

USAID/OTI Iraq Program Description

IRAQ TRANSITION INITIATIVE

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) worked closely with the Coalition Provisional Authority and after the transfer of sovereignty continues to work 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 April 2003, ITI has issued more than 3754 small grants totaling over \$277 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.

Program Activities:

Civil Society: ITI funds activities that support civil society development, civic education, and media outreach to expand citizen understanding of and participation in the establishment of Iraqi institutions. Groups targeted for ITI assistance include women's and youth groups, professional associations, and human rights organizations. At the national level, ITI collaborates with the U.S. and Iraqi governments on public information efforts related to the constitutional and electoral processes. At the local level, ITI supports programming that enhances citizen participation and engages communities and emerging Iraqi leaders in addressing local needs.

Good Governance/Transparency: ITI is working to expand the capacity of the new Iraqi government at all levels by enhancing official skills, improving communications between political officials and constituents, developing positive links between local officials and national authorities, and increasing accountability for government decisions and processes. Initially, grant activities focused on ensuring that government entities had the proper facilities, equipment and supplies to carry out their functions and provide essential services to citizens. Currently ITI supports activities that help the Iraqi people learn about their rights and responsibilities in a democracy. By participating in ITI sponsored workshops, conferences, opinion polls, and town meetings, Iraqis have an opportunity to develop expectations for the new Iraqi government and express those views in a meaningful way.

Conflict Mitigation: ITI focuses small grant activities in current or potential conflict areas using participatory methods to manage and mitigate sources of tension. ITI draws heavily upon its close working relationship with U.S. Military, Civil Affairs, and other Coalition Forces present in areas prone to or experiencing conflict. For example, ITI is working closely with the U.S. Army First Cavalry Division (or 1st Cav) and now 3rd Infantry Division (3rd I/D) in priority areas of Baghdad. ITI and the 1st and 3rd Cav's joint efforts target immediate assistance to unstable neighborhoods. Working with this collaboration, ITI has approved more than 997 grants, worth more than \$119 million. Grants focus on neighborhood clean-up projects that have provided temporary employment to 24,500 local residents.

Human Rights and Transitional Justice: ITI supports a wide range of activities related to human rights and transitional justice. ITI funds nascent human rights organizations and is creating a national network of these organizations to take the lead on human rights advocacy in Iraq. ITI grants bolster the participation in public life of traditionally marginalized and vulnerable groups including women, youth, minorities, and the disabled. ITI's activities increase the capacity of the Ministry of Human Rights and reestablish trust in Iraqi institutions that enforce the rights of the people. ITI also supports activities that assist the Iraqi people in accounting for and moving beyond past atrocities committed in Iraq. ITI is providing support for identification and protection of mass graves, establishment of the Iraqi Special Tribunal, services for victims of past crimes, and support for the Iraqi commission to set up to handle property disputes.