



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID IRAQ ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM PROJECT

MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT, AUGUST 2014

SEPTEMBER 2, 2014

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Management Systems International.

USAID IRAQ ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM PROJECT

MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT, AUGUST 2014



Management Systems International

Corporate Offices

200 12th Street, South

Arlington, VA 22202 USA

Tel: + 1 703 979 7100

Contracted under AID-267-C-11-0005 Iraq Administrative Reform Project

Please do not circulate this report without due consideration of security issues in Iraq.

DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

CONTENTS

- Acronyms 1**
- Summary 2**
- Initiatives 4**
 - 1.1 Regulatory Reform 4
 - 1.2 Public Policy Reform Initiative 4
 - 1.3 Public Procurement Reform Initiative 6
 - 1.4 Project Management Reform Initiative 8
 - 1.5 One-Stop-Shop Initiative 9
 - 1.6 Center of Excellence Initiative 10
 - 1.7 Iraq Development Management System Initiative 10
- Project Administration 11**

ACRONYMS

COMSEC	Council of Ministers Secretariat
ICEG	Iraq Center for Excellence in Government
ISRAR	Iraq Solutions for Regulatory and Administrative Reform
PMI	Project Management Institute
PMP	Project Management Professional
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

SUMMARY

USAID-*Tarabot* progresses steadily with program activities despite the volatile political and security situation in Iraq. While discussions to form a new Iraqi government are underway, *Tarabot* continues to focus its efforts on the transfer and anchoring of systems and knowledge within its partnering entities.

In the beginning of August, the Iraq Solution for Regulatory and Administrative Reform (ISRAR) met with the Prime Minister's Advisory Council to discuss the details of their recently signed cost share agreement. All procedures and necessary documentation required to begin moving cost share funds have been finalized, and the transfer of these funds from the Government of Iraq to USAID-*Tarabot* will represent a significant step toward ownership of the ISRAR initiative by the Iraqi government.

Six pilot initiatives have been developed for the implementation of the Iraqi Industrial Strategy by the Ministry of Industry and Minerals with the support of USAID-*Tarabot*. These initiatives aim to create a better business-enabling environment and include support for public-private dialogues, training young entrepreneurs, and producing a market intervention guide for the government with the goal of producing results in a short period of time and to enable lessons learned. Additionally, *Tarabot* has been working steadily with the Ministries of Migration and Displaced, Human Rights, Environment, and Labor and Social Affairs to design implementation plans for their respective public policies, and to set targets, milestones, and performance indicators to gauge progress.

The Governorate of Babil awarded a US \$10 million dollar contract to an American consulting firm, Mantid International LLC, for the development of the governorate's five-year investment strategy and the implementation of their 2014 capital investment plan after months of technical support from USAID-*Tarabot*. *Tarabot* provided support in the development of a request for proposals, its announcement on dgMarket, the preparation of a short list, and guiding the bid analysis process. *Tarabot* continues to provide follow up and technical assistance in contract implementation for the governorate. The successful completion of the entire procurement process and final issuance of a contract by the governorate illustrates its commitment to the procurement reforms promoted by *Tarabot* and improved services to citizens.

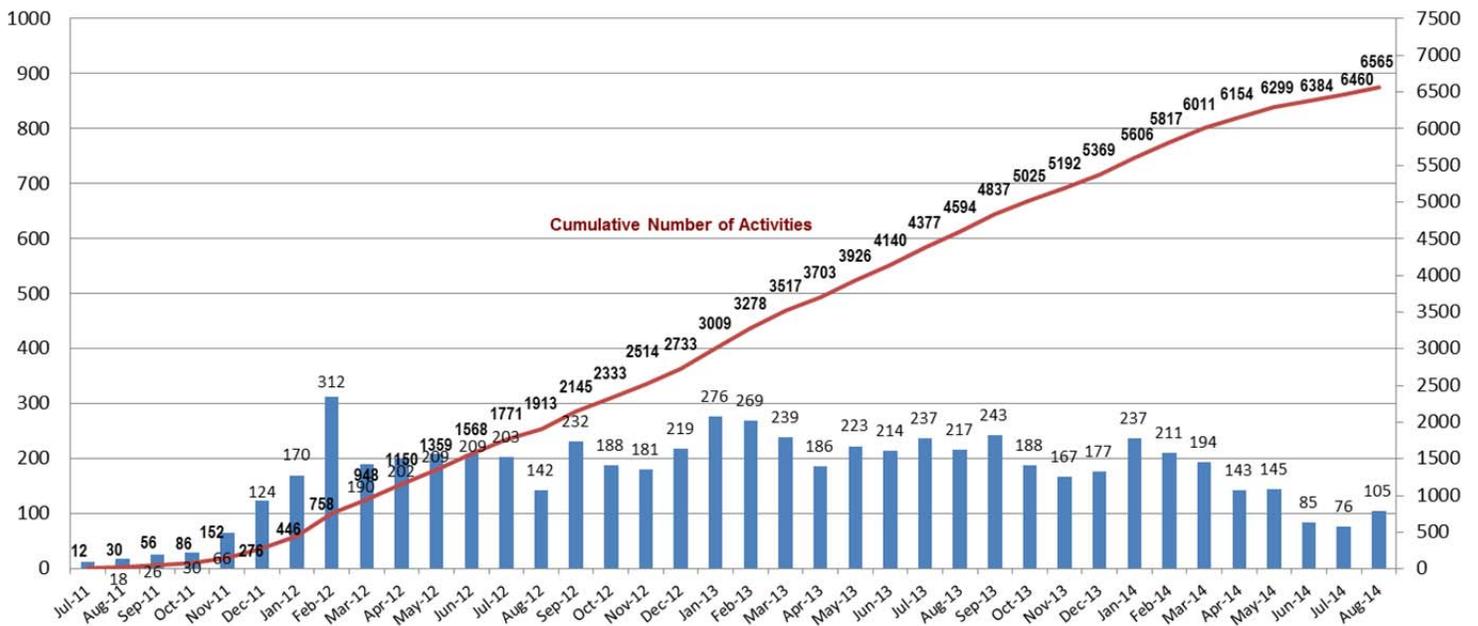
Additionally, *Tarabot* worked closely with the Ministry of Planning this month to implement the Ministry's agreed upon program of workshops regarding standard bidding documents. As part of this program, workshops were held for the Ministries of Interior, Defense, Construction and Housing, and Education, as well as the Governorates of Babil and Karbala. On-the-job trainings and workshops are key elements of *Tarabot*'s support to the Ministry of Planning to build national capacity in procurement. Conducted jointly with Ministry of Planning staff, these activities also provide important opportunities for government staff to garner knowledge and experience regarding procurement and training, which will be crucial to sustaining *Tarabot*'s work in procurement reform.

Tarabot is working in partnership with the Kurdistan Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to establish a One-Stop-Shop in Dahuk, which will offer Social Safety Net services. Early this month, *Tarabot* senior

management held a meeting with the contractor for the renovation of the center and to discuss implementation and the terms of the contract; soon thereafter, work commenced under the supervision of *Tarabot* to ensure necessary

Events: USAID-*Tarabot* engaged in a variety of activities in August. Despite the ongoing security situation, much of *Tarabot*'s technical work continued as planned. The following accounts for the number and types of events delivered in August.

- **Total Events:** USAID-*Tarabot* teams held **105** events (workshops and formal meetings) during August.
- **Locations:** **50** of these events were held in Baghdad, while **55** events were delivered on location in **13** provinces.
- **Type of Event:** **105** events in August were formal assessment meetings, action planning, or implementation workshops.
- **Institutions:** **73** of these events were with **17** ministries and **32** events supported governors' offices.
- **Tarabot Components:** **11** events were carried out by the National Policy Management component, **90** events were carried out by the Administrative Decentralization component, and **4** events were held in the Kurdistan Regional Government.



INITIATIVES

I.1 Regulatory Reform

In the beginning of August, the Iraq Solutions for Regulatory and Administrative Reform (ISRAR) met with the Prime Minister's Advisory Council to discuss the details of their recently signed cost share agreement with MSI. All procedures and necessary documentation required to begin moving cost share funds have been finalized, and the transfer of these funds from the Government of Iraq to USAID-*Tarabot* will represent a significant step toward ownership of the ISRAR initiative by the Iraqi government. Additionally, ISRAR met with the Ministry of Transportation to discuss the details of its upcoming regulatory reform package. The ministry and *Tarabot* reviewed various pieces of legislation and cooperated to create joint recommendations. Midway through the month, ISRAR advisors held meetings with the Ministries of Planning, Industry and Minerals, Transportation, and Culture, as well as the Securities Commission, to discuss the status of the review process and to address outstanding issues.

USAID-*Tarabot* is taking steps to strengthen the capacity of the ISRAR team to undertake an effective stakeholder communications and advocacy strategy. In addition to the political commitment and technical capacity of the government, constituency support is a key element in sustaining reforms. To this end, a series of workshops and mentoring sessions will be held with ISRAR team members to devise an outreach and advocacy strategy. *Tarabot* conducted a workshop with ISRAR team members this month to formulate advocacy objectives and to identify primary and secondary stakeholder audiences. Furthermore, a stakeholder analysis was conducted to assess targeted audiences' interests in and attitudes toward reform.

In the final week of August, ISRAR received feedback from the Al Shura Council regarding *Tarabot's* recommendations on the following issues: 1) import-export reform; 2) the ISRAR law, which aims to cement ISRAR as a permanent entity within the Government of Iraq; 3) the construction nidham; and 4) the One-Stop-Shop for company registrations. ISRAR is reviewing the feedback and will formulate a response to address the council's recommendations. ISRAR also met with Ministry of Health to discuss legislation for its upcoming regulatory reform package.

Throughout August the ISRAR Central Unit continued with its regulatory reviews. At the end of August, the number of reviews completed by the Central Unit is 1,163 while the ministries have completed a total of 890 reviews. This brings the total number of reviews uploaded to the e-Guillotine system to 2,053.

I.2 Public Policy Reform Initiative

Council of Ministers' Secretariat

The Public Policy Unit of the Council of Ministers' Secretariat (COMSEC) drafted a brief guide on policy development for ministry policy liaison officers this month, which is currently under review by USAID-*Tarabot*. The guide will be instrumental in coordinating the policy submission process when translating the new government's program into a policy and strategy framework. *Tarabot* discussed working

materials with the Public Policy Unit pertaining to upcoming activities aimed at redesigning COMESEC's policy coordination processes, and producing a new set of procedures. Workshops on this subject are scheduled to commence next month. Also, USAID-*Tarabot* and the Public Policy Unit discussed the customer requirements for creating an electronic public policy database. Functional and design features of the system were agreed upon, with an eye toward producing the demo version of the database in September.

Economic Ministries

The Industrial Policy and Reform Center of the Ministry of Industry and Minerals developed six pilot initiatives to launch the implementation of the Iraqi Industrial Strategy. The pilots will serve to demonstrate results in a relatively short period of time, enable lessons learned, and serve as models for replication. The pilots aim to produce the government's market interventions guide; establish a private-public policy dialogue; train young entrepreneurs; establish a business support center and business incubator; and run an innovative small grants scheme for micro-, small- and medium- sized enterprises. Along with these activities, policy officers from the ministry delivered presentations on the implementation of the Industrial Strategy to ministry officials.

The Public Policy Unit of the Ministry of Electricity administered a questionnaire for the evaluation of current regulatory functions in Iraq's electricity sector. Senior ministry officials participated in the survey, and its findings will allow for informed recommendations for ministry leadership on the establishment of a regulatory unit—a step envisaged in the Iraqi Integrated National Energy Strategy.

The Ministry of Trade is working to produce an operational plan for establishing the Iraqi integrated trade management information system. A working group comprised of representatives from the ministry's policy office, trade information center, and IT unit have developed chapters on the system's management and information technology. The ministry has established contacts with local service providers to outsource certain parts of this work. Additionally, with USAID-*Tarabot*'s assistance, the Ministry of Trade launched activities this month that aim to assess the knowledge and skills of ministry staff in trade policy, and the eventual development of a multi-year capacity building plan. A working group tasked with the conduct of the training needs assessment has agreed on an action plan, and discussed the first draft of the questionnaire with *Tarabot*.

Social Ministries

The Ministry of Migration and Displaced has set up a working group to produce a coordination mechanism for the implementation of its "Brain Gain" policy as a result of multiple meetings between USAID-*Tarabot* and senior government officials. The policy aims to create conditions for the hiring of academics from the Iraqi Diaspora to fill knowledge gaps in Iraq, and to enhance teaching standards in universities. The Assistant Director General for Migration Affairs, Mr. Mohammed Hantook, will chair the group. With USAID-*Tarabot*'s assistance, the Ministry plans to produce a proposal to establish a coordination committee, which would bring together relevant governmental entities and design a communications plan to reach out to the target audiences.

The Public Policy Department of the Ministry of Environment began devising an implementation plan this month for its public policies – "Depletion of Ozone Layer Gases" and "Pollution of the Tigris River in

Baghdad Province.” They have agreed with USAID-*Tarabot* on steps to take and analytical tools to use. Thus far, the ministry’s policy experts have set implementation targets and milestones, and have assigned key performance indicators to measure progress towards policy objectives.

The Public Policy Unit of the Ministry of Human Rights worked on the implementation plan for its “Domestic Violence” policy. Policy unit members have considered various policy instruments such as enacting new legislation, strengthening law enforcement, and raising awareness and advocacy. To this end, unit members have reviewed the measures recommended by the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in its 2014 report on Iraq. The ministry’s policy experts conducted an analysis of the ministry’s SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) regarding the policy issue to set realistic targets.

The Public Policy Unit of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs devised a plan of activities this month for the design of an implementation plan for its “Homeless Orphans” policy. Policy instruments such as a foster care system, civil society managed and government supported orphanages, and advocacy and awareness raising campaigns were considered. With USAID-*Tarabot*’s guidance, the ministry’s policy unit conducted an analysis of the ministry’s SWOT vis-à-vis proposed policy measures. An implementation target and milestones were set, and performance indicators assigned to gauge progress.

I.3 Public Procurement Reform Initiative

USAID-*Tarabot* continued to support the establishment of fair and transparent procurement systems that will lead to a more conducive environment for international businesses and better services for the Iraqi people. In pursuit of this effort, *Tarabot* promoted the adoption of international standards in the opening and evaluation of bids with a range of Government of Iraq partners, and the use of standard bidding documents in the procurement process.

Tarabot conducted a five-day standard bidding documents workshop for Ministry of Planning staff in response to a last minute request from the Director General of the Office of Government Public Contracts and Policy. The workshop was attended by over 60 staff members from the Ministry of Planning, including the Director General. Per request from the Director General, the workshops centered on the following topics: 1) the procurement manual for the implementation of government contracts in Iraq, developed by the World Bank; 2) prequalification documents for the procurement of works for contractors; 3) standard bidding documents for the design, supply, and installation of electromechanical works; 4) standard bidding documents for the procurement of health sector goods, including pharmaceuticals, supplies, and medical equipment; 5) and standard bidding documents for text book publications.

Additionally, in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning, *Tarabot* continued to implement the standard bidding documents training program agreed upon with the ministry. As part of this program, workshops were held for the Ministries of Interior, Defense, Construction and Housing, Education, Culture, and Higher Education, as well as the Governorates of Babil, Wasit, and Karbala.

On-the-job technical training and support was completed for the Governorates of Maysan and Wasit to support them in the application of standard bidding documents. These trainings and workshops were

jointly conducted by *Tarabot* advisors and ministry staff to support the building of staff capacity in the Ministry of Planning, and comprise the main elements of *Tarabot*'s support to the Ministry of Planning in the building of national procurement capacity. These activities were important opportunities for ministry staff to garner knowledge about procurement and training, which are critical elements of their ability to carrying on *Tarabot*'s work in procurement reform.

Beyond trainings and workshops planned and conducted with the Ministry of Planning, *Tarabot* engaged with a range of ministries on the use of standard bidding documents. *Tarabot* completed a workshop for the Ministry of Health on standard bidding documents issued by the Ministry of Planning for works, goods, prequalification, and consultant and non-consultant services. A workshop was held for the Ministry of Oil's Baghdad Oil Products Distribution Company by *Tarabot*'s service center and procurement teams to outline the procurement process for the selection of consultants for its One-Stop-Shop. In Basrah, a workshop was conducted on standard bidding documents for the procurement of works, goods, and consulting services. For the Governorate of Babil, a workshop was held on developing terms of reference and request for proposals, evaluating consultants, and procurement planning. In Maysan, *Tarabot* provided a workshop on the preparation of standard bidding documents for the procurement of works, goods, and consulting services contracts.

Tarabot continued to work with the Ministry of Trade to support the adoption of a standard request for proposals for the selection of employment and consulting services with the objective of building the ministry's capacity to select local firms to develop designs for concrete wheat silos with a holding capacity of 80,000 tons. Following a meeting with *Tarabot* in June, the ministry reviewed and approved the completed terms of reference. This month, *Tarabot* met with the ministry to explain next steps including the announcement of the tender on dgMarket, short-listing and assessing local firms, and further developing requests for proposals.

Tarabot met with the Governors of Maysan and Wasit to discuss procurement achievements, the selection of a project for the application of standard bidding documents, and to develop a sustainability plan.

The Governorate of Babil recently awarded a US\$10 million contract to Mantid International, LLC for the implementation of their 2014 investment plan and the development of a five-year investment strategy, reflecting the support of USAID-*Tarabot*. *Tarabot* provided technical support in developing a request for proposal, announcing the tender on dgMarket, preparing a short list, and guiding the governorate through the bid analysis process. *Tarabot* followed up its assistance with a meeting with the Contracting Director and Bid Analysis Committee to provide support on contract implementation.

The Ministry of Health's State Company for Pharmaceutical Marketing and Medical Appliances, also known as "Kimadiya," subscribed to dgMarket for the posting of its tenders as a result of the advocacy and training of *Tarabot*. This allows for more transparency and competition in bidding, with easy access by a broad range of potential international suppliers. *Tarabot* provided technical assistance to the ministry to explain how to publish, modify, and adjust tenders on the portal.

The Ministry of Health with the support of *Tarabot* also completed its 2014 procurement plan and officially submitted it to the Ministry of Planning. Similarly, *Tarabot* worked with the Governorate of

Najaf's reconstruction commission to assist in the preparation of their 2014 procurement plan. A draft is now ready and will be submitted to the Ministry of Planning.

I.4 Project Management Reform Initiative

Throughout Iraq government engineers are capitalizing on the capacity building programs of USAID-*Tarabot* and applying Project Management Institute (PMI) techniques on major capital investment projects. Engineers are taking steps to ensure projects are properly scoped and scheduled, and costs realistically estimated through the use of internationally-recognized tools and techniques with the ultimate goal of institutionalizing Project Management Institute (PMI) processes within *Tarabot's* partner entities. The selection of over 100 projects for the application of PMI processes across 11 ministries and 14 governorate offices has set a strong precedent for their institutionalization.

As part of its work to anchor project management techniques, *Tarabot* conducted two site visits to a neighborhood rehabilitation project in District 313 of Diyala province. During the first visit, *Tarabot* consulted with the project team on the use of earned value management to redraft the project schedule to reflect actual work progress and deviation. On the second site visit, *Tarabot* consulted with the project team on the adoption of a Project Management Institute (PMI) verification list form. The project in Diyala will improve water, electricity, sewage, and communications infrastructure.

In Karbala, *Tarabot* worked with project teams on three capital investment projects. For the Hay Al Resala neighborhood development project, *Tarabot* provided guidance on the resource breakdown structure to define the scope of work for the project team, and the adoption of a verification checklist. This list is used to confirm that all deliverables of the work breakdown structure are met, project management processes followed, payments made, claims settled, and all project phases completed. For the construction of the Abo Zarea road, *Tarabot* supported the project team in applying PMI initiation and planning processes over the course of two site visits, in addition to identifying stakeholders and project requirements and defining the project's scope. For the Al Sawada road, technical assistance was provided over the course of two site visits in the application of PMI processes for risk assessment, including the application of a risk register for conducting a qualitative analysis.

In Kirkuk, *Tarabot* worked with the project team for the construction of a tribal council directorate building on the application of scheduling, estimation, and earned value management techniques. Additionally, a problem regarding a soil analysis for the project site was addressed through the use of PMI forms.

In Babil, *Tarabot* worked with the Babil Construction Commission to develop a closing-phase verification checklist. *Tarabot* also met with the governor to present the progress of its project management achievements in the governorate. The current work plan was discussed in the context of preparing for a handover of *Tarabot's* initiatives, and ways to ensure their sustainability in the province.

In Wasit, *Tarabot* met with officials to encourage the adoption of PMI techniques. Governorate officials agreed to expand the use of MS Project to additional projects, and apply scheduling, estimation, and earned value management techniques on a project to develop the Hay Al Howra'a neighborhood. *Tarabot* also met with a project team from the Wasit Governorate Office, who agreed to expand use of MS Project to review the schedule for its Hay Al Jihad neighborhood development project. *Tarabot* also

met with a project team to develop an electrical grid in the Khachiyah neighborhood to identify the techniques that would be used on the project. It was agreed that MS Project, a work breakdown structure, scheduling, estimation, and earned value management will be applied.

Tarabot also supported the project team from the Ministry of Trade in its construction of a concrete silo. Recommendations were made on how to better address project status and control variations. Assistance was also provided on the development of a master schedule, establishment of an S-curve—a method for monitoring and controlling—to address problems in calculating the amount of work accomplished against funds spent.

Tarabot met with officials from the Ministry of Electricity to advocate for the broader adoption of PMI tools, including the work breakdown structure, scheduling, estimation, and earned value management. A plan was completed to deploy MS Project as a tool to improve project scheduling, performance baseline development, tracking, and reporting.

Tarabot met with the head of the Project Management Unit for the Ministry of Youth and Sports to discuss technical support in scheduling and costing for recreational facility projects in Baghdad and Babil. A work plan was put in place, including site visits to assess project requirements and the development of a work breakdown structure.

Tarabot also worked with the Governorates of Wasit and Babil to further improve upon their Project Management Offices, which are in operation. *Tarabot* provided technical assistance in processing project information, and introduced mechanisms for the compilation of lessons learned in the project management cycle and how to make decisions based upon them.

As part of its work to ensure that engineers from partnering government entities are well positioned for the Project Management Professional (PMP) exam, preparatory tests were conducted with over 150 attendees from the Ministries of Industry and Minerals, Transport, Electricity, Agriculture, Health, Oil, Electricity, Transport, Construction and Housing, and the Governorates of Babil, Najaf, Wasit, Dhi Qar, Basrah, and Diwaniyah. This is part of a program of intervention tailored to the individual needs of the given entities to prepare them for the exam. The Governors of Babil and Wasit agreed to nominate engineers for the exam before October 2014.

1.5 One-Stop-Shop Initiative

USAID-*Tarabot* introduced the One-Stop-Shop service center model to address the long lines and complicated procedures that have long plagued service delivery in order to improve citizens' services in Iraq. Currently, *Tarabot* is working in partnership with the Kurdistan Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to establish a One-Stop-Shop service center in Dahuk, which will offer Social Safety Net services. Undergoing necessary renovations to comply with the principles of *Tarabot's* architectural design, the center is expected to be opened in October.

This month, *Tarabot* senior management held an initial meeting with the contractor for the rehabilitation of the One-Stop Shop in Dahuk to discuss mechanisms of implementation and the terms of the contract. The contractor then met with a group of ministry engineers at the project site to conduct a handover of the facility, and to hold a more detailed discussion of its implementation; soon thereafter, the

rehabilitation commenced under the supervision of *Tarabot*. Throughout August the demolition of the internal walls was completed, a false ceiling frame reinstalled, walls in the front-desk area renovated, and the atrium completed.

Tarabot is now working on a handover plan to ensure that COMSEC is fully capable of carrying on the initiative, thereby securing its sustainability. As part of the handover plan, *Tarabot* prepared training materials on Bonita software and business process re-engineering methodologies, which are approximately 90 and 70 percent completed, respectively.

Additionally, *Tarabot* completed the development of a standard request for proposals for software development for the Baghdad Oil Products Distribution Company. The request for proposals includes a standard letter of invitation, instructions for consultants, terms of reference, and a standard form of contract.

In Wasit, Diwaniyah, and Najaf, *Tarabot* advisors met with officials to distribute brochures and discuss the concept and goals of the service center initiative as part of an awareness campaign.

1.6 Center of Excellence Initiative

The Iraq Center for Excellence in Government (ICEG) is the culmination of years of effort by USAID-*Tarabot* and its predecessor, USAID-*Tatweer*, to improve the institutional development and performance of Iraqi government entities. The Excellence model is a tool for measuring where an organization or entity is on the path to achieving their capacity development initiatives, and helps them to understand gaps and simulate solutions. Through the promotion of sustainable, innovative, and transformational institutional capacity development initiatives, the ICEG seeks to advance and award creativity and leadership in service delivery.

Tarabot proposed targeted services for short-term high-impact improvements to the Ministries of Construction and Housing, Transportation (General Company Ports of Iraq), Health (Kadimayyah Medical Center), Labor and Social Affairs, and Human Rights to ensure improvements in service delivery. The proposed services were selected on the basis of documentation and analysis of service delivery conducted by *Tarabot*. Follow up meetings were also conducted with the Ministries of Transportation, Health, Labor and Social Affairs, Migration and Displaced, and Human Rights to mentor their Excellence teams in the development of work plans to implement the Excellence models in their respective entities.

Tarabot conducted follow up meetings with the Ministry of Migration and Displaced, Human Rights, Transportation, and the University of Basrah to mentor their Excellence teams in documenting and analyzing service delivery procedures in line with Excellence criteria to ensure selected improvements in short and long term service delivery are achieved.

1.7 Iraq Development Management System Initiative

Tarabot continued to work with the Ministry of Planning and Synergy, the contractor tasked with the design of the Iraq Development Management System, to address software coding issues related to

project status. *Tarabot* also worked with high-level officials from the Ministry of Planning and COMSEC to facilitate this process.

Synergy is moving forward with the development of a code that generates project histories, allowing for the Ministry of Planning to test how the system can track changes in project implementation status. Synergy also created new filters in the system's reporting module, which are specifically related to project status and year. Lastly, a detailed guide for the use of system reports is being developed.

PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

Staffing, Deployment, and MSI Registration in the Kurdistan Regional Government

As of August 31, 2014, the USAID-*Tarabot* staff consists of 12 expatriates and 133 Iraqi nationals. From August 9–21, 2014, expatriate staff were temporarily relocated to work from Amman due to the deteriorating security situation in Erbil. Based on the political settlement among Iraqi political parties and continuing relative stability in Baghdad, MSI approved the return of expatriate personnel to Baghdad as of August 22. Since then, expatriate and national personnel are working from the Mansour compound in Baghdad.

Within the context of difficulties between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government has made it difficult for Iraqis to obtain residency visas in Erbil. To maintain *Tarabot* operations in Iraq, it is necessary to renew MSI's company registration in the Kurdistan Regional Government so that the project's Iraqi staff are able to travel to and work in Erbil, even temporarily.

Security

The conflict in northern Iraq worsened throughout August, and insurgents launched attacks near the borders of the Kurdistan Regional Government, approaching Erbil. International airlines suspended travel to Erbil, and USAID approved temporary relocation of expat staff to Amman, Jordan, pending clarification of the political and military situation in Iraq. As of August 22, 2014, *Tarabot* expatriate staff were approved to return to Baghdad and continue normal project operations.

Closeout

Tarabot vacated Pyramid House and allocated office space for remaining staff in Brady, Gurka, and Bronze Houses on the Mansour compound. Pyramid House was returned to Sallyport including all furniture, equipment, and two exterior meeting halls.

Tarabot staff completed closing the Erbil Office this month. As decided by USAID, project furniture and equipment were donated to the Kurdistan Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs' One-Stop-Shop in Dahuk, which is undergoing renovation for an October opening.