Asuda's Reach: Supporting Regional Partners & Returnees

Asuda extended its services beyond Iraq by supporting Syrian and Iranian partner NGOs in documenting Human Rights violations and, as part of its reintegration efforts, has facilitated job placement for 129 returning women and girls from Europe.

7 Establishing a Climate Change Network

In 2024, Asuda launched a "Women's Network for Sustainable Environmental Peace and Security" connecting multiple NGOs and individuals working at the intersection of climate change and women's rights.

COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH



Empower

Educate

Protect

OUR SERVICES & ACTIVITIES

I. EMPOWERMENT

We empower women to actively contribute to their community and society, participate in decision-making processes, and lead in social, political and economic transformation.

At Asuda, empowerment is about breaking barriers and creating opportunities.

We don't just support women, we equip them to **lead**, **advocate**, and **thrive**. Through vocational training, legal awareness, psychosocial support, and leadership programs, we help women gain confidence, financial stability, and control over their futures.



Women Empowerment Session, 2019.

Our economic empowerment programs provide women with entrepreneurial training, financial literacy, and small business support, enabling them to build sustainable livelihoods.

Beyond individual empowerment, Asuda plays a key role in women's political participation, being among the main actors in developing Iraq's First and Second National Action Plans on Women, Peace, and Security. By creating safe spaces, amplifying voices, and shaping policies, we ensure that women are not just survivors, but leaders and changemakers.



Open discussion on 1325 resolution, 2012.

I. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT & LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT

Asuda has long been committed to empowering women and girls by providing skills training and livelihood opportunities, with a particular focus on the reintegration of returnees from outside Iraq, especially from European countries. Through a Job Placement Program implemented in partnership with UN Women Iraq, Asuda has facilitated employment opportunities for **129 returnee women and girls**, helping them regain financial stability and social reintegration. At its Women's Training Center in Sulaymaniyah—now the Sulaymaniyah Listening Center—Asuda has equipped women with tailoring skills and resources, enabling them to generate income by selling handmade clothes individually or at exhibitions organized by Asuda.



Asuda's Training Center, Now (Sulaymaniyah Listening Center).



Asuda's Sewing Skill Learning Workshop.

Beyond training, Asuda has actively connected women to job opportunities by partnering with business owners to facilitate employment and on-the-job skills training. Additionally, since the early 2000s, Asuda has provided small grants to support women in launching their own projects, fostering economic independence and self-sufficiency.



Asuda's Staff Distributing Sewing Machines to Women in Low-Income Families to be Used as a Source of Income.



Supporting Microfinance Initiatives of Women and Girls in the Rural Areas in Sulaymaniyah, 2024.

II. AWARENESS

Through community engagement, advocacy campaigns, and education, we challenge harmful norms, ignite meaningful dialogue, and empower individuals to take a stand against violence. By working with **youth**, **community leaders**, and **policymakers**, we drive lasting change and promote a society where women's rights are respected and protected.

"Change begins with awareness. Awareness leads to action"



Awareness Campaign on GBV, Erbil 2008.



Awareness Campaign on GBV, IDP camps, Sulaymaniyah 2009.

In recent years, Asuda has placed a strong focus on technology-facilitated violence (digital violence), a growing threat in today's digital world. Recognizing that young individuals are at a critical age phase, we have specifically targeted youth with tailored awareness programs, reaching nearly **1,500** participants through interactive sessions and community workshops.



Engaging religious leaders workshop



Digital Violence seminar, Sulaymaniyah 2024.

II. LEGAL ADVOCACY, AWARENESS, & EMPOWERMENT

Asuda prioritizes women's legal rights, advocating for their protection and empowerment through seminars, workshops, and advocacy programs. By equipping women with the knowledge and skills to assert their rights and organizing panels and discussions, Asuda fosters dialogue and drives policy and community change, ensuring women's rights are upheld.

Advocacy

- **Advocating for Domestic Violence Law in KRG:** Asuda played a key role in drafting and raising awareness on the Domestic Violence Law in the KRG.
- **Supporting Iraq's Domestic Violence Legislation:** Beyond KRG, Asuda has supported efforts to draft Iraq's national Domestic Violence Law.
- **Advocating for Yazidi Survivor Law:** Asuda contributed to raising awareness and advocating for the better implementation of the Yazidi Survivor Law.
- **Small Arms Law & Legislative Amendments:** Recognizing the link between gun ownership and domestic violence, actively advocating for amendments to reduce access to firearms in homes.
- **Advocating for Employment Contracts:** Asuda advocates for fair and legal employment practices, emphasizing the importance of formal contracts to protect workers' rights

Awareness

- **Combatting FGM and Early & Forced Marriage:** Through awareness and education, Asuda campaigns against early and forced marriage, raising awareness about its legal and social consequences.
- **Activating the Monetary Fund:** Asuda has worked to activate and enhance the Monetary Fund, ensuring financial support for women in crisis situations.
- **Women's Financial Rights After Divorce:** Under the Personal Status Law, ensuring women understand their rights to alimony, inheritance, and economic security.
- **Law No. 6 of 2008 (Law of Preventing Misuse of Communication Devices):** Asuda actively raises awareness through seminars and social media campaigns about the law.

Empowerment

- **Legal Aid & Assistance:** One of Asuda's remarkable achievement is offering free of charge legal counseling and court representation to nearly 5000 women and girls through its listening centers and hotline.
- **Expanding Legal Access for Women in Rural Areas:** Asuda has always ensured that women in rural areas are aware of their rights and have access to legal aid.
- **Law Students Empowerment:** Since 2010, Asuda has been empowering law students by providing specialized training on women's rights under the Personal Status Law and Domestic Violence Law. Through mentorship, volunteer opportunities, and legal guidance, Asuda equips future legal professionals with the knowledge and skills.



Implementation of Yazidi Survivors Law Round table, 2024


Women's Access to Justice, Chamchamal 2011


Training Law Students, 2010.

II. INCLUSION: SUPPORTING MINORITIES AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Our commitment to empowering marginalized communities extends to minorities and persons with disabilities, ensuring they have access to vital information, resources, and support.



Women's Financial Right' after Divorce, Sulaymaniyah 2024.

To promote greater accessibility, Asuda has conducted seminars in sign language for individuals with hearing loss, ensuring that awareness on gender-based violence and legal rights reaches deaf and hard-of-hearing communities.



Distributing Sunflower Lanyard ribbons for hidden disabilities, 2021.



Open discussion with youth leaders on women's political participation from minority ethnic and religious community 2024

Additionally, Asuda has led seminars on minority rights, advocating for equal protection, representation, legal recognition of Iraq's diverse ethnic and religious groups, and the political participation of women from minority ethnic communities.

III. PROTECTION: EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO YAZIDI SURVIVORS

In 2014, the Yazidi community faced one of the most devastating atrocities in modern history when thousands of women and girls were kidnapped, enslaved, and subjected to brutal violence by ISIS. Many endured unimaginable abuse, forced labor, and sexual slavery, leaving deep scars on survivors and their communities.



Interviewing a survivor at camp.

Asuda was among the first NGOs to respond, recognizing the urgent need for intervention. From the early days of the crisis, Asuda provided emergency cash assistance, psychosocial support, and legal aid to survivors, ensuring they had access to essential services. Asuda's teams conducted visits to displacement camps, meeting directly with survivors to document their stories, assess their needs, and facilitate access to critical services.

Beyond immediate assistance, Asuda worked closely with legal experts and service providers to ensure that Yazidi survivors could access justice, helping them navigate legal processes for reparations, civil documentation, and survivor recognition programs. Through awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts, Asuda has also pushed for policy reforms and stronger legal protections for Yazidi women.



Asuda's Staff Distributing Emergency Cash Assistance to a Yazidi Survivor.

To date, Asuda has provided emergency cash assistance to more than 530 GBV and SGBV survivors, including **325 Yazidi women**, helping them regain a sense of security, stability, and dignity.

IV. BUILDING CAPACITY: TRAINING GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

As part of its commitment to strengthening institutional responses to gender-based violence (GBV), Asuda has played a key role in training government-related stakeholders and Human Rights defenders. In partnership with Syrians for Truth and Justice and the Ceasefire Center for Civilian Rights, Asuda has conducted capacity-building training for Syrian and Iranian Human Rights defenders, equipping them with the skills to advocate for survivors and enhance protection mechanisms. These programs ensure survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and legally sound interventions in GBV response and justice processes.



DCVAW Staff Capacity Building, 2013.



DCVAW Staff Capacity Building, 2024.

Targeted Stakeholders & Training Focus

1 Directorate of Combating Violence Against Women (DCVAW)

- Training on case management, survivor-centered approaches, and risk mitigation.
- Strengthening documentation and data collection practices for improved service delivery.
- Guidance on legal frameworks related to domestic violence and women's protection.

2 Security Forces & Law Enforcement

- Awareness sessions on gender-sensitive policing and proper intervention methods in GBV cases.
- Training on Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse (SHEA) to prevent misconduct within law enforcement agencies.
- Best practices in handling survivors' cases with confidentiality, dignity, and non-discrimination.

3 Women's Shelters & Safe Houses

- Training on secondary trauma and psychosocial support to help staff manage emotional stress while working with survivors.
- Risk mitigation and security measures to enhance protection in shelters.
- Strengthening referral mechanisms to ensure survivors receive holistic and effective support.

V. MONITORING & RESEARCH

"At Asuda, research is more than data collection, it is a tool for change. By documenting women's realities, we ensure that policies and programs are shaped by real experiences, not assumptions."



Asuda's staff Research Data Collection, Baziyan 2017.

At Asuda, monitoring and research are essential tools in the fight against gender-based violence (GBV) and inequality. Effective monitoring allows us to assess the impact of programs, identify gaps, and ensure services truly meet the needs of survivors and vulnerable communities.

Research, on the other hand, is our compass—it guides us through the complex realities women face, shaping policies and interventions that don't just scratch the surface but create transformative, lasting change.

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by women and girls Asuda has delved deep into the heart of these communities to uncover the untold stories.

Our research sheds light on critical issues like employment status, access to legal rights, economic independence, and the prevalence of GBV in underserved communities.

We've explored the painful realities of forced and early marriages, the silent epidemic of workplace harassment, the hidden scars of domestic violence, the rising threat of digital violence, and the cultural barriers that keep women from speaking out.

By collecting first-hand data directly from rural women, we ensure their voices are not just heard but amplified—pushing policies and programs to be rooted in real experiences, not just assumptions.

VI. NETWORK ESTABLISHMENT

Women's Network for Sustainable Environmental Security

The escalating impact of climate change disproportionately affects women and youth, deepening gender and economic inequalities.
Recognizing the urgent need for action, Khanim Latif, Asuda's Director, in 2024 established and leads the Women's Network for Sustainable Environmental Security to address these challenges.

The Women's Network for Sustainable Environmental Security works to amplify their voices, enhance participation in sustainable development, and equip them with the skills and knowledge to adapt to environmental challenges. Through awareness, capacity-building, and collective action, we can drive inclusive, effective climate solutions while ensuring shared responsibility among all stakeholders.



A consultative meeting on government-civil society cooperation and climate change's impact on women and families.

The network is composed of relevant governmental institutions (both central and regional), civil society organizations, journalists and media institutions, environmental activists, international organizations, and universities and research centers. By bringing together expertise from various sectors, the network fosters collaboration, knowledge exchange, and collective action to drive impactful and sustainable environmental initiatives.

VII. RECOGNITION OF GLOBAL & SOCIAL EVENTS

Asuda has always been committed to amplifying women's voices by actively recognizing and participating in key international and social events that advocate for women's rights and gender equality.

Asuda was among the first NGOs to observe the 16 Days of Activism, launching groundbreaking campaigns called **"White Ribbons"** to raise awareness and drive action against GBV.



Asuda's White Ribbon Campgain for 16 Days of Activism, 2012.



8th March Event, 2013.

Beyond these major events, Asuda also recognizes other global observances and social movements focused on women's rights, justice, and protection. This includes efforts to combat honor killings, forced and early marriage, digital violence, and economic marginalization. Through collaborations with civil society, government institutions, and international organizations, Asuda continues to drive meaningful change by ensuring that women's rights remain a priority in policy and social discourse.



16 Days of Activism Campgain, 2015.



Youth Education Initiative via Brochures, Duhok, 2024.

BOARD OF **TRUSTEES**



Ms. Rezan Yaseen
Chairperson of Board

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Financial Expert at the Finance Ministry, Women's Rights Activist, Secretary of Deaf and Mute Organization. She has been on Asuda's baord since 2005.



Ms. Narmin Osman
Board member

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Former Minister of Women Affairs, Education and Environment, Women's Rights Activist and a founding member of Asuda. She has been
on Asuda's Baord since its establishment. She is a political activist and member of the PUK's Leader-ship Committee.



Ms. Dilshada Ismail Hassan
Board Member

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Consultant at the Ministry of Finance, member of Deaf and Mute Organization. She has been in Asuda board since 2010. An active women rights activist and conributes to most of women's rights activities and advocacy work.

Testimonials About Our Services

A Case from the Philipins

I came to Kurdistan to work because I needed money to support my family. After a year of working in Kurdistan, I was suffering from abuse and disrespect. Asuda protected me and helped me go back home.

A Woman from Tuzkhurmatu

“My only fault was that I loved a man and wanted to get married with him, but my father did not allowed me to get married and killed my husband a few months later”. I found nowhere to go, I ended up at Asuda where I delivered my baby”

A girl from Baghdad

“When I arrived Asuda shelter, I did not know how to write my name, after staying about 6 months at Asuda shelter,
I was so happy to learn how to write my name and many more words, thanks to Asuda’s help in teaching me how to read and write”

OUR PARTNERS

VITAL VOICES
GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

The U.S. Department of State - Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

UN WOMEN
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

WILPF
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

HEARTLAND ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL

CEASEFIRE
centre for civilian rights

Equality Now
A just world for women and girls.

FREE YEZIDI FOUNDATION

minority rights group international

MADRE

UNITED NATIONS TRUST FUND TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

OUR PATH FORWARD

REINTEGRATION. EMPOWERMENT. DEVELOPMENT

Through decades of dedicated work in leadership development, psychosocial recovery, livelihood support and legal advocacy, Asuda has become a cornerstone of empowerment for women and girls in Iraq.

But our journey doesn't stop here.

We are committed to building a society where reintegration is dignified, where survivors reclaim their lives with strength, skills, and opportunity. In the years ahead, through strategic partnerships, bold advocacy for legal reform, and a growing movement of allies across Iraq and the region, Asuda is advancing human development at its core—where justice is not a distant hope, but a shared reality.



ASUDA
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