



Strategy and Impact of the Iraq Transition Initiative

OTI in Iraq (2003 – 2006)

Final Evaluation

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Effectiveness

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Acronyms

ADF	American Democratic Foundation
APU	Abuse Prevention Unit
CAP	Community Action Program
CERP	Commanders' Emergency Response Program
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
CR	Country Representative
DAI	Development Alternatives, Inc.
DART	Disaster Assistance Response Team
DCHA	Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance
DG	Democracy and Governance
1AD	First Armored Division
1CD	First Cavalry Division
FSN	Foreign Service National
4ID	Fourth Infantry Division
IFES	International Foundation for Election Systems
IPCC	Iraqi Property Claims Commission
ITI	Iraq Transition Initiative
IRRF	Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund
LNO	Liaison officer
ORHA	Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGI	New Global Initiatives
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
PDO	Program Development Officer
PDS	Public Distribution System
PM	Program Manager
PSC	Personal service contractor
RO	Resource Organization
RTI	Resource Triangle Institute
STE	Short-term employment
3ID	Third Infantry Division
TAL	Transition Administrative Law
TBS	Team Building Session
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States government

Executive Summary

Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI)

The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) was established by USAID in 1994 following a recommendation by Ambassador Thomas Eagleburger, who felt that the United States needed some kind of means beyond humanitarian assistance to support political transitions in nations that were emerging from prolonged ethnic or religious and civil conflict, an all too frequent situation following the collapse of Socialist regimes as well as ethnic conflicts in Africa and elsewhere. It was tasked with steering post-conflict countries toward democracy, jump-starting destroyed economies, launching or restoring viable political, social, and economic institutions, mitigating existing or renewed conflict, and promoting reconciliation. OTI intervenes rapidly and undertakes quick-impact interventions through short-term grants that catalyze broader change. Most of its primarily in-kind grants have democratic process as their objective. OTI seeks to stay in a new country no more than two to three years. In recent years, USAID Missions have adopted all or major parts of OTI programs into the Missions longer-term development portfolio.

Iraq Transition Initiative

OTI began its program in Iraq in early April 2003, concluded implementing new activities at the end of April 2006, and ceased all operations by the end of July 2006. OTI's activities in Iraq totaled \$417.6 million, with the majority going to a small grants program implemented through a contract with Development Alternatives, Inc. This program, known as the Iraq Transition Initiative (ITI), pursued three strategic objectives:

1. Support critical activities that build and sustain Iraqi confidence in the development of a participatory, stable, and democratic Iraq.
2. Identify and fill crucial gaps in the U.S. government assistance efforts at national and local levels.
3. Increase public support for the interim government.

OTI's fast-paced assistance initially met critical relief and rehabilitation needs – providing short-term employment, restoring basic government and community services, increasing Iraqi access to information and communication, and encouraging protection of human rights. Within a few months in country, OTI came to focus on four program objectives that fell under the three broader strategic objectives:

1. Increase citizen participation in social/political/economic life.
2. Enhance capacity of local and national governments.
3. Prevent, manage, mitigate, and resolve conflict.
4. Encourage respect for human rights and foster peace and reconciliation.

Evaluation Purpose

As it ended program activities in Iraq, OTI sought to explore through an external evaluation the successes and failures, the strong and weak points, and the lessons learned from three years in Iraq. The fundamental questions asked focused on program strategy and effectiveness. Together they are a solid measure of performance.

Strategy in this context is more concerned with short-term ingenuity and constancy in achieving medium-term objectives than with long-term strategic vision. OTI program implementation is strategic, rather than tactical, when it maintains congruity of short-term activities with overall strategic objectives. Program effectiveness relates to the degree to which grant activities were appropriately targeted and implemented.

Methodology

Dr. Philip Boyle, a senior associate of Social Impact, Inc. (Arlington, VA) carried out the final evaluation. Although some program documentation exists, most data were collected by means of one-on-one interviews with more than 70 people. Substantial information and assistance were also provided by OTI advisors Eleanor Bedford and Dustin Felix, who carried out related studies on operations and the OTI-military relationship. Since no field trip was made to Iraq, the evaluator was unable to interview grantees or other stakeholders inside that country. A majority of interviews were conducted between March 25 and April 1, 2006 during the OTI/Iraq Close-Out and Lessons Learned Retreat in Amman, Jordan. Most of the remaining interviews were conducted in person or by telephone between April 11 and May 19, 2006.

Conclusions

1. OTI successfully carried out activities that directly addressed its first strategic objective of supporting critical activities that build and sustain Iraqi confidence in the development of a participatory, stable, and democratic Iraq. OTI support to civil society organizations laid a firm foundation for a more inclusive and participatory democracy. Neighborhood and district councils were empowered as grantees. Substantial economic benefits were generated through short-term employment grants that also served to demonstrate highly visible governmental services to neighborhoods. Solid groundwork was also carried out in human rights, women's rights, property rights, and the documentation of war crimes.
2. OTI successfully pursued its second strategic objective of identifying and filling crucial gaps in U.S. government assistance efforts at national and local levels. OTI was on the ground in Iraq with the first wave of U.S. civilian assistance and ended up by leading it. Through the Abuse Prevention Unity (APU), OTI quickly identified and responded to human rights issues in property rights and mass graves. When other U.S. agencies were still setting up, OTI filled assistance gaps in property rights, human rights, women's rights, civil society start-ups, war crimes documentation, media activities, local governmental strengthening, and short-term employment/clean-up projects. When USAID requested that OTI redirect substantial funds into short-term employment and neighborhood clean-up projects to address the insurgency, OTI

proved itself so effective that Congress granted it substantial monies in late 2004 to continue this effort through 2005 and beyond.

3. OTI also appropriately carried out activities in support of its third strategic objective of increasing public support for the interim government. Central governmental institutions were rapidly rehabilitated and equipped with work stations. Facilities identified for provincial, district, and neighborhood councils were rehabilitated and equipped, and numerous in-kind grants were made to local authorities for rehabilitation and employment activities. Many public schools and health centers were rehabilitated. Between December 2003 and June 2004, OTI participated in the design of a national governmental elections framework and process that jump-started work continued under the USAID Mission.

4. OTI made important contributions to strengthening democratic processes and increasing momentum for peaceful resolution of conflict in its elections framework work, in jump-starting civil society, and in using local councils as grantees in over two thousand rehabilitation and employment/clean-up projects.

5. While it is clear that OTI was on target in its program, it is difficult to judge the magnitude of objective achievement because OTI did not define end states or develop indicators to track progress toward these outcomes. Some public opinion polling of population perceptions was carried out in 2003 but was later abandoned for security reasons.

6. From all evidence, OTI had significant impact on standing up governmental and other public institutions through the rehabilitation of offices and the equipment and supply kits that followed. These “ministry in the box” grants targeted national ministries and provincial directorates and were particularly prevalent in 2003. Provincial and local councils (district and neighborhood) and schools and some health centers were targeted through a similar approach.

7. OTI had important impact on the creation of civil society in Iraq by jump-starting support for a large number of organizations that became major participants in an emerging independent civil society. From few, if any, independent organizations under the previous regime, except in the autonomous northern area (Iraqi Kurdistan), there are now hundreds of Iraqi NGOs or unregistered equivalents. In the north, existing civil society was strengthened and continued its expansion. While not alone in building a burgeoning civil society, OTI was certainly a major player and was in action before most other assistance organizations.

8. OTI played an important role in building a legal foundation and process for two elections and a constitutional referendum by seconding an experienced staff member to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) for this purpose. By the time this staff member left Iraq in June 2004, the elections’ process had started and was able to play itself out with little disruption and steadily increasing Iraqi participation.

9. OTI played an important role in addressing conflicting property claims and human rights violations in the first months of presence in country. It pioneered work with freed prisoners, mass graves, and women rights. It supported the Iraqi Special Tribunal by rehabilitating the

court house and providing grants designed to establish mechanisms and units able to collect, secure, and store documentary evidence.

10. The OTI program shifted strategically between 2003 and 2006 through a combination of internal impetus and external events. The program was reoriented from its initial mode with the arrival of the first official Country Representative in October 2003. At this time, it was narrowed to four program objectives. Pursuit of these objectives was interrupted by a serious rise in the insurgency in April 2004, following which OTI developed a close working relationship with the U.S. military and emphasized short-term employment grants. The last Country Representative deepened and intensified the OTI-military partnership after March 2005, while preserving many of the activities of other focus areas, in part by packaging them with employment projects.

11. There were significant expenditures month by month over the life of the program that supported specific stabilizing or conflict mitigation activities. Thus, in the run-up and immediate aftermath of the January 2005 elections, while the transitional government was being chosen and seated, grant expenditures were fairly high. These expenditures would also peak or increase prior to and in the sensitive periods following the constitutional referendum (October 2005) and the December 2005 elections for the permanent government. OTI activities were extended from December 2005 to June 2006 in large part to program an additional \$35 million dollars to employ Iraqis in the run up to the December elections and government formation in its aftermath.

12. Because OTI found a clear niche in the transition process, successful program linkage to the USAID Mission is under way. OTI demonstrated what was possible and workable in community stabilization and much of its program served as a direct precursor to the current USAID follow-on program.

13. OTI has also clearly had major impact on the U.S military in Iraq, paving the way for future close civilian and military collaboration in Iraq and other countries. While this probably would not have occurred without the insurgency, it has certainly demonstrated the value of joining these two cultures in collaborative “win-win” activities.

14. Clear legacies and spearheading efforts of the Iraq Transition Initiative include development of a key set of local partner NGOs, military liaisons from combat brigades, the military-OTI partnership, remote operations, strategic shifting of programming, and effective program linkage to follow-on activities of the USAID Mission.

15. More documentation of program decisions and operations should have occurred in a program of this size and importance. Considering the length of time involved and considerable prominence of OTI’s role in political stabilization and transition in Iraq, there is very little written material on program strategy and operational decisions.

16. Insufficient effort was expended in gathering feedback on grant results and population impact (see Recommendations 6 and 7). While the contractor organization was relied upon to do monitoring and evaluation, its task order contained no funding or staff position to do so. Although security was an issue, more could have been done to address this information gap by employing key local NGO partners. By engaging them in this activity early on in program

activities, these NGOs would have developed their methods and capacities in monitoring and evaluation.

Recommendations

1. OTI should rethink and revise formal strategy statements as it shifts strategically to changing events in a given country. The team building retreats set the stage for this, but little follow-up appears to occur. Since there are rarely written OTI documents conveying the shifts in focus or emphasis of what follow up action is taken, OTI field management should issue to staff brief memoranda documenting what has changed and where the program is heading over the following six months. If a major strategic document has been envisaged, this follow-up function could be assisted by senior advisors or contracted out.
2. Conceptualizing the relationship between strategic and program objectives and between program objectives and program activities in an objective tree would be a useful exercise to ensure congruity and clarity of various levels of action. If the program shifts strategically, the objective tree can be revised accordingly.
3. Lessons learned in the military-OTI partnership in Iraq may be applied in similar situations in the future. While OTI shares some common culture with the U.S. military, there are many differences that required OTI in Iraq to assert its own philosophy and methodology. How OTI successfully maintained its uniqueness in Iraq, as it worked in collaboration with the military should be understood by all staff for use in future such arrangements.
4. The early identification and capacity building of a key set of NGOs is a useful model that should be emulated in future post-conflict situations, where civil society has remained undeveloped or has been largely destroyed. They can become trusted partners for OTI activities, when other alternatives are limited.
5. While adapting strategically to changing circumstances, OTI should maintain as wide a variety of preferred themes and core competencies as possible. In the same way that OTI found ways to be creative in its sequencing and packaging of activities around short-term employment, it should continue to seek opportunities within program mandates to shift the funding mix, when feedback indicates the need for changes in activities or target groups. To do this it will need to increase feedback from activities.
6. Some reasonable means to secure feedback on grant results and impact should be devised in every OTI country program. Given the nature of what OTI does, this does not mean developing rigid objectives and performance indicators in most country contexts. Nor does it require extensive surveys or other formal methods. Hiring local NGOs to investigate program results and impacts would be invaluable, whether or not security allows OTI staff to observe directly.
7. Although any M&E system should remain as simple as possible, care must be taken to focus attention on results and outcomes (impacts), rather than on inputs and lower-level outputs. This does not mean that every activity type will be equally susceptible to results measurement, nor that not being able to measure some activities should exclude them from the grant mix. It would

be useful to cast this in terms of measuring major grant types, such as work with civil society, media, elections, women's rights, participatory local government, national governmental functioning, and so on. Program objectives may also be formulated in such a way that simple measures based on polling or sampling of key informants yield a sense of what has been accomplished. This will certainly require building in an M&E capacity in the task order to contractors in future country interventions. This would include a funded position and a budget to collect and/or analyze feedback from program grantees.

Iraq Transition Initiative (2003 – 2006)

I. Background

The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) was established by USAID in 1994 following a recommendation by Ambassador Thomas Eagleburger, who felt that the United States needed some kind of means beyond humanitarian assistance to support political transitions in nations that were emerging from prolonged ethnic or religious and civil conflict, an all too frequent situation following the collapse of Socialist regimes as well as ethnic conflicts in Africa and elsewhere. It was tasked with steering post-conflict countries toward democracy, jump-starting destroyed economies, launching or restoring viable political, social, and economic institutions, mitigating existing or renewed conflict, and promoting reconciliation. OTI intervenes rapidly and undertakes quick-impact interventions through short-term grants that catalyze broader change. Most of its primarily in-kind grants have democratic process as their objective. OTI seeks to stay in a new country no more than two to three years, at which time other parts of USAID are ready to engage in longer-term development activities.

OTI began its program in Iraq in April 2003 and ceased operations by the end of July 2006. Over three years, OTI issued more than 5,200 small grants totaling nearly \$337 million at the time of evaluation. Known as the Iraq Transition Initiative (ITI), the program supported critical activities intended to build and sustain Iraqi confidence in the development of a participatory, stable, and democratic Iraq. While working closely with the USAID Mission and the U.S. Embassy in Iraq, ITI identified and filled crucial gaps in the U.S. government's assistance efforts at national and local levels and sought to increase public support for the interim and transitional governments. Program activities were primarily implemented through a contract with Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI) that allowed for fast and flexible disbursement of small in-kind grants to local Iraqi groups and institutions.

OTI arrived in Iraq in early April 2003 as part of the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), but soon took charge of implementing its own transition assistance in the face of considerable needs and opportunities. OTI's fast-paced assistance initially met critical relief and rehabilitation needs – providing short-term employment, restoring basic government and community services, increasing Iraqi access to information and communication, and encouraging protection of human rights. As the situation in Iraq evolved, OTI focused within a few months on areas crucial to the development of Iraqi democracy, such as civic education, civil society development, media, women's participation, good governance, conflict mitigation, human rights, and transitional justice. As the program matured, it came to focus on four program objectives:

1. Increase citizen participation in social/political/economic life.
2. Enhance capacity of local and national governments.
3. Prevent, manage, mitigate, and resolve conflict.
4. Encourage respect for human rights and foster peace and reconciliation.

Preparing to end its program activities in Iraq, the Office of Transition Initiatives sought to explore through an external evaluation the successes and failures, the strong and weak points,

and the lessons learned from three years in Iraq. The operational environment and resulting program in Iraq have certainly been unique in OTI experience.

II. Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

1. Objectives

The two fundamental questions asked of this evaluation were:

1. OTI's strategy in Iraq was to: (1) support critical activities that build and sustain Iraqi confidence in the development of a participatory, stable, and democratic Iraq; (2) identify and fill crucial gaps in the U.S. government assistance efforts at national and local levels; and (3) increase public support for the interim government. Did OTI succeed in implementing this strategy, and in what ways could its efforts have been improved?
2. Was the program strategic in responding to shifts in the transition process, both in terms of evolving U.S. foreign policy imperatives and in terms of the evolving political and security situation inside Iraq? Within this evolving context, did the program meet its stated goals and objectives?

These fundamental questions deal with program strategy and effectiveness. Together they are a good measure of performance. Strategy in this context is more concerned with short-term ingenuity in achieving medium-term objectives than with longer-term strategic vision, the logical components of this vision, and the sequence of steps to be taken over time to realize them. OTI program implementation is strategic, rather than tactical, when it maintains congruity of short-term activities with longer-range strategic objectives.

Effectiveness in this context relates to the nature and degree of results achieved through OTI activities on the ground, including whether program objectives were appropriately pursued, whether activities in pursuit of these goals were most likely to reach them, and the efficacy of methods used to pursue them compared to others that might have been applied.

2. Methodology

A senior evaluator, Dr. Philip Boyle, was assigned responsibility to respond to the two lines of inquiry developed by the OTI Program Office. Dr. Boyle is a senior associate of Social Impact, Inc. of Arlington, Virginia. Although some program documentation exists, most data were collected by means of one-on-one interviews with more than 70 people. Substantial information and assistance was also provided by OTI advisors Eleanor Bedford and Dustin Felix, authors of related reports of their own for internal use. Since no field trip was made to Iraq because of security, the evaluator was unable to interview grantees or other stakeholders inside that country. A majority of these interviews were conducted between March 25 and April 1, 2006, during the OTI/Iraq Close-Out and Lessons Learned Retreat in Amman, Jordan. Most of the remaining interviews were conducted in or from Washington, D.C., either in person or by telephone, between April 11 and May 19, 2006. Based on a core set of questions focused on program strategy and achievements, interviews ranged widely to capture as much information as possible.

Direct attribution of opinions has been avoided in this evaluation, sometimes at the explicit request of interviewees. Information not drawn from documentation in Annex C has been derived from the interviewees listed in Annex B.

III. Findings

1. Strategic and Program Objectives

OTI had three strategic objectives in Iraq:

1. Support critical activities that build and sustain Iraqi confidence in the development of a participatory, stable, and democratic Iraq.
2. Identify and fill crucial gaps in the USG assistance efforts at national and local levels.
3. Increase public support for the interim government.

As the OTI program took form in Iraq, these broad strategic objectives came to encompass more defined program objectives:

1. Increase citizen participation in social/political/economic life.
2. Enhance capacity of local/national governments.
3. Prevent, manage, mitigate, and resolve conflict.
4. Encourage respect for human rights and foster peace and reconciliation.

There is no exact fit between program objectives and strategic objectives, since grants categorized under one or another program objective might serve several strategic objectives. However, grants made under program objectives 1 and 4 are most closely linked to strategic objective 1, while program objective 2 is closely linked to strategic objective 3. Program objective 3 is most closely linked to strategic objective 2 (cf. Annex A).

OTI applied the following grants and financial resources to the four program objectives over the life of the Iraq Transition Initiative.¹

Table 1: Total Grants Cleared by Program Objective (April 1, 2003 – March 17, 2006)

Program Objective	No. of Grants	% of Grants	Total Funding	% of Funding	Av. Grant Size
1. Increase citizen participation in social, political, and economic life.	1,252	23.9%	\$32,503,860	9.6%	\$25,962
2. Enhance capacity of local and national governments.	607	11.6%	\$39,990,616	11.9%	\$65,882
3. Prevent, manage, mitigate, and resolve conflict.	3,256	62.2%	\$256,729,105	76.2%	\$78,848
4. Encourage respect for human rights and foster peace and reconciliation.	118	2.3%	\$7,695,065	2.3%	\$65,212
Total	5,233	100%	\$336,918,646	100%	\$64,383

¹ Drawn from the OTI database as it stood on March 17, 2006.

OTI strategy in pursuit of its strategic objectives shifted, adapted, and evolved over three periods, each of which was approximately one year:

- April 2003 – April 2004;
- April 2004 – April 2005; and
- April 2005 – April 2006.

The first period includes the arrival of the DART, activities of the Abuse Prevention Unit (APU), early programmatic directions, program consolidation under the first formal Country Representative, programmatic debate at the first Team Building Session, assistance to the electoral process, and a worsening security situation.

The second period corresponds to the outbreak of insurgency in central and south-central Iraq, strategy change in the second Team Building Session, shift to remote operations (management of grant implementing organizations from OTI/Iraq offices without face-to-face contact), development of a relationship with the U.S. military, and acting program leadership for eight months before a second permanent Country Representative (CR) was named.² The third and final period corresponds to the tenure of the last CR and was characterized by a tight strategic partnership with the military down to final grants and program close-out.

2. April 2003 – April 2004

OTI was strategic in its activities from the beginning in Iraq. Although strategizing never involved formal assessments inside the country, from the end of 2002 OTI was included in USAID planning for probable invasion and regime change. Once in-country, OTI prepared or commissioned a number of strategic documents between May and August 2003. In October 2003, a permanent Country Representative was named and OTI held its first Team Building Session (retreat) to set its strategy for the following six months.

OTI had succeeded in placing itself within the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), in spite of initial lack of appreciation by the internal USAID Task Force planning the agency response. This was in itself a strategic move, since it broadened the disaster assistance role of the DART and placed OTI in the first wave of U.S. government civilians to enter Iraq behind the military. To achieve this, OTI had convinced other parts of USAID/Washington that OTI could not set quantitative targets in advance, but that its role was to respond to events on the ground once inside Iraq. These events would lead to tactical decisions that would evolve over time, although OTI could draw on a number of previous post-war experiences, especially in Afghanistan and the Balkans. OTI maintained this approach down to program close-out, responding to needs on the ground both geographically and in terms of focus areas. This operational strategy responded to its second strategic objective of identifying and filling U.S. government assistance gaps.

² The second permanent CR was a program manager from December 2004 to March 2005, when she was named Acting CR. In June 2005, she was officially made Iraq Country Representative.

A senior field advisor was in charge of the OTI sub-team within the DART, later heading the DART entirely in June 2003. Even in the field, OTI had to assert its distinctive mandate to fill gaps and react to budding opportunities that other DART members failed to appreciate or understand. OTI had planned ahead in Washington and Kuwait and then moved into Iraq with \$20million and two primary implementing partners already in hand to execute grants. Part of the idea of two partners was to be sure that, if one could not perform, the other would fill the breach. In fact, the International Organization for Migration – a United Nations affiliate organization – left Iraq along with all other United Nations agencies following the bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad in August 2003.³ This led to the termination of its cooperative agreement with OTI four months later.⁴ From all evidence, the remaining partner Development Alternatives, Inc. and its sub-contractor New Global Initiatives (NGI) very ably filled the gap.

First needs were obvious to arriving OTI and DAI staff members in Iraq. Virtually all governmental buildings had been looted throughout the country from ministries down to provincial directorates. These required rehabilitation, equipment, and supplies. The desire to stand up the national government led directly to the “ministry in a box” grants of which 114 were implemented worth \$10.6 million, most of them in 2003. The “box” usually consisted of a set of 100 work stations for national ministries and provincial directorates, although some ministries received more than one set because of large size. These stations provided a desk, chair, computer, and office supplies for one person per station. Such basic equipment had to be supplied rapidly to stand up the interim government.

Approaching governance from the other side, OTI also wrote “council in a box” grants to support the military-created local councils it encountered as it moved north through southern Iraq. These provided office space, equipment, and supplies to neighborhood and district advisory councils. Both national and local governmental infrastructure and supply grants directly addressed OTI’s third strategic objective of increasing public support for the interim government.

This early concentration on government office rehabilitation and equipment supply (box projects) was facilitated by DAI’s identification in the largely autonomous north of two local engineering/construction firms. These two “Resource Organizations” (ROs) became essential to the grant implementation structure down to program close-out.

The speed with which OTI advanced in fulfilling its mandate to jump-start reconstruction activities in Iraq raised OTI’s profile considerably within the U.S. government and military. All evidence points to the fact that OTI was the only U.S. civilian organization capable of moving substantial money through its contractor in Iraq in the summer of 2003.

The first OTI team leader in the field imparted a clear strategic orientation to the program from the beginning. For him, strategy meant pursuing highly visible results on the ground that demonstrated peace dividends or rewards. There should be no limits to the activities involved, subject to their basic fit with a “winning hearts and minds” objective. By “winning hearts and minds” OTI meant supporting activities that built people’s confidence, trust, and hope in the new government and their own future. Iraqis should see palpable evidence that they were better off

³ The UN agencies have yet to return to Iraq.

⁴ IOM implemented 70 grants worth \$960,759 before ending activities on December 31, 2003.

as a result of regime change and that the concept of democracy meant greater security and material improvements in their lives. This strategic orientation strongly supported the first and third OTI strategic objectives.

Demonstrating the benefits of peace and democracy also required establishing relationships with a variety of organizational actors, to remove OTI from the humanitarian assistance lane under the DART. This strategic effort had begun in Kuwait under the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs (ORHA). OTI strove to keep its focus beyond the DART and educate ORHA on how OTI defined its transition support mission. A good example of thinking beyond the limits of humanitarian assistance was the OTI-funded short-term employment activity in Sadr City (June 2003). Another early example of thinking “outside the box” was the intervention to shore up the Mosul Dam by obtaining and delivering betonite to patch fissures in the structure. While the U.S. Army eventually provided the cement, the initiative was OTI’s. A third example was the construction of loading docks for the Iraqi government public (food) distribution system (PDS). These examples respond to all three OTI strategic objectives. They also significantly raised the profile of OTI within ORHA and later the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the transitional authority in Iraq from May 2003 to June 2004.

2.1 Abuse Prevention Unit

A major part of OTI within the DART was the Abuse Prevention Unit (APU), consisting of five technical specialists with experience in human rights work. This unit had been formed at the request of the USAID Administrator to seek out and report two types of expected human rights abuses: revenge killings of Baathist party members and Sunni-Shia ethnic strife. Finding few signs of these abuses, the APU soon focused on other issues: property claims disputes in the north and mass graves, prisoners, and missing persons in most of the rest of the country. Its work in Iraq largely falls under the first OTI strategic objective of building population confidence in the development of a participatory, stable, and democratic Iraq.

Planning involving the APU in consultation with international NGOs and other human rights groups had begun prior to invasion and a two-page, plasticized field guide was soon produced by USAID.⁵ This was liberally distributed to military units in Kuwait prior to the invasion of Iraq. The APU also trained the DART team, NGOs, and military units on “civilian protection” issues as part of pre-war preparations in the United States and Kuwait.

The APU dealt with property rights issues and pre-war atrocities without a preconceived strategy, since it had prepared for massacres of Baath party members and inter-ethnic strife. In OTI “can-do” fashion, however, over the next five to six months it laid the foundations for subsequent grants in human rights, media, property claims, women’s rights and women’s centers, and transitional justice. Among other entities, the APU dealt with prisoners’ associations, lawyers’ associations, and women’s groups. After about three months in country, the APU began to develop grants.

In the north around Kirkuk, where Kurds had been forcibly ejected and southern Arabs resettled, the APU found military units immersed in property title documents and conflicting legal claims

⁵ USAID. “Field Guide to Preventing, Mitigating and Responding to Human Rights Abuses.” No date.

to land and houses. A system was put in place to save documents and find people to classify them. OTI followed up the APU work in late June 2003, by issuing a contract to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support the Iraq Property Reconciliation Program. This program focused on the development and implementation of a mechanism for the collection, processing and voluntary reconciliation of real property claims. Seven regional offices equipped to process 40,000 claims each were established. The program cost slightly more than \$1,762,000 and ended in late April 2004, at which time all materials, equipment and vehicles were transferred to the Iraqi Property Claims Commission (IPCC).

No one had foreseen the magnitude of mass graves in Iraq, but the APU responded by moving quickly to document grave sites, keep them secure, and preserve them to compile evidence for later war crimes trials. According to APU members, numerous grants were issued to local authorities and civic groups to assist in gathering intelligence and documenting war crimes. Storage facilities were constructed to hold evidence for these crimes. No other assistance entity had the money and flexibility to carry out this work so the APU filled this gap, another good example of pursuit of strategic objective 2. Among other products, a documentary film and a brochure⁶ were soon produced by OTI.

2.2 Other Early Activities

As the summer of 2003 wore on, the USAID Mission separated from its preceding connection to ORHA and CPA,⁷ and OTI set up an office with the rest of the USAID DCHA Bureau.⁸ Under a second acting Country Representative, OTI continued to assert its unique mandate in the face of USAID misunderstanding its mission and CPA ambivalence (\$70 million promised, then taken away, then increased to \$135 million). The CPA continued to channel OTI into conformity with its own strategy, assigning it the task, among other things, of setting up and generalizing the idea of women's centers. Through the summer and fall of 2003, OTI was allowed to pursue previous human rights activities (property rights, prisoners, mass graves), identification and support to local NGOs (civil society), and "box-type" projects to community centers, local councils, city halls, and governmental ministries/directorates.

OTI issued grants to hundreds of civil society organizations, according to the database, but for security reasons later preferred to work through its short list of five organizations. This "A list" consisted of five associations that OTI had first formed granting relationships with in the summer of 2003. Over the life-of-program, OTI issued 276 grants worth \$6,538,305 to the A-list organizations.

The first short-term employment (STE) activity was launched in May 2003. To carry this out, the OTI and DAI team leaders engaged local leaders in Sadr City (Baghdad) in a consultative process. These local leaders urged that short-term employment of idle young men to remove garbage and sewage from city streets would pay enormous peace dividends. This resulted in the approval of seven STE grants totaling \$546,254 between May 22 and June 7, 2003. These were responsible for creating some 4,000 full-time jobs lasting six to eight weeks, in which up to

⁶ USAID. "Iraq's Legacy of Terror: Mass Graves." January 2004.

⁷ The CPA took over from ORHA in mid-May 2003.

⁸ USAID Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Affairs.

12,000 to 13,000 young men participated.⁹ Only three more employment grants were cleared between July and April 2004, when the OTI program shifted to significant STE for conflict mitigation.

It also appears that while “stepping up to the plate” for the CPA, OTI tried to advocate for an increased role for other parts of USAID. This was not successful, because the rest of the USAID Mission had little ability to produce fast and flexible results of the type desired by the CPA, since its program money had already been largely contracted out. Consequently, OTI – not the USAID/Democracy and Governance office – received \$40 million from the CPA to work on national governance, primarily preparation of elections. This directly supported OTI’s strategic objective 3.

Information flow to Iraqis in the months following the successful invasion was an obvious and strategic need to fill quickly. This supported OTI’s first and third strategic objectives. Moreover, media activities are part of the standard OTI “toolkit” in post-conflict situations. Beginning with internet cafes in the south, OTI moved to increase Radio Sawa’s broadcast capabilities and humanitarian and reconstruction reporting by extending this U.S. funded Arabic-language network to cities in Iraq. Following this, a media specialist with experience in the Balkans was sent by OTI to Iraq in September 2003 with the mandate to develop a core media strategy. Unfortunately, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) had its own media strategy and did not allow most OTI media efforts for months.

OTI did find a role in disseminating information on the transition process, by inserting itself into the strategy for transferring sovereignty from the CPA to the Iraqi people. This was an important activity in support of OTI strategic objective 3. This support became particularly useful after the publication of the Transition Administrative Law (TAL) in March 2004. It was important to raise the population’s consciousness of what the TAL contained, since it would be the governing framework until the new Iraqi constitution could be written and approved late in 2005.

In late 2003 and early 2004, OTI was preparing a significant media assistance strategy to educate the public on the TAL, involving training for journalists and station managers, as well as placing advisors directly in radio and television stations. Unfortunately, this emerging media campaign had to be abandoned as the events of Fallujah, Sadr City, Karbala, and Najaf forced a serious reorientation of OTI strategy in April 2004.

2.3 Strategic Thinking (May to August 2003)

As events on the ground unfolded in the spring and summer of 2003, OTI commissioned or wrote a series of strategy papers. These set the strategic framework for OTI’s future activities in Iraq. In May 2003, a consultant prepared an “OTI Interim Strategy for Iraq.”¹⁰ Four immediate needs of Iraqis were identified: (1) restoration of public services; (2) security; (3) information; and (4) short-term employment. The consultant felt that by rapidly addressing these needs, “the Iraqi people will be much better prepared to tackle the difficult tasks associated with constructing

⁹ Data supplied by a private consultant and advisor to the USAID Administrator.

¹⁰ Tanner, Victor. May 2003. “OTI Interim Strategy for Iraq.”

a framework for democratic governance.” It is clear from the activities engaged in by OTI in the following months that the program addressed these needs.

The May 2003 strategy statement indicates that OTI had not originally planned to conduct broad employment programs, primarily because of high cost. However, the strategy did propose that “with adequate funding, OTI could mount a significant public works program” to provide temporary employment and have immediate impact on communities. Seven such projects were funded in May and June 2003.

In early August 2003, OTI commissioned a second paper from the same consultant to review progress to date and help revise the initial strategy.¹¹ While praising OTI for having successfully demonstrated to Iraqis that change was real and beneficial and for providing rapid and effective support to the CPA and Coalition forces, the paper also raised some issues. Among these was the need to revert back to “OTI’s traditional process-oriented work” with local communities, emerging civil society groups, and in promoting transparent and pluralistic decision-making processes. According to the consultant, this work had been neglected because of the emphasis on refurbishing critical administrative infrastructure.

The paper also noted that because of inadequate local and expatriate staff, there was “little follow-up of initiatives and no monitoring.” The paper went on to say that: “Our inability to monitor grant outputs, or even merely follow up on the quality of commissioned work or whether equipment delivered is being properly used” could be counterproductive in winning population support. Given the declining security situation after the summer of 2003, this inability to monitor grant outputs and impact plagued the OTI program down to close-out in 2006. As OTI stated, “We were victims of the tyranny of a poor security situation in which OTI was locked in the Green Zone with little if any access to grant sites.”¹²

Finally, the August strategy paper noted that OTI appeared to lack a strategy for moving ahead. The paper proposed that “it is time to start thinking about priorities and where we want to go.” It went on to make a number of operational and programmatic recommendations that included continued refurbishment of public buildings as well as support to associations, groups, NGOs, and communities. Given staff shortages, the consultant proposed a modular approach that would develop templates for various types of easily replicated interventions. Short-term employment is not included among OTI priorities at this point, except for jump-starting some initiatives in the Sunni Triangle. The paper noted, however, that while clean-up campaigns in previous months were not meant to be sustainable, the momentum of those projects needed to be maintained, and it was desirable to find activities that would plug the gap between clean-up and eventual longer-term solutions.

OTI/Washington produced a paper of its own entitled “Program Strategy and Operations Guidelines” in August 2003, which was an update of a document first written by an OTI/Washington team in February/March 2003.¹³ This document recognized that the advent of the Iraqi Governing Council under the CPA signaled a new and critical phase of operations, in

¹¹ Tanner, Victor. “General Thought Memo.” August 8, 2003.

¹² Written communication from OTI (July 2006).

¹³ OTI/Washington. “Program Strategy and Operations Guidelines.” August 8, 2003.

which the emphasis should shift from basic security, social services, and reconstruction to the development of a constitution, elections, and the formation of a democratic government. OTI was expected to expand its activities beyond previous emphasis on provision of basic services and employment generation to media activities, national governance, and the “development of a robust civil society.” The document indicates that the CPA was already looking to OTI “to provide flexible high impact and results oriented support emphasizing basic services, short term employment, human rights, abuse protection, national level governance and the development of civil society organizations.”

This document presents an early picture of OTI values and preferred approaches in Iraq. Although increasingly constrained by security concerns and the directives attached to OTI funding in 2004 and 2005 stressing conflict mitigation through STE grants, these programmatic and operational values, such as high visibility, high impact, optimal population benefit, and maximization of the public good and interest remained active in OTI Iraq programming down to close-out.

Finally, once again in August 2003, OTI/Washington commissioned a significant strategy statement, entitled “Strategic Opportunities for the Iraq Transition Initiative: A Strategy Brief on Program Options and Political Transition in Iraq.”¹⁴ This was a substantial product (20 pages) that sought to “review the status of current programming, suggest a conceptual framework for managing transitional development grants, highlight coordination opportunities and review operational support scenarios.” It also discussed exit and hand-off provisions.¹⁵

The strategy proposed seven program pillars to be combined with OTI’s rapid-response capacity: (1) a narrower mandate for APU’s activities; (2) a strong communications and media program; (3) a governance and participation track; (4) support for civic advocacy; (5) employment initiatives; (6) security-enhancing programming; and (7) continuation of the transitional infrastructure assistance (rehabilitation and equipment/supply to public service entities).

The paper stressed that what was important going ahead was a consistency of vision and the political transition character of every grant.¹⁶ Program expansion, moreover, would require an increase in good, professional staff. It warned that the assistance environment would increasingly present challenges to OTI’s process-oriented work – especially in the areas of popular participation and governance programming. Although this was not adopted as a formal strategy document, OTI did generate considerable program variety over the first year of activity. However, the CPA discouraged STE activities until April 2004. Thus, only 10 STE grants were issued during this first year – and only three between July 2003 and April 2004).

Table 2 breaks out by program objective grants cleared during the first year of the program. STE grants are part of program objective 3.

¹⁴ Jennings, Ray. “Strategic Opportunities for the Iraq Transition Initiative: A Strategy Brief on Program Options and Political Transition in Iraq,” August 15, 2003.

¹⁵ Handoff or handover generally means linking OTI jump -start activities to USAID or other donor follow-on programs.

¹⁶ OTI grants are officially known as Political Transition Grants (PTGs).

Table 2: Grants Cleared from April 1, 2003 through March 31, 2004

Program Objective	No. of Grants	Amount of Grants
1. Increase citizen participation in social/political/economic life.	191	\$7,252,229
2. Enhance capacity of local/national governments.	217	\$16,359,278
3. Prevent, manage, mitigate, and resolve conflict.	263	\$14,843,467
4. Encourage respect for human rights and foster peace and reconciliation.	45	\$2,454,132
Total	716	\$40,909,106

After the UN bombing of August 28, 2003, the security situation in central and western Iraq declined considerably, becoming virtually prohibitive for OTI staff in April 2004. Given the difficulty of direct interaction with the Iraqi population in Baghdad and the Sunni Triangle, the OTI program nevertheless worked to maintain a high level of spending on grants. Given low staff numbers and the high emphasis on spending, OTI would find itself far less able to consult population groups about their needs and their perceptions of grant impact. OTI, however, never imposed a specific “burn rate” on the program, although it did have a substantial amount of Congressional funding to implement.

2.4 First Team Building Session (October 2003)

When the first permanent OTI Country Representative (CR) took up field leadership in October 2003, a Team Building Session was held in Amman. This was important because, according to the new CR, there was inadequate focus in the OTI program; it seemed “rudderless.” He also felt the grant money “burn rate” could be accelerated.

The new CR felt some early activities to be “outside core competencies,” although given OTI’s penchant for hiring management-oriented generalists, there was little in the way of technical capacity to draw on in most endeavors (exceptions being in media, human rights, and elections). For him, the APU seemed to have lost its way by this time. Another of these non-core activities was the satellite communications program that the CPA requested of OTI. It was launched in July 2003 through the U.S. Navy organization known as SpaWar and consisted of 76 communication packages for central ministries, the Governing Council, a lead governmental facility in all governorates, and 42 Ministry of Electricity facilities.

At the first TBS, programmatic directions were debated. Most felt that the security situation was permissive enough to return to OTI’s core themes of civil society, human rights, civic education, support to emerging governmental institutions, and promoting local community participation. These programs had already proven themselves effective in the Balkans, where many OTI staff had cut their teeth, but Iraq was proving itself unique. The resulting “OTI-Iraq Mission Statement and Operational Framework: October 2003 – March 2004” was targeted on the four focus areas of: (1) civil society; (2) good governance; (3) conflict management and mitigation, and (4) transitional justice. Media, short-term employment, and community/local impact would be “cross-cutting themes or project elements.”¹⁷

¹⁷ Training Resources Group. “Report on OTI-Iraq Team Retreat: Amman, Jordan, October 14-16, 2003.”

Activities continued for the next six months based on these focus areas and corresponding program objectives, although publication of a formal strategy was not possible given CPA's insistence on its strategy being the only official strategy for all U.S. government civilian agencies. The APU was folded under the rest of OTI and its activities in abuse prevention subsumed under transitional justice and human rights. Among other things, a democracy/governance (DG) program funded by the CPA contained a substantial section designed by OTI for OTI. Under this new DG program, activities included OTI participation in "democracy dialogues" in communities alongside the USAID contractor Research Triangle Institute (RTI). This activity fit under both strategic objectives 1 and 3.

2.5 Electoral Preparations

Based on two International Foundation for Elections Support (IFES) assessments funded by OTI, an OTI staff member was seconded to CPA in December 2003 to work on the national electoral structure and create an independent electoral commission. Support to the electoral process turned out to be one of the most successful U.S foreign policy initiatives in post-war Iraq.

The seconded staff member arrived just after the CPA had scuttled a three to four year plan to put in place electoral institutions and events. Speeding up this process was essential and one in which OTI played an important role. One of the most pressing mandates was to configure an electoral process that would not have too many events and would fit into a compressed timeframe. While the process would play out over a full two years, the building blocks and legal framework would all be in place by the time the OTI staff member left Iraq with the end of the CPA (June 2004).

A not insignificant contribution in launching this process was the decision to resort to the previous regime's public (food) distribution system (PDS) database. This yielded a ready made voter registration list. Other key components of this process were a full legal framework for elections and an Independent Electoral Commission. The latter, charged with devising and overseeing electoral rules, was finally composed of nine members whittled down from over 2,000 nominees.

3. April 2004 – April 2005

A number of events and actors converged in March/April 2004, resulting in a major strategic shift for OTI activities. The 1st Cavalry Division (1CD) replaced the 1st Armored Division (1AD) in Baghdad, a new USAID Mission Director arrived, OTI conducted its second Team Building Session in Amman, and uprisings broke out in Fallujah, Sadr City, Karbala, and Najaf.

3.1 Second Team Building Session (April 2004)

As the participants assembled in Amman for the second TBS, one of the topics to be addressed was the participants' need "to have a clearer grasp of the program's 'strategy' or implementation framework."¹⁸ Although it was generally agreed that the previous Mission statement¹⁹ had

¹⁸ Training Resources Group. "Report on OTI-Iraq Team Retreat: Amman, Jordan, April 13-15, 2004."

served them well, the Country Representative presented a strategy that was in essence a budget with four line items. Since these line items were stated as themes, they “allowed for maximum flexibility at the field level in identifying projects that could be categorized into one of these line items.” The budgetary themes had resulted from the soft earmark categories of the first Iraq supplemental legislation of late 2003.²⁰ These themes included support for civic education, civil society, infrastructure, media, women, civic programs, and the Iraqi Special Tribunal.

Among other things, TBS participants were tasked with redefining the overall OTI goal – the existing Mission statement – and what differences there should be in program areas and cross-cutting themes from those currently in use. Following the TBS, the OTI Country Representative returned to Baghdad, charged with developing a new strategy within two weeks for circulation to staff. Rapidly declining events must soon have overcome this process, for no new strategy document was produced.

3.2 Reorientation of OTI Programming

The major outcome of the rapidly declining security situation in April 2004 was a strategic redirection of OTI efforts to an emphasis on short-term employment programs to stabilize the situation, particularly in Baghdad. Early work in Sadr City in June 2003 had not been followed up due to a combination of OTI reluctance and CPA opposition.²¹ Finding himself faced with a vast increase in the scale of the insurgency, the 1st Cavalry Division’s commanding officer sought out the recently arrived USAID Mission Director for help. The USAID Mission Director asked OTI to put young men to work, beginning once again in Sadr City. This set in motion a growing partnership with the military that lasted until the close-out of OTI operations.

OTI had always collaborated with the military, and prior to April 2004 officers from civil affairs units even sat with OTI in the USAID Mission. However, the new relationship worked out between OTI, USAID, and the 1st Cavalry Division focused overwhelmingly on STE projects to occupy young men of military age (17-35) in daily projects that would pay them good wages by Iraqi standards (\$4-5 per day or more) to reduce the likelihood of their joining the insurgency. Although few hard data are now available, persons interviewed during the evaluation process stated that the military began to note a rapid and significant drop in the number of hostile incidents and U.S. casualties in Baghdad neighborhoods where STE projects occurred.

Short-term employment and neighborhood clean-up grants fell under the program objective of preventing, managing, mitigating and resolving conflict. While they served all three strategic objectives, they corresponded most to the second OTI strategic objective of filling gaps in USG assistance activities. No other entity of the U.S. government had funds available to do this.

Table 3 below presents the breakout of STE grants over the duration of the program.

¹⁹ The Mission statement was “to support critical initiatives that build Iraqi confidence in the transition to a participatory, stable, and democratic Iraq.”

²⁰ Known as the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund # 2.

²¹ The CPA wanted the new governmental ministries to be responsible for all employment projects and did not want OTI to engage further in STE after June 2003.

Table 3: Short-term Employment Grants Cleared by OTI in Iraq

Period	No. of Grants	Amount	Av. Per mo.	Total Grants	% of Total Grants	Total Amount	% of Total Funding
4/1/03–3/31/04	10	\$636,807	\$53,067	716	1.4%	\$40,909,106	1.6%
4/1/04–3/17/06	2402	\$210,177,197	\$8,917,149	4,517	53.2%	\$296,009,541	71.0%
Total	2412	\$210,814,004	\$6,101,708	5,233	46.1%	\$336,918,647	62.6%

In order for the relationship with the military to form and deepen during the period following April 2004, OTI (and USAID) expressed its concern not to be co-opted by the military, but rather to conserve the ability to turn down proposed activities. OTI expresses this as follows: “We absolutely guarded the opportunity to turn down proposals for activities. Innumerable projects were not implemented based upon OTI’s evaluation as to the efficacy and based upon the fact that they may not have fallen within the OTI mandate. OTI intensely sought to maintain independence from the military and would push back upon the military if ground commanders tried to assert control over OTI projects in their areas of operation.”²²

While focusing increasingly on STE projects because of Congressional funding to do so, the leadership of OTI in Iraq continued to feel that that there should be some logical next step to these projects. Had the security situation stabilized, which it never did, it is likely that OTI would have returned to a focus on grants to civil society organizations and support to the democratic transition that characterized much of 2003. Moreover, there was an increasing number of USAID contractors operating or poised to operate in the civil society and local governance spheres, so that without the insurgency OTI might have found itself able to withdraw after 18 to 24 months of in-country presence. Instead, given OTI’s effective generation of STE grants over the previous six months, Congress gave OTI \$200million in November 2004 to expand these projects in partnership with the military.

3.3 Partnership with the 1st Cavalry Division (Baghdad)

The OTI partnership with the U.S. military was based on a common vision and a determination to work together. OTI had to maintain a certain distance to function optimally, including the ability to resist supplying what appeared to be endless data to a plethoric and insatiable military staff. Beyond this, OTI had to be careful in deciding exactly where it would work and when, in order to protect its implementing structure and staff (DAI, Resource Organizations, and A-list NGOs). In May and June 2004, OTI initiated its first large-scale series of STE grants involving solid waste and sewage clean-up involving youth and students in Baghdad neighborhoods, including Rashid and Sadr City. These involved 100 grants for a total of \$12,613,633.

In order to improve coordination, the OTI Country Representative requested that the 1st Cavalry Division attach a full-time liaison officer (LNO) to sit with OTI in USAID. The person he requested was finally assigned to OTI in October 2004. This was the first time a liaison officer had been seconded from a combat brigade, and consequently coordination with the military improved significantly. The only thing that would have improved this arrangement, according to the former USAID Mission Director, would have been the placement of an OTI staff member

²² Written communication from OTI (July 2006).

within the military command structure.²³ Although this was never done, the value of the LNO had proven itself to the point where 1CD's successor divisions in Baghdad (3rd and 4th Infantry Divisions) both appointed LNOs. By OTI program end, in addition to the OTI LNO, there were two other LNOs concurrently attached to USAID (but sitting with OTI) – one from 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (Multinational Force-West) and one from Multinational Corps-Iraq. This is an important legacy left by OTI to all of the USAID Mission in Iraq.

Although STE projects were somewhat expensive, they were relatively simple to replicate and multiply. The average cost of the 2,412 STE grants was about \$87,400 compared to \$64,380 for all grants. If the military saw these projects largely as “force protection,” OTI also saw the potential to demonstrate visibly to the population that the interim and transitional Iraqi governments could provide some basic services and jobs. The resulting psychological impact on neighborhoods was part of the OTI emphasis on winning “hearts and minds.” Thus, STE grants, while filling an enormous assistance gap, actually supported all three OTI strategic objectives.

During the summer and fall of 2004, OTI became increasingly linked to military plans to stabilize strategic cities in the run-up to the first national elections in January 2005. Among these strategic cities were Baghdad, Najaf, Samarra, Fallujah, and Mosul. In August 2004, an OTI staff member accompanied the U.S. military to Najaf, in the aftermath of combat with the Mahdi militia. This became a template for several more OTI post-battle initiatives, including Fallujah in November 2004 and Tal Afar in October 2005.

By mid-October 2004 the weekly 1st CD Commanding General (CG) briefing was moved into the Green Zone for safety, whereby OTI and other USAID staff began to attend these meetings, discuss their programs, and coordinate in a systematic way with the military. By November 2004, OTI began attending weekly meetings with each combat brigade under the 1CD. At about the same time, a standardized format for 1CD military grant proposals and a grant tracking system were developed by the LNO and OTI.²⁴ The 1CD “grant tracker” excluded civil society projects at the request of OTI, in order to protect the identity of OTI's NGO partners and ensure they were not linked too closely with the military in public perception.

OTI had a particular mandate to ease neighborhood violence through STE projects in the run-up to the January 30 elections for the transitional government. From an average of 50 grants per month in May and June, the volume rose to 122 per month in July-September, 112 in October-December, and 194 per month in January-March 2005. It dropped off again in April-June to an average of 93 per month. Employment generated by these projects peaked at 65,000 young men per day in February and March 2005, just after the elections.

In spite of greatly increased emphasis on employment projects, many other grants in all program areas were issued between April 1, 2004 and March 31, 2005. As Table 4 illustrates, of a total of 2,551 grants cleared during this period, 796 (31%) fell under program objectives other than conflict mitigation.

²³ Stevenson, James. “Military-Civilian Cooperation: A Field Perspective.” *Foreign Service Journal* (Vol. 83, No. 3). March 2006.

²⁴ The grant tracker was for military use and is not the same as the OTI grants database.

Table 4: Grants Cleared from April 1, 2004 through March 31, 2005

Program Objective	No. of Grants	Amount of Grants
1. Increase citizen participation in social/political/economic life.	547	\$15,654,848
2. Enhance capacity of local/national governments.	186	\$12,591,361
3. Prevent, manage, mitigate, and resolve conflict.	1,755	\$172,554,343
4. Encourage respect for human rights and foster peace and reconciliation.	63	\$4,311,334
Total	2,551	\$205,111,886

The 1,385 STE/clean-up projects were 54% of all grants during this year, but 71.5% of grant funding. The Baghdad office issued 60% of these STE grants, followed by 20% for Erbil, 14% for Hilla, and 6% for Basra.

3.4 Students for Students

A good example of support to civil society under OTI strategic objective 1 was work undertaken directly with university student associations beginning in April 2004. This activity involved OTI directly in organizing student associations in universities, beginning in Baghdad. An Iraqi contractor staff member set about meeting with university students department by department, urging them to organize into associations that would then vote on a list of essential educational equipment needed in their departments. In some departments this went smoothly, but in others considerable coaching was required. Nevertheless, this was an explicit exercise in participatory democracy and attempts by radicals to dominate these associations were resisted peacefully and democratically. The program was subsequently extended to the north, center, and south of Iraq. In all, about 300 grants were issued to university department associations.

3.5 Third Team Building Session (December 2004)

Development of a future program strategy, as well as creative ways to overcome operational constraints, was an explicit objective of the 3rd TBS at the end of 2004.²⁵ With respect to strategic orientation, the TBS report indicates that going into the retreat “many staff reported they were unclear about OTI’s strategy and the level of program flexibility that was permitted.” While participants appreciated the relationship that had been forged with the military in and around Baghdad, there was a growing feeling that STE projects were not equally relevant for OTI regional offices across Iraq.

In the TBS, OTI’s management team discussed the OTI Iraq strategy and how it related to USAID and to the U.S. military. The strategic alignment with the military was apparently difficult for many Iraqi and some expatriate DAI staff. OTI management pointed out that OTI was an integral part of USAID, itself an integral part of the overall United States mission to Iraq. Given OTI’s success in funding a high volume of these grants, Congress had provided another \$200million in November 2004 to carry on STE projects in collaboration with the military. In doing this, OTI was filling an assistance gap that no other civilian agency could address.

²⁵ TRG. “Report on OTI-Iraq Team Retreat: Amman, Jordan – December 7- 9, 2004.”

4. April 2005 – April 2006

The final period examined here corresponds to the tenure of the last OTI Country Representative. During this period, OTI initially planned to withdraw by the end of 2005, but the U.S. Ambassador requested that OTI remain for six months longer (June 2006) to allow time for appropriate linkages to be made to USAID projects and follow-on military activities (especially STE). It was a time of continued close collaboration with the U.S. military and the continuation of OTI post-battle actions.

As indicated in Table 5, during this period, 63% of all grants were cleared for activities in support of conflict mitigation, while 37% of grants continued to support work under the three other program objectives. STE/clean-up grants constituted 52% of all grants and 70% of grant funding. About half (52%) of STE grants were issued by the Baghdad office, 23% by Basra, 15% by Erbil, and 10% by the Hilla office.

Table 5: Grants Cleared from April 1, 2005 through March 17, 2005 ²⁶

Program Objective	No. of Grants	Amount of Grants
1. Increase citizen participation in social/political/economic life.	514	\$9,596, 783
2. Enhance capacity of local/national governments.	204	\$11,039,977
3. Prevent, manage, mitigate, and resolve conflict.	1,238	\$69,331,295
4. Encourage respect for human rights and foster peace and reconciliation.	10	\$929,599
Total	1,966	\$90,897,655

4.1 Remote Operations

The security situation had declined by late 2004 to the point where OTI was unable to implement directly most of its previous activities in Baghdad and central Iraq. OTI responded to this situation by developing an implementation strategy known as “remote operations.” Thus, OTI managers were restricted to the Green Zone in Baghdad and to two regional offices (Hilla and Basra), conducting their work largely through email communication. DAI expatriate staff moved to Jordan in October 2004 and then to Erbil in June 2005. In Baghdad, DAI Iraqi staff continued to be located outside the Green Zone, where they implemented and monitored grants by means of the two engineering/construction firms known as the “Resource Organizations.” The latter had several offices in Baghdad and in the regions.

In Baghdad, DAI Iraqi staff had little or no ability to seek out new grant ideas or monitor implementation. In the north (Erbil office), DAI expatriate and Iraqi staff could get out into most areas to identify and supervise projects. DAI Iraqi staff did the same in and around Basra. In the Hilla (South-Central) regional office, the OTI program manager and the DAI program development officer were able to receive grantees, but could not easily leave the office to generate grants or monitor projects. The basic implementation structure for all areas except the

²⁶ Database as it stood at the time of the final evaluation.

north was much the same and relied heavily on the two ROs and their implementing mechanisms.

Most grant ideas in Baghdad in 2005 and 2006 were channeled to OTI by the military, which constituted the “eyes and ears” of the partnership. They did this in direct consultation with local authorities, usually district and neighborhood councils. These councils tended to request conflict mitigation activities and became the official grantees. While combat brigades in Baghdad and other areas were concerned to identify areas for force protection, they always consulted with local councils or other authorities before passing requests to OTI program managers for clearance. These, in turn, would convey approved requests to the DAI program development officers (PDOs), who passed them on to the two ROs. The latter then approached the requesting local authorities to negotiate the grants.

In many cases, the ROs themselves channeled grant requests upward from local authorities to DAI for acceptance by OTI, but interviewees stated that only about 10%-15% of these were actually funded. Preference went to satisfying military STE requests, because it was explicit in the funding provided by Congress to OTI in November 2004 that OTI would work closely with the military to mitigate conflict through STE activities. In Al Anbar province, however, ROs were the primary linkage to local Iraqi authorities (sheikhs, mayors, and councils).

Following OTI approval of requests, the ROs generally did their own “ground truthing” of the situation, feeling “that the military was not always asking the right questions.” The ROs took full responsibility for connecting with grantees in implementation and organizing work parties through local contacts. Generally speaking, the details of these arrangements were left to the ROs. OTI carefully maintained several “layers of separation” between itself and actual grant implementation, not only because of contractual requirements but also to avoid compromising the security of DAI and RO staff and local authorities.

OTI’s contract with DAI (SWIFT II) specifically required working directly with grantees, who signed off on grants (often in English) without necessarily having much to do with choosing sites, monitoring activities, or even selecting the workers. Some interviewees hinted at the fact that more could have been done to develop the grantees’ capacity. However, OTI was only responsible for building grantee capacity to the extent that they constituted a viable in-kind grant recipient. Longer-term institution building of these entities was the responsibility of other USAID projects.²⁷

Project implementation monitoring on the ground was largely done by the military, which conducted helicopter flyovers or ran seemingly routine vehicular patrols through employment areas. This was distinct from STE grant supervision, which was the role of the ROs and DAI. To the extent that military units monitored STE project progress or completion, this was done in consultation with OTI. At times the military passed back information to OTI on specific projects when there were complaints or questions, which OTI passed on to DAI and the ROs. Normally the ROs took “before, during, and after” photographs. The ROs also supplied numbers and names of workers employed to DAI, but the names were not kept for security reasons.

²⁷ Particularly the USAID Local Governance project and the Community Action Program (CAP).

Since the beginning of the OTI program, nearly 600,000 worker-months (594,919 through May 2006) were funded at an average cost of \$354 per worker-month and a total cost of \$210,814,000 at time of evaluation. Unskilled workers received between \$5 and \$11 per day, depending on the place, with skilled workers or professionals receiving more. Most of this was spent in strategic cities, with the lion's share of STE grants (\$140million out of \$210million) issued by the Baghdad office.

In the final analysis, the actual human impact of these grants can only be assumed. There was little feedback to OTI on what happened to the persons involved in these projects. Although the military saw a clear relationship between neighborhood STE/clean-up projects and a reduction in violent incidents and military casualties, data supporting this relationship no longer appear available. Using the implementing ROs or A-list NGOs to gather information on how participants viewed these projects and what they did with the income would have been desirable and possible, but this was attempted only once in September 2005. This would have yielded information on how participants saw the projects in relation to OTI's strategic objectives of winning support for the new democracy and interim government. It might also have led to fine-tuning of the STE grants. The overall population impact of neighborhood cleaning, imparting hope and a sense of control to local residents, may well have been as strong in reducing violence as actual employment of young men. Certainly both types of outcomes flowed from these activities.

4.2 Post-battle Initiatives

The US Mission in Iraq had developed a "strategic cities" initiative in late 2004, and OTI and the military operated within that strategic context in their selection of communities for conflict mitigation activities. For the military, multiplying force protection took precedence, but there was also a good deal of thought given to the strategic or symbolic importance of specific communities. Sadr City was clearly one of these, and it is likely that the Mahdi militia would not have had as much backing as it got there in early 2004, if employment projects had continued after June 2003.

Post-battle reconstruction and clean-up continued during this last year of grant activity, based on previous experiences in Najaf and Falluja. This involved USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) program manager in Baghdad, as well as the OTI Country Representative in joint planning sessions with the military command prior to the Tal Afar offensive in October 2005. The Tal Afar campaign is the most recent and most touted example of this collaboration, in which OTI projects hit the ground in strategic cities as the fighting stopped. However, OTI's involvement in the retaking of Najaf (August 2004) and Falluja (November 2004) was more extensive.

In Tal Afar, grants funded school rehabilitation and equipment, parks, soccer fields and moved from the city out to surrounding villages. As in the case of Najaf and Falluja, OTI program managers were "embedded" at frequent intervals in the military planning cell. In Tal Afar, however, DAI and the ROs had their own contacts in this area that substantially assisted with identification of grantees and areas for assistance. OTI followed on the heels of its DCHA sister

organization OFDA, providing follow-on activities to the immediate humanitarian assistance that OFDA rendered in the aftermath of military operations.

4.3 Grant Sequencing and Complementarity

Grant packaging in conflict mitigation, involving sequencing of various grants in neighborhoods, began in 2004 in Najaf and Sadr City and was replicated down to program close-out in 2006. It occurred in every strategic geographic area since its inception and was linked to the USG strategic cities initiative. As security improved in a targeted area, OTI funded grants that eventually brought local Iraqi NGOs to a point where they could begin work in formerly prohibitive environments.

Trash removal and employment grants were accompanied or followed by civic education or public education campaigns on the value of engaging in community clean-ups. Extensive billboard information, tree planting, and curb painting grants were all components of these sequencing packages. There are examples of trash removal leading to the clearing of a soccer field followed by a neighborhood soccer match. The last Country Representative indicated the following ideal sequence for OTI activities in a given place: (1) equipment deliveries to local government; (2) trash removal/clean-up projects; (3) rehabilitation of small infrastructure; and (4) civic education (neighborhood cleanliness) and civil society (local NGO support) grants to preserve the gains made through STE grants.

In September 2005 a team composed of the OTI Country Representative, OTI program managers, and military officers compiled material to describe grant integration and sequencing that had been going on since the spring of 2004.²⁸ The paper describes how OTI/Baghdad “has made a strong effort to make the large scale, tailored short-term grants more strategic in scope, implementation, and target group.” The document described the rationale for more discrete linkage in order to maintain high impact in smaller areas, as OTI funding wound down and grants were increasingly targeted on specific areas. Thus, “when developing a strategy [focused on a geographic area], these non-military related grants have become linked with the conflict mitigation and hard infrastructure projects.” In this way, a sequence of projects (project packages) was developed for specific neighborhoods, involving the A-list NGOs in complementary and follow-on activities to STE projects, including public information and civic education activities. NGOs used their own networks “to disseminate messages through radio, television and print to access the public.”

The September 2005 paper goes on to draw up a set of lessons learned from the experience of working with the military and devising packages of activities bringing in civil society organizations. Beyond extolling the value of working closely with the armed forces and stressing the need to improve this relationship by educating them,²⁹ lessons learned also included the need to be proactive in neighborhood selection (before they become “hot spots”), the need for OTI to take the lead in drawing in non-military organizations during strategy development to

²⁸ Sullivan, Suzanne et al. “The USAID/OTI and Military Relationship.” September 8, 2005. This was actually a collaborative effort between OTI and the U.S. military involving several authors.

²⁹ OTI’s 1 CD LNO developed an “OTI 101” brief in late 2004, as well as a brief on basic project development.

tailor specific grant packages, and the likelihood that these packages would not only increase program impact but also their durability.

OTI did not fund a one-to-one sequence of grant types listed above, but rather linked a series of STE grants with a few follow-on grants. For example, when the time was appropriate in Falluja after a series of cleaning and equipment grants, OTI funded two public information campaigns (civic education) on keeping neighborhoods clean for health and security reasons.

If the A-list NGOs and their local contacts could be effective in program development, they might also have been relied upon more for feedback on results and impact. As the September 2005 paper states: “Without any feedback on OTI Baghdad’s projects, OTI Baghdad has little concrete means for showing the impact of its activities.” This point was brought up by numerous informants during evaluation interviewees, who also stated that monitoring and evaluation should not be left just to the military, since it is not always looking for the same outcomes (e.g., force protection). OTI did issue a grant to an A-list NGO for a limited M&E study in September 2005, but lack of financial and human resources in a period of winding down to program close-out precluded its continuation.

While little is available concerning population impact of STE grants, a short debriefing paper prepared by OTI South/Central region (Hilla) in June 2005 raises some issues with respect to the level of participatory democracy in these grants.³⁰ OTI Hilla wrote: “It would behoove OTI Hillah to re-work the way it develops and manages projects that generate short-term employment.” While the paper recognized that employing young men might well reduce the insurgency, the concern was raised that community members, local council members, and provincial council members “need to be more involved in the development and implementation of such projects” and that OTI grants should do more to strengthen local governmental capacity and its accountability to the citizenry. The OTI program needed to meet the immediate needs of local communities as articulated by the communities themselves. The paper ended on the following note: “When the program shifted towards temporary employment, prior projects were left to the way side and were implemented poorly, if implemented at all. Additionally, such projects lost all community interest and buy in. They rarely served the intent that they were originally designed to address.” The author gives no figures on success rates for these other projects, and similar complaints were rarely expressed by persons interviewed during the evaluation.

The database indicates that STE grants had become the overwhelming majority in South/Central region by the arrival of a new program manager in June 2005. The manager worked to increase the strength and accountability of local governmental councils and address community-expressed needs. He also reduced the number of employment grants, presumably because local councils were requesting other types of projects by this time. From 91% of all grants cleared over the previous six months, STE grants fell to 32% from June 2005 to mid-March 2006.

³⁰ OTI Hilla. “OTI Hillah Debrief.” June 2005. No author (apparently prepared by the outgoing program manager).

4.4 Fourth Team Building Session (June 6-8, 2005)

The importance of the periodic team building sessions (retreats) for stocktaking and strategizing should not be minimized. Not only did they increasingly constitute a major means of communication between OTI and DAI staff within Iraq and between the field and Washington, but they also brought in representatives from other parts of USAID, the military, and the Resource Organizations. In the absence of much documentation, they also provide a record of strategic thinking and internal discussions. Each of these retreats had assembled an increasing number of participants. This fourth team retreat in June 2005 included 84 participants (up from 60 in the previous TBS and 53 in April 2004).³¹

The overall purpose of the fourth TBS was to “clarify the path forward for the OTI/DAI Iraq program.” The volume of grants had peaked in early 2005, corresponding to elections for the transitional assembly and its seating. From April 2005, the number of grants steadily diminished as funding was depleted. The growing differences between regions and uncertain funding as the program headed toward close-out by year’s end (later extended to June 2006) were staff concerns.

A situation analysis was presented by the OTI Country Representative in opening comments. The heavy emphasis across Iraq on mitigating conflict and reducing tensions through STE grants focused on a target group of young, unskilled adult males was acknowledged, although regional creativity had extended trash removal to cleaning canals and planting trees. At the same time, the CR recognized continued efforts to provide support to youth, women’s groups, and local NGOs. The Students for Students program was singled out for praise.

The CR went on to discuss the sequencing and packaging of these STE activities with other grants that targeted civic education, anti-violence, and cleanliness education campaigns. Linking efforts in civil society and civic education (neighborhood cleanliness campaigns) to STE activities was a strategic concern in each of the regions. The CR stressed that support to local NGOs also continued to be important to OTI management, in addition to structural rehabilitation grants.

The Country Representative explained that work with the military provided a means by which OTI could educate its partner on how OTI operated, resulting in force multiplication of OTI efforts, expanding OTI’s reach, providing follow up on project implementation, and serving as a means of communication between Iraqi population needs and OTI activities. What the CR hoped to communicate was that OTI gained a great deal from the relationship with the military and that force multiplication applied to OTI as well as to the military.

While a new strategic statement was not expected from this Team Building Session because of uncertainties concerning future funding and the close-out date, the continued interest of participants in pursuing all OTI strategic objectives, particularly democracy building and support to local government and civil society, shows through clearly. There is also a constant thread through the four TBSs of questions related to what OTI grants were accomplishing, though no clear answers could be provided.

³¹ TRG. “Report on OTI-DAI Iraq Team Retreat: Amman, Jordan, June 6-8, 2005.”

4.5 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

The SWIFT II contract with DAI made the contractor responsible for designing and implementing an M&E system, which for security reasons and lack of technical expertise it failed to do. Moreover, the task order to the contractor provided no staff for M&E and made little mention of this activity. Consequently, M&E received little attention until early in 2005, when an internal OTI report criticized the program for not having an M&E system. Shortly before the June 2005 TBS, OTI began to discuss the idea of having NGOs do project evaluations. From this flowed a grant to one of the A-list NGOs in September to conduct an evaluation of a small number of civil society grants. The result was of dubious value, and OTI had neither the time nor the staff to build M&E capacity in its NGO partners as the program moved toward close-out. Building such a capacity among some or all of the A-list NGOs should have begun in 2003, but at that time OTI left this responsibility to its implementing contractor.

IV. Overall Conclusions

1. OTI successfully carried out activities that directly addressed its first strategic objective of supporting critical activities that build and sustain Iraqi confidence in the development of a participatory, stable, and democratic Iraq. OTI support to civil society organizations laid a firm foundation for a more inclusive and participatory democracy. Neighborhood and district councils were empowered as grantees. Substantial economic benefits were generated through short-term employment grants that also served to demonstrate highly visible governmental services to neighborhoods. Solid groundwork was also carried out in human rights, women's rights, property rights, and the documentation of war crimes.
2. OTI successfully pursued its second strategic objective of identifying and filling crucial gaps in U.S. government assistance efforts at national and local levels. OTI was on the ground in Iraq with the first wave of U.S. civilian assistance and ended up by leading it. Through the APU, OTI quickly identified and responded to human rights issues in property rights and mass graves. When other U.S. agencies were still setting up, OTI filled assistance gaps in property rights, human rights, women's rights, civil society start-ups, war crimes documentation, media activities, local governmental strengthening, and short-term employment/clean-up projects. When USAID requested that OTI redirect substantial funds into short-term employment and neighborhood clean-up projects to address the insurgency, OTI proved itself so effective that Congress granted it substantial monies in late 2004 to continue this effort through 2005 and beyond.
3. OTI also appropriately carried out activities in support of its third strategic objective of increasing public support for the interim government. Central governmental institutions were rapidly rehabilitated and equipped with work stations. Facilities identified for provincial, district, and neighborhood councils were rehabilitated and equipped, and numerous in-kind grants were made to local authorities for rehabilitation and employment activities. Many public schools and health centers were rehabilitated. Between December 2003 and June 2004, OTI participated in the design of a national governmental elections framework and process that jump-started work continued under the USAID Mission.

4. OTI made important contributions to strengthening democratic processes and increasing momentum for peaceful resolution of conflict in its elections framework work, in jump-starting civil society, and in using local councils as grantees in over two thousand rehabilitation and employment/clean-up projects.
5. While it is clear that OTI was on target in its program, it is difficult to judge the magnitude of objective achievement, because OTI did not define end states or develop indicators to track progress toward these outcomes. Some public opinion polling of population perceptions was carried out in 2003 but was later abandoned for security reasons.
6. From all evidence, OTI had significant impact on standing up governmental and other public institutions through the rehabilitation of offices and the equipment and supply kits that followed. These “ministry in the box” grants targeted national ministries and provincial directorates and were particularly prevalent in 2003. Provincial and local councils (district and neighborhood) and schools and some health centers were targeted through a similar approach.
7. OTI had important impact on the creation of civil society in Iraq by jump-starting support for a large number of organizations that became major participants in an emerging independent civil society. From few, if any, independent organizations under the previous regime, except in the autonomous northern area (Iraqi Kurdistan), there are now hundreds of Iraqi NGOs or unregistered equivalents. In the north, existing civil society was strengthened and continued its expansion. While not alone in building a burgeoning civil society, OTI was certainly a major player and was in action before most other assistance organizations.
8. OTI played an important role in building a legal foundation and process for two elections and a constitutional referendum by seconding an experienced staff member to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) for this purpose. By the time this staff member left Iraq in June 2004, the elections’ process had been successfully jump-started and was able to play itself out with little disruption and steadily increasing Iraqi participation.
9. OTI played an important role in addressing conflicting property claims and human rights violations in the first months of presence in country. It pioneered work with freed prisoners, mass graves, and women rights. It supported the Iraqi Special Tribunal by rehabilitating the court house and providing grants designed to establish mechanisms and units able to collect, secure, and store documentary evidence.
10. The OTI program shifted strategically between 2003 and 2006 through a combination of internal impetus and external events. The program was reoriented from its initial mode with the arrival of the first official Country Representative in October 2003. At this time, it was narrowed to four program objectives that reflected Congressional reporting requirements. Pursuit of these objectives was interrupted by a serious rise in the insurgency in April 2004, following which OTI developed a close working relationship with the U.S. military and emphasized short-term employment grants. The last Country Representative deepened and intensified the OTI-military partnership after March 2005, while preserving many of the activities of other focus areas, in part by packaging them with employment projects.

11. There were significant expenditures month by month over the life of the program that supported specific stabilizing or conflict mitigation activities. Thus, in the run-up and immediate aftermath of the January 2005 elections, while the transitional government was being chosen and seated, grant expenditures were fairly high. These expenditures would also peak or increase prior to and in the sensitive periods following the constitutional referendum (October 2005) and the December 2005 elections for the permanent government. OTI activities were extended from December 2005 to June 2006 in large part to program an additional \$35 million dollars to employ Iraqis in the run up to the December elections and government formation in its aftermath.

12. Because OTI found a clear niche in the transition process, successful program linkage to the USAID Mission is under way. OTI demonstrated what was possible and workable in community stabilization and much of its program served as a direct precursor to the current USAID follow-on program.

13. OTI has also clearly had major impact on the U.S military in Iraq, paving the way for future close civilian and military collaboration in Iraq and other countries. While this probably would not have occurred without the insurgency, it has certainly demonstrated the value of joining these two cultures in collaborative “win-win” activities.

14. Clear legacies and spearheading efforts of the Iraq Transition Initiative include development of a key set of local partner NGOs, military liaisons from combat brigades, the military-OTI partnership, remote operations, strategic shifting of programming, and effective program linkage to follow-on activities of the USAID Mission.

15. More documentation of program decisions and operations should have occurred in a program of this size and importance. Considering the length of time involved and considerable prominence of OTI’s role in political stabilization and transition in Iraq, there is very little written material on program strategy and operational decisions.

16. Insufficient effort was expended in gathering feedback on grant results and population impact. While the contractor organization was relied upon to do monitoring and evaluation, its task order contained no funding or staff position to do so. Although security was an issue, more could have been done to address this information gap by employing key local NGO partners. By engaging them in this activity early on in program activities, these NGOs would have developed their methods and capacities in monitoring and evaluation.

V. Recommendations

1. OTI should rethink and revise formal strategy statements as it shifts strategically to changing events in a given country. The team building retreats set the stage for this, but little follow-up appears to occur. Since there are rarely written OTI documents conveying the shifts in focus or emphasis of what follow up action is taken, OTI field management should issue to staff brief memoranda documenting what has changed and where the program is heading over the following six months. If a major strategic document has been envisaged, this follow-up function could be assisted by senior advisors or contracted out.

2. Conceptualizing the relationship between strategic and program objectives and between program objectives and program activities in an objective tree would be a useful exercise to ensure congruity and clarity of various levels of action. If the program shifts strategically, the objective tree can be revised accordingly.
3. Lessons learned in the military-OTI partnership in Iraq may be applied in similar situations in the future. While OTI shares some common culture with the U.S. military, there are many differences that required OTI in Iraq to assert its own philosophy and methodology. How OTI successfully maintained its uniqueness in Iraq, as it worked in collaboration with the military should be understood by all staff for use in future such arrangements.
4. The early identification and capacity building of a key set of NGOs is a useful model that should be emulated in future post-conflict situations, where civil society has remained undeveloped or has been largely destroyed. They can become trusted partners for OTI activities, when other alternatives are limited.
5. While adapting strategically to changing circumstances, OTI should maintain as wide a variety of preferred themes and core competencies as possible. In the same way that OTI found ways to be creative in its sequencing and packaging of activities around short-term employment, it should continue to seek opportunities within program mandates to shift the funding mix, when feedback indicates the need for changes in activities or target groups. To do this, it will need to increase feedback from activities.
6. Some reasonable means to secure feedback on grant results and impact should be devised in every OTI country program. Given the nature of what OTI does, this does not mean developing rigid objectives and performance indicators in most country contexts. Nor does it require extensive surveys or other formal methods. Hiring local NGOs to investigate program results and impacts would be invaluable, whether or not security allows OTI staff to observe directly.
7. Although any M&E system should remain as simple as possible, care must be taken to focus attention on results and outcomes (impacts), rather than on inputs and lower-level outputs. This does not mean that every activity type will be equally susceptible to results measurement, nor that not being able to measure some activities should exclude them from the grant mix. It would be useful to cast this in terms of measuring major grant types, such as work with civil society, media, elections, women's rights, participatory local government, national governmental functioning, and so on. Program objectives may also be formulated in such a way that simple measures based on polling or sampling of key informants yield a sense of what has been accomplished. This will certainly require building in an M&E capacity in the task order to contractors in future country interventions. This would include a funded position and a budget to collect and/or analyze feedback from program grantees.

Annex A: Relationship of OTI Strategic and Program Objectives

OTI had three broad strategic objectives in Iraq:

- (1) Support critical activities that build and sustain Iraqi confidence in the development of a participatory, stable, and democratic Iraq;
- (2) Identify and fill crucial gaps in the USG assistance efforts at national and local levels;
- (3) Increase public support for the Interim Government.

As the OTI program took form in Iraq, these broad objectives came to encompass more defined program objectives and focus areas. These are first defined by OTI Iraq management in the October 2003 Team Building Session (team retreat) in Amman, Jordan. In the retreat report, an “OTI-Iraq Mission Statement and Operational Framework: October 2003 – March 2004” identified four program focus areas:³²

1. Civil society – included strengthening community associations (local NGOs), media development, technical assistance, and organizational infrastructure. Civic education campaigns were central to this focus area.
2. Good governance – included national-level support to elections, Governing Council, ministries, a new constitution, and small-scale infrastructure repair; and local-level support to district, city, and neighborhood councils, also including small-scale infrastructure repair. No support was ever given to political parties. This focus area was later renamed “transparency.”
3. Conflict management and mitigation – included activities focused on flashpoints, involvement of key stakeholders (participatory approaches), and high impact and visibility.
4. Transitional justice – included documenting past regime abuses, property rights issues, and work with the judicial system. This was later renamed “justice and human rights.”

In addition to these focus areas, media, short-term employment, and community/local impact would be “cross-cutting themes or project elements,” meaning they might be included in any of the focal areas.

Following the team retreat, an OTI briefing paper from October 2003³³ presents the four focus areas, but also includes five program objectives for coding grants in the OTI database.³⁴ One of these objectives – temporary employment and basic community services – was later removed, yielding the four currently in use. Temporary employment was placed under Objective 3 (prevent, manage, mitigate, and resolve conflict). These objectives mirror the four program focus areas.

³² Training Resources Group. “Report on OTI-Iraq Team Retreat: Amman, Jordan, October 14-16, 2003.”

³³ OTI. “Introduction to the Iraq Transition Initiative (ITI) and OTI Small Grants.” October 2003.

³⁴ OTI tracks all its grants in an ACCESS-based database.

1. Increase citizen participation in social/political/economic life.
2. Enhance capacity of local/national governments.
3. Prevent, manage, mitigate, and resolve conflict.
4. Encourage respect for human rights and foster peace and reconciliation.

With only a few modifications, the four focus areas of the current database correspond to those first established for the OTI program. Good governance, for example, has been replaced by transparency and traditional justice by justice and human rights.

These focus areas and objectives may be compared to the Section 2207 reporting format to Congress since the first supplemental legislation,³⁵ in which OTI reported on four categories: democracy building activities, civic education, human rights, and crimes against humanity. It was against these four line items that OTI funding was received, then obligated and disbursed.

Correspondence between Strategic and Program Objectives

The four program objectives fold under OTI's broad strategic objectives as presented in Table 1 below. It must be kept in mind that the origin of these program objectives was in the field. Strategic objective #2 – filling gaps in U.S. government assistance – certainly cross-cut all program objectives to some degree. Given the enormous strategic gap filled by OTI in the domain of conflict mitigation through short-term employment projects (63% of all grant expenditures), short-term employment (STE) projects have been matched to filling crucial gaps in the table.

Table 1: Relationship between OTI Strategic and Program Objectives in Iraq

Strategic Objectives	Program Objectives
1. Support critical activities that build and sustain Iraqi confidence in the development of a participatory, stable, and democratic Iraq.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase citizen participation in social/political/economic life. • Encourage respect for human rights and foster peace and reconciliation.
2. Identify and fill crucial gaps in the USG assistance efforts at national and local levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent, manage, mitigate, and resolve conflict.
3. Increase public support for the Interim Government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance capacity of local/national governments.

³⁵ Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund 1 (supplemental legislation) of October 2003.

Annex B: Persons Interviewed

Name	Title
Office of Transition Initiatives	
Rob Jenkins	Deputy Director, OTI Washington
Justin Sherman	Iraq Team Leader, OTI Washington
Jeanne Briggs	Former Iraq team leader, OTI Washington
Lauren Barbour	Former Iraq team leader, OTI Washington
Leah Werchick	Former Program Manager, OTI Washington
Jason Aplon	Senior Field Advisor, OTI Washington
Gordon Shettle	Program Manager, OTI Washington
Heidi Silvey	Country Representative, OTI Iraq
Megan Holleran	Country Program Manager, OTI Iraq
Ken Spear	Country Program Manager, OTI Iraq
Suzanne Sullivan	Country Program Manager, OTI Iraq
Brian Kuns	Country Program Manager, OTI Iraq
Kirk Day	Former Country Representative, OTI Iraq
Sinclair Cornell	Former Country Program Manager, OTI Iraq
Sara Brewer	Deputy Country Representative
Denise Dauphinais	Former Acting Country Representative
Shannon Martinez	Former Country Program Manager, OTI
Karen Hanrahan	Advisor on Human Rights, OTI
John Gattorn	Former member of OTI Abuse Protection Unit
Albert Cevallos	Former head of OTI Abuse Protection Unit
Steve Epstein	Former member of OTI Abuse Protection Unit
Sloan Mann	Former member of OTI Abuse Protection Unit
Fritz Weden	Former head of OTI Dart team
Donna Kerner	Former member of OTI DART team
Eleanor Bedford	OTI Senior Field Advisor
Adam Schmidt	Former OTI staff member in CPA
Victor Tanner	Former OTI consultant
Development Alternatives, Inc.	
Bruce Spake	IQC Manager, DAI Bethesda
Steve Connolly	Task Order Manager, DAI Bethesda
David Williams	Chief of Party, DAI
Jim Benson	Deputy Chief of Party, DAI
Getu Reta	Former Chief of Party, DAI

*	Regional Program Manager, DAI
*	Regional Program Manager, DAI
*	Program Development Officer, DAI
*	Program Development Officer, DAI
*	Program Development Officer, DAI
*	Program Development Officer, DAI
*	Program Development Officer, DAI
*	Program Development Officer, DAI
*	Program Development Officer, DAI
*	Program Development Officer, DAI
*	Program Development Officer, DAI
*	Former Program Development Officer, DAI
*	Information Officer, DAI
*	Procurement Officer, DAI
*	Grant Manager, DAI
*	Grant Manager, DAI
*	Grant Manager, DAI
*	Grant Manager, DAI
*	Grant Manager, DAI
*	Grant Manager, DAI
*	Grant Manager, DAI
U.S. Military	
Captain A. Heather Coyne	Former U.S Army civil affairs officer in CPA
Lieutenant Colonel Otto Busher	Baghdad Chief of Public Services, PRT
Colonel Kendall Cox	MNC-I Reconstruction Advisor
Captain Dustin Felix	Former LNO for 1 st CD to USAID/OTI
Major Jan January	Former LNO from MNF-W (Anbar) to USAID/OTI
Colonel Jonathan Brazee	MNF-W LNO to USAID/OTI
Lieutenant Colonel John Boland	Civil Affairs MNF-W
Other USAID	
Mike Hess	Assistant Administrator, DCHA Washington
Dawn Liberi	USAID/Iraq Mission Director
Spike Stevenson	Former USAID Mission Director, Iraq
Chuck Swagman	Present OFDA officer in USAID Iraq
Rick Quinby	Former OFDA officer in USAID Iraq
John Acree	Former Food for Peace Officer, USAID Iraq
Bob Gersony	Advisor to Administrator, USAID

* Names of Iraqis were removed for security reasons.

Resource Organizations	
General Manager	Implementation Resource Organization (1)
General Manager	Implementation Resource Organization (1)
General Manager	Implementation Resource Organization (2)
Others	
Stephen Lennon	Program manager, IOM Iraq
Dave Hodgkinson	Former State Department member of CPA

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Annex D: OTI/IRAQ FINAL EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK REVISED (8/1/06)

Introduction

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives supports critical activities that build and sustain Iraqi confidence in the development of a participatory, stable, and democratic Iraq. The Iraq Transition Initiative (ITI) works closely with the Iraqi Interim Government and the U.S. Embassy in Iraq. ITI identifies and fills crucial gaps in the U.S. Government's assistance efforts at national and local levels and increases public support for the Interim Government. Activities are primarily implemented through a contract with Development Alternatives Inc. that allows for fast and flexible disbursement of small grants to local Iraqi groups and institutions. Since the program started in April 2003, ITI has issued approximately 5,000 small grants totaling \$335 million.

Initially, ITI's fast paced assistance met critical needs-providing short-term employment, restoring basic government and community services, increasing Iraqi access to information and communication, and encouraging protection of human rights. As the situation in Iraq evolves, ITI focuses on areas crucial to the development of Iraqi democracy e.g. civic education, civil society, media, women's participation, good governance, conflict mitigation, human rights and transitional justice.

Purpose

As OTI prepares to end its program activities in Iraq, we would like to explore through an evaluation the following questions:

- OTI's strategy in Iraq was to support critical activities that build and sustain Iraqi confidence in the development of a participatory, stable, and democratic Iraq; to identify and fill crucial gaps in the USG assistance efforts at national and local levels; and to increase public support for the Interim Government. Did OTI succeed in implementing this strategy, and in what ways could its efforts have been improved?
- Was the program strategic in responding to shifts in the transition process both in terms of evolving U.S. foreign policy imperatives and in terms of the evolving political and security situation inside Iraq? Within this context, did the program meet its stated goals and objectives?
- Discuss the program's operational successes and shortcomings and identify lessons learned and best practices from which future programming will benefit.*
- OTI continues to work closely with the U.S. Military in "post-battle" or immediate post conflict contexts. Where was the confluence of interests between the military and OTI in Iraq? Where and how can we optimize this relationship? Were there operational constraints that inhibited our ability to achieve our program objectives because of our work with the military? How can OTI continue to work with the military and do it in

ways that advance our strategic objectives? Should OTI move beyond being perceived as “force protection multipliers”?*

* Note that the first two questions will be addressed by Social Impact in a public document while the last two bullets will be addressed primarily by OTI senior field advisors (see the Team Composition section below) with assistance from SI and will only be available as internal USG annexes.

Security

Due to security restrictions that prevent free movement for U.S. Government employees and contractors in Iraq, the methodology for this independent evaluation will have to deviate from recent OTI final evaluations. The final evaluation team will not be able to visit project sites in Iraq and any movement will be severely restrained and extremely expensive. Therefore, OTI proposes that the evaluation be conducted by interviewing stakeholders and participants.

In addition, no attribution to grantees, locations, and names (beyond general provinces) can be made in the final documents and this information will be conveyed to the interviewer(s) and to the interviewees.

Objectives

The objective of this task order is to provide technical assistance to OTI for the following:

A. Final Evaluation

1. Recruit and field a 1-person final evaluation team to Jordan and Washington D.C.;
2. Determine, together with OTI, an appropriate methodology (including questionnaires) for the evaluation/AAR;
3. Evaluate the performance and impact of the OTI/Iraq program;
4. Document, in a final evaluation report for public distribution, findings, conclusions and lessons learned from the program, as well as recommendations for the future;
5. Assist in preparing the operations and military sections of the evaluation for internal USG circulation.
6. Provide out-briefings and an official presentation in Washington on the final evaluation.

A substantial amount of information and documentation exists on the program. OTI would like the evaluation team to first conduct a desk study of existing documentation on each program, and then conduct a series of semi-structured interviews at the Close-Out Planning Session that will take place in Amman in late March. A second round of interviews can take place in Washington D.C. in April.

Team Composition

1. One senior level evaluator with extensive experience designing and conducting evaluations. The senior level evaluator will serve as team leader and be responsible for the interviews in Jordan, the draft and final evaluation reports, and for debriefs in Washington, DC.

The evaluator should have experience in countries in transition and in the Middle East. OTI will provide two OTI staff members as resources on the evaluation team: one senior field advisor, and one field advisor with military experience in Iraq. Both will participate in the planning and methodology for the evaluation and will be in Amman and/or Washington for the interviews.

Deliverables

The deliverables expected from the technical assistance provided are the following:

1. Brief outline of methodological approach for assessments, including proposed itinerary for interviews and identification of all logistical support needs;
2. Draft evaluation report, not to exceed 20 pages, plus additional annexes;
3. Brief Power Point presentation summarizing conclusions and recommendations, deliverable at the same time as the draft report;
4. Final evaluation report, deliverable no later than two weeks after receipt of all comments on first draft.

Proposed Time frame

March 13 – September 30, 2006

Level of Effort

Task	# People	Total LOE
Desk review of program documents prior to Amman visit	1	5
Preparation of proposed methodology and meeting with OTI	1	3
Travel to/from and interviews in Amman (3/23-4/2)	1	11
Compilation of data and preparation of DC interviews	1	2
Interviews in Washington DC	1	10
Preparation of draft report	1	10
Presentation of findings, recommendations and discussion of draft	1	2
Preparation of final report	1	17
	Totals	60