



USAID
من الشعب الأمريكي

LEGISLATIVE STRENGTHENING PROGRAM

برنامج دعم وتطوير البرلمان بروگرامي بيشنگيري اوبه ره بيدان بهرله مان

Legislative Strengthening Program

REPORT ON PHYSICAL SITE ASSESSMENT OF NEWLY IDENTIFIED LOCATION

October 2010

Contract No. 263-I-03-06-00015-00 (REDI Task Order No. 3)

October 2010

This document was produced for review by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). It was prepared by AECOM. The authors' views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Legislative Strengthening Program

Contract No: 263-I-03-06-00015-00

REDI Task Order No. 3

USAID/Iraq SO10: Capacity of National Government Institutions Improved

Program Area: Good Governance

Program Element: GJD 2.1- Legislative Function and Process

REPORT ON PHYSICAL SITE ASSESSMENT OF NEWLY IDENTIFIED LOCATION

October 2010

Submitted by:

AECOM

2101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 700

Arlington, VA 22201, USA

T: +1.703.528.7444

www.aecom.com

In association with:

Management Systems International

DISCLAIMER

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) or the United States Government.

REPORT ON PHYSICAL SITE ASSESSMENT OF NEWLY IDENTIFIED LOCATION

I. Background

The Legislative Strengthening Program (LSP), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by AECOM, is promoting a new era of political stability in Iraq. LSP provides a range of support to strengthen Iraq's parliament, the Council of Representatives (COR). LSP is guiding the COR along a more sustainable democratic path, promoting greater transparency and accountability.

LSP's team of international and local specialists are building the capacity of the members and staff of parliament to debate laws in a formal constructive environment, form and run parliamentary committees, analyze and properly consider proposed legislation, improve the functioning of the COR's Presidency Council, improve the ability of parliament to oversee the executive branch, review and analyze the national budget, and bring the national government closer to constituents in the provinces.

The idea of a parliamentary development center was conceptualized by the former Speaker, who envisioned that such a center would strengthen democratic institution building and generate awareness about parliamentary functions and good governance. The former Speaker authorized the COR's Members Affairs and Parliamentary Development Committee to initiate the process of establishing the Iraq Center for Parliamentary Development (ICPD) with the cooperation of LSP. The ICPD aims to offer a sustainable platform to enhance the understanding of parliamentary democracy, develop capacity of the COR by establishing a variety of training for MPs and parliamentary staff, organize seminars and workshops, and facilitate the COR's representation at international parliamentary bodies.

The Presidency Council of the COR held a meeting on October 11, 2009 at which it made a decision to allocate a portion of the former National Parliament building, belonging to the COR, for use by the ICPD. This decision of the Presidency Council was formally conveyed to LSP by the Secretary General in a letter dated December 10, 2009. LSP conducted a site assessment on the suitability of the building for use by the ICPD.

II. Findings of Assessment

The former National Assembly Building is located in the Al Alawi district of Baghdad. The Head of Maintenance Department of the COR informed LSP that it was designed and constructed in the 1980's to house the Parliament and the Secretariat. The Secretary General noted to LSP that the building is a place of historic significance and the influence of the unique architecture of the region is depicted in its structure. It is an elegant, ceremonially configured building suited for high level activities. At the fall of the former regime, the building was looted and damaged. The damage was subsequently worsened by a bombing in an adjacent Justice Ministry facility. The building was renovated by Al Rashid Company under the direction of the Ministry of Housing and Construction. The Ministry of Justice occupies a portion of the building, and the Human Rights Commission temporarily occupied a section on the ground floor.

External

The building is located in an area of about 5000 square meters. The building is a two-story structure with perimeter brise-soleil arcades on both floors and a partial basement. It is constructed principally of concrete and masonry. It is within a compound



Exterior view of Southwestern (Mecca-facing) facade

also occupied by the Ministry of Justice and some Iraqi Army units. The compound is encircled by T-walls and has secure entrance areas. The building is sited approximately 80 meters from the principal street frontage. The site is developed with street paving, curbs, gutters and sidewalk. Some landscaping of green spaces is provided. Much of the open land of the site is occupied by secured car parking and garage areas. Principal elements of the site that will require upgrading are the access to the building, landscaping and site identification.



Exterior view of Northwestern facade



Typical Exterior Arcade

The exterior of the building is in good condition. The overall state of the building was restored by the renovation. The exterior is sound and weather tight. Walls, doors and windows appear complete and with few exceptions properly sealed. While it was not possible to survey the roof, on the interior of the building the only evidence of leaks is in the area of the mid-building expansion joint. The source of the leak should be identified and repaired. All window caulking and sealing should be inspected and where needed provided. The window glazing does not appear to have an applied blast-film.

Internal

The interior of the building was also well restored. The ground floor of the building is accessed from the ceremonial entrance at one end. It leads into a large reception foyer providing access to the main hall where plenary sessions were held, Hammurabi Hall, to an overlooking portion of the ground floor via a monumental stair and to the back half of the building via two secured entrances at its ends. The back half of the building is divided into a number of offices, meeting rooms and support spaces. The ground floor is not allocated for use by ICPD with the following exceptions:

1. Use of Hammurabi Hall and its support spaces on a scheduled and shared basis and
2. Access from the ground floor to the first floor.

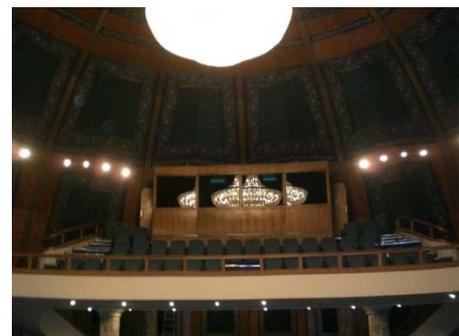


View of Hammurabi Hall exterior from mezzanine

Hammurabi Hall is a 325-person two story space located on the ground floor of the building. This space, roughly 375 square meters and covered with a circular dome, is appointed with wood and fabric



Interior Hammurabi Hall



Hammurabi Hall Mezzanine

walls, furnished with carpeting, fixed seating, lights, air conditioning, and relatively current audio-visual equipment. The floor slopes to a two-tiered dais to accommodate presiding officers. A rear balcony for guests also contains a control room and interpretation booths. The room is of very high quality and by both its style and formality rises to the level of being considered as a national treasure.

Access to the first floor is either through the monumental stair located in the reception foyer or from the office stair located centrally in the building. During recent renovations of the building, the first floor anteroom between the monumental stair and the office space was converted into an air conditioning equipment room for Hammurabi Hall. As a result, access to the rest of the first floor can only be achieved by exiting the floor into the perimeter arcade or from the stair connecting the office spaces of the two floors to each other. This is not particularly convenient for ICPD use.



Central staircase from Ground Floor

The first floor of the building is the area intended for use by the

ICPD. This area is 3,500 square meters. It currently includes eighteen rooms of varying sizes, four large meeting halls, and space for support functions. The four halls consist of:

1. Al Shuhda'a Hall: Contains 172 chairs for attendees and 21 chairs for the Committee Members
2. The Blue Hall: Contains 74 chairs for attendees and 14 chairs for the Committee Members
3. The Green Hall: Contains 41 chairs for attendees and 11 chairs for the Committee Members
4. Al Abassia Hall: Contains 100 chairs for attendees and 14 chairs for the Committee Members



Al Shuhda'a Hall

The first floor, however, lacks a cafeteria. This leaves the ICPD without a space for employees and trainees to take breaks during the working day. It may be possible to make use of space on the ground floor for this purpose.

The major observable deficiency is in the various restrooms. In all cases, they will need a complete renovation to provide, at a minimum, all new plumbing fixtures as many are broken or missing. Typically, providing all new fixtures also implies replacing a number of plumbing lines and results in the need to replace much of the finished tile work as well. The quantities of fixtures are somewhat modest for the scale of the building. While they will prove adequate for the initial occupancy, when placed fully into service, especially as relates to substantial use of Hammurabi Hall, it will become necessary to add additional washrooms for optimal use of the building.

The various offices, meeting rooms and committee rooms of the first floor are in good condition with the exception of a few points of access to mechanical and electrical systems that need to be properly sealed or to have access panels provided. In general, both floors are in need of a complete cleaning and a general repainting to refresh the building.

Systems

Most rooms appeared to have at least some lighting and electrical distribution provided. There was no apparent communication or IT distribution system.

New air conditioners were installed during the renovation, but may not be sufficient in all locations. An upgrade will certainly be required for the IT room and possibly for the training rooms.

Currently the electrical supply is backed up by a generator installed in the other parts of the building occupied the Ministry of Justice. Since that back up is out of the control of the ICPD it would be prudent to add an additional generator configured to supply and support the areas occupied by ICPD.

Handicap Access

The building is not particularly accessible to individuals with mobility challenges. Access to the ground floor is limited by steps and curbs, and access to the first floor is only available by way of staircases. It would be worth considering providing an elevator in the future for access from the ground floor to the first floor. The sidewalk apron adjacent to the ceremonial entrance could be modified to create an access ramp. It may also be of value to consider renovating at least one washroom per floor for easier access and movement of disabled individuals.

III. Conclusions

The site selected for the ICPD, the former National Assembly building, is suitable for the intended use. With some minor upgrades, it would be ready to be occupied in a relatively short period of time. With some more substantial upgrades, use could be optimized to better facilitate the mission of the ICPD. Major upgrades are unnecessary at this time.