



LORI SEVERENS/USAID

Power of Partnership

Iraq's Minister of Electricity Karim Hasan and USAID Mission Director Christopher D. Crowley sign a Memorandum of Understanding on Sept. 10, 2008 to deliver better services to Iraqis. To date, USAID has supported the Government of Iraq in training more than 25,000 public officials. About 1,300 of those trained are in the Ministry of Electricity.

Dear Readers:

We are pleased to welcome our new Deputy Mission Director Thomas R. Delaney, who joins us from USAID/Central Asia.

Despite challenges, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) continues to move forward in transitioning Iraq to a stable, democratic and prosperous state. The combination of improved security, genuine progress toward reconciliation across political lines, real legislative accomplishments by the Council of Representatives and impending elections have sparked a fresh surge of optimism among the Iraqis.

In this issue, we highlight the success of the U.S. government's solid waste management project in Kirkuk and support for civil service reforms in Iraq. We also touch upon the changes that are influencing Iraqi women in their pursuit of self-reliance. We hope you find this issue of our newsletter useful and informative.

Regards,
Christopher D. Crowley
USAID Mission Director

Since 2003, USAID has spent more than \$6 billion on programs designed to stabilize communities; foster economic and agricultural growth; and build the capacity of the national, local, and provincial governments to respond to the needs of the Iraqis.



Kirkuk Finds Trash Disposal Solutions

KIRKUK—Dozens of men in blue overalls fan out across the city, moving from home to home, picking up household trash, taking it to a transfer station, and depositing it at a landfill site. Nothing is unusual here except that the scene is played out in Kirkuk, a city that has lacked basic services for decades.

The one million people who live in this oil-rich city generate nearly 900 tons of garbage a day. To combat the harmful effects of rubbish on health and the environment, the U.S. government initiated a Solid Waste Management Plan for Kirkuk in 2005.

The plan called for a transfer station and a landfill site that was financed (\$11.5 million) by the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP). The new landfill site is the first of its kind in Iraq, complying with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards.

Additional CERP funds (\$3.4 million) went to purchase equipment for the transfer station and to operate the municipal facility. USAID also funded \$2.5 million for landfill equipment.

“Previously, garbage collection was done in an ad hoc manner with the Iraqi Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works struggling with a limited waste collection vehicle and equipment fleet and a huge volume of trash,” says Brian McCarthy, Solid Waste Management Advisor with a USAID implementing partner.

Today, the local municipalities stand to regain public trust with an efficient system of trash collection that serves nearly 750,000 people across Kirkuk.

The new transfer station that opened in July employs about 36 staff and nearly 60 Iraqis at the landfill site. A second transfer station is under construction (\$2.5 million) that will expand the reach of services to the entire city.

USAID advisers have assisted in the design of the landfill and transfer station; set up a Solid Waste Management Department within the Municipality of Kirkuk; trained staff; and coordinated developments with all stakeholders.

As of July 2008, the collection, transfer station and landfill operations are 100 percent run and operated by the Municipality of Kirkuk with funding from the Government of Iraq. USAID advisors from the Local Governance Program impart training to public service professionals and others as required.

The success of the project inspired McCarthy to launch the first national Solid Waste Management conference in Erbil this summer, drawing 120 professionals from across Iraq. Participants heralded the solid-waste management project as a major step toward improving health and the environment.

Plans are underway to transfer skills and knowledge to other provinces across the country. ■



Top: The new sanitary landfill site on the outskirts of Kirkuk City can accept excess of 1,000 tons of waste each day. **Above:** A worker dumps trash at the Municipal Transfer Station site.

Jeffrey Ashley, USAID Team Representative in Kirkuk, says: “The project has enabled the Government of Iraq to manage its solid waste production to international standards.”

Iraqi Government Presses for Civil Service Reform

BAGHDAD—The Iraqi Prime Minister is leading a new Civil Service Reform Committee to overhaul federal personnel management. The Iraqi government has requested the U.S. government's help to make this happen.

The goals are to have merit-based appointment and promotion; performance management, grading, and pay systems; human resource management; and new job descriptions and classifications. When enacted, this will professionalize the civil service, improve transparency, and reduce corruption.

The Iraqi Constitution requires the creation of a Federal Civil Service Commission, which makes civil service reform a key priority for the Government of Iraq (GoI).

As a part of this obligation, Iraq made commitments to the international

community to overhaul the current civil service system. The goal of this reform is to institute a comprehensive federal civil service based on professionalism, integrity, and non-partisanship; and to lessen the opportunities for corruption and favoritism in employment.

The USAID-funded *Tatweer* project, or National Capacity Development, is providing technical assistance with capacity-building to key Iraqi ministries and national institutions. As part of this effort, USAID/*Tatweer* worked with the Prime Minister's office to establish a high level committee dedicated to this important undertaking.

As an important step toward creating the Federal Civil Service Commission, the Council of Ministers approved the draft law and forwarded it to Parliament where it is being debated through a second reading prior to enactment.

The Prime Minister issued an executive order establishing an Inter-Ministerial Civil Service Reform Committee composed of representatives from his office, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Planning, and the Ministry of Finance.

The Committee is charged with establishing the Federal Civil Service Commission and is working on a new civil service law in line with international best practices. In response to GoI's request,

USAID/*Tatweer*'s Civil Service Program will continue supporting the Commission's goals by providing training and expert counsel in the areas of civil service and legislation.

Public outreach and education interventions are planned for the near future so the people are kept informed about the progress of civil service reform efforts in Iraq. ■

Jolan Park Reclaims Fallujah's Lost Luster

Fallujah's Jolan Park fell into disrepair years ago and was used as a dump by local residents and a staging ground for attacks by insurgents. This spring residents and city leaders fought back and reclaimed the area. In April, USAID through its Community Stabilization Program (CSP) contributed \$890,115 to renovate the park. Water falls, playgrounds, winding stone paths and gardens will grace the newly refurbished park in the heart of the city. The park's central location means many families will be able to enjoy the facilities. The project has generated 80 short-term jobs and 10 long-term jobs. The CSP is designed to restore economic and social stability in communities hit by insurgency, while paving the way for long-term development. ■



RENUKA NAJ/USAID

Iraqi Women Open New Doors



Below: Mariam Youmara, coordinator for Women's Initiatives in Baghdad, displays the garments sown by young widows in Mahmoudiya. The sewing cooperative has expanded from 15 to 1,200 women in seven months.

RENUKA NAJ/USAID

With stability slowly returning to Iraq, more women are laying claim to greater power and influence both inside and outside of their homes. They are acquiring businesses, joining public service, and advocating for women's rights. The name, age and profession vary from one beneficiary to another, but the impact of U.S. aid is the same across Iraq.

Nahla al Taie, a civil servant with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), sees strengths aplenty. In the past progress at the ministry had been interrupted by outdated skills and systems, exposing it to vicissitudes of top-heavy bureaucracy. But now the focus is on regeneration.

Reinventing Systems

Taie gained fresh insights into modern tools of communication and management at a Leadership and Communications workshop this summer sponsored by USAID's *Tatweer* project. She put her new knowledge to good use, prompting an overhaul of the finance and administrative departments of the ministry. Charmed by her persistence and take-charge attitude, her supervisor elevated her to head of the MoA Information and Training Department in the southern city of Basra. At least 967 MoA employees are better communicators now after their training with USAID's Leadership and Communications program.

Taie is among the new breed of professionals who is daring to reinvent systems in the name of progress.

Another example is Enaam Khalil Ibrahim, an electrical engineer who has worked 27 years at the Petroleum Training Institute in Baghdad. Her arrival on the Ramadi City Council has inspired a shift in political dynamics.

Less than two years ago, Ramadi women shuddered to go out on the

as Stability Returns Home

streets, fearing vicious gun-toting insurgents. Now they can be seen haggling in marketplaces, walking worry-free from homes, and voicing new ideas at public forums.

Enaam says, "The biggest challenge that Ramadi faces today is not security but getting young girls back to school." She hopes to make education for women a priority with her public role in the Females for Ramadi Council (FRC). The young girls should know gender is no barrier to greatness, she notes.

Set up by the mayor of Ramadi with help from U.S. government advisers, the FRC embodies the limitless optimism of education and economic freedom. "With education, women will be able to find jobs or start their own businesses, and become independent" Enaam believes.

To promote gender equality, the Iraqis agreed to a 25 percent quota for women in the last elections for parliament and provincial councils, held in 2005. A law paving the way for the new vote to be held by Jan. 31 maintains that quota, allowing women to make up at least a quarter of the provincial councils.

Business Opportunities

USAID has designed programs to equip Iraqi women with skills to start and manage businesses, get access to credits and form partnerships with U.S. entrepreneurs.

With money readily available through USAID's *Tijara* microloans program, which is compliant with Islamic laws, women are now eager for business opportunities, not just handouts.

To stave off poverty, the widows of Mahmoudiya, a city 10 miles south of Baghdad, banded together to form

sewing cooperatives that allow them to connect, keep track of each other's activities and create groups of shared interest. "With money from their businesses, they are raising their children, sending them to schools, and helping others in their communities," says Bruce Bailey, USAID representative at a Baghdad ePRT.

What started as a group of 15 women has expanded to 11 cooperatives, out of which four are now nongovernmental organizations, employing 1,200 women.

Behind the numbers is a cultural transformation that is changing the way Iraqi women are thinking of freedom.

Growing Confidence

On a recent Wednesday morning, Donia, a female talk show host in Diyala, a mixed-sect province, launched a call-in program on *Hathara* station. She invited listeners to discuss issues important to women, especially the increasing events tied to female suicide bombers.

The spotlight was on a teenage girl's failed attempt to blow up her grenade-heavy vest in a crowded place. Ahead of the show, Donia rustled up the courage to strike a deal with the police to allow the teenage detainee to be a guest on a live radio interview.

Donia opened the show by speaking with Nahida, a police recruit who has been trained to search women and check for suicide vests and other threats to public safety. She then interviewed the detainee, sparking a debate.

The *Hathara* radio station is subsidized through U.S. grants and is free of Iraqi government influence, a positive step after years of outright control by the Ba'athist regime.

Donia says, "I am determined to broaden the appeal of the program and

not intimidated by threats or attacks by insurgents." She has emerged as a champion of a different vision for Iraq, which most Iraqis would agree has been lacking in the past few decades.

Protecting Rights

Until recently, domestic violence against Iraqi women was treated typically as a private family matter. Abuses went unrecorded and perpetrators mostly unpunished.

"With new knowledge and exposure to international practices, more women are opting to seek legal help," explains Awat Yasseen Abdullah, who runs the first female shelter in Kirkuk.

Under a fresh-faced crusader, the Pana Center protects women from threats by relatives and links them to legal services, marking a promising start for women's rights.

According to the Iraqi constitution, men and women have basic rights such as voting and owning property and suing in court. But deep differences exist in Iraqi society over the role of women.

Since May 2008, USAID has supported the Pana Center, where volunteers work to reconcile differences between couples and facilitate settlements. Local police and the judiciary are engaged with the center, which handles dozens or more cases a month.

For Awat, the risk of operating such a center is astonishingly high. But she relies on her faith and ingenuity to keep on going.

Iraq is today flush with stories of women who are breaking down barriers of fear and embracing new opportunities. And this is just the start. ■

Milestones

Supporting War Widows:

USAID programs provide supplies and training to widows and families who have lost their breadwinner in Coalition military operations.

Enhancing Business Skills:

USAID collaborates with Iraq's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to support Vocational Technical courses for women in computer maintenance, cosmetology, sewing/tailoring and mobile phone repair. To date, 5,580 women have graduated with 1,205 going on to apprenticeship programs.

Boosting Business Ownership:

USAID programs offer micro-, small- and medium-size grants for women to start, expand or rebuild a business. Grantees receive follow-on business management training courses in accounting, management, human resources and marketing. To date, 2,000 Iraqi females have gained employment either through receiving a grant or through being hired by a grantee.

Private Banking: Women represent 14 percent to 18 percent of the clientele of the three largest microfinance institutions. Four percent of the loans disbursed through the member banks of Iraq Company for Bank Guarantees are female borrowers. To date, 38 female loan officers work in microfinance firms.

Access to Political Processes:

USAID's Women's Leadership Programs aim to promote the effective role of women's participation in local governance. The program is active in the North, Central, and South Central Regions of Iraq.

Encouraging Leadership Skills:

About 57 women have been selected in Scholarship Program to study Public Management. A total of 6,858 female ministerial officials have been trained in the core areas of public administration.



BALAD FACTORY, IDLE FOR TWO YEARS, NOW OFFERS JOBS

BALAD—After nearly two years of laying idle, Iraq's Balad Canning Factory (BCF) is again producing food and beverages.

USAID's *Inma* Agribusiness Program has enabled BCF to re-establish the electricity and water supplies necessary to resume production of snack chips, bottled drinking water and fruit-flavored drinks – first steps in getting all 11 factory lines back in operation.

Opened in the mid-1970s, BCF was forced to shut in 2006 when the city was raked in ethnic violence. Workers lost their jobs and farmers could no longer tend their fields safely.

“When the factory was closed down, the management retained some workers as guards,” explained Ali, who has worked at the factory for 16 years. He has been a supervisor for the chip production unit that resumed operation in July with 26 employees working seven hour shifts, six days a week.

“Each day we produce 500-600 cartons of 40 small packages that local shops sell for 250 Iraqi dinars or about 20 cents. It's only the begin-

ning,” says Ali. “When all the equipment is operating, we will employ 110-120 people.” Ali's brother Akram, a BCF veteran of 14 years, supervises quality at the water bottling operation.

“We receive water from a Tigres River pump station and pass it through a series of filters,” explained Akram. “A carbon filter removes any taste or odor that might be present and a ceramic-carbon filter brings the water purity to 99 percent.”

Potable water production, which also began in July, employs 38 people to run the machinery and package the 1.5 liter bottles into cases of 12. Marketers buy cases from BCF for 2,750 to 3,250 dinars, or \$2.30 to \$2.70, and resell at about 500 dinars, or 42 cents. Daily production averages 950 to 1,000 cases.

Resuming production of tomato paste and date syrup will mean local farmers again will have a reliable market for their crops.

USAID-*Inma*'s efforts have already improved the lives of more than 100 Balad families and progress has only just begun. ■

Morin Helps Farmers To Forge Strong Bond, Support Economy



When Stephen Morin arrived in Diyala in the summer of 2007, he knew it was a place with high stakes and relatively thin rewards. And

yet he was a willing team player in the reconstruction of Iraq.

Touted as the breadbasket of Iraq, Diyala was once prized for fertile farmlands, dense palm groves and winding waterways. The province of one million people with a mix of Sunni, Shias and Kurds had a natural advantage in agriculture. But crumbling infrastructure due to years of neglect and poor planning had left the economy stagnant and the farmers divided and isolated.

Managing Creatively

Steve's passion for all things green was apparent as soon as he settled into his routine at the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) wearing dual hats: He was head of the economic section and USAID representative. He played up his strengths in agriculture honed during his years in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Azerbaijan. He creatively managed to initiate development opportunities in the rubble of military operations in one of the most dangerous corners of Iraq.

Asked what he did to restore the hope of Iraqi farmers and families, the Nebraska native and bluegrass enthusiast cited mechanisms that were put in place for farmers to gain access to credit, affordable tools and technology; structural reforms to raise productivity; and exposure to markets to stimulate the economy.

From the start, Steve and his military and State Department colleagues at

the 45-member PRT, took on the daunting task of drawing farmers and local leaders to regular meetings. Encouraging cooperative efforts seemed a natural response to fix problems—especially, when the province was deeply entrenched in a centralized form of governance championed under the Ba'athist regime.

In lockstep with local leaders and residents, USAID's Local Governance Program and partners, Steve helped provincial council members craft a provincial development strategy and forge strong links with central, district, and sub-district governments.

"Considering all the problems the people of Diyala face, it amazed me how often our provincial counterparts, including local extension agents, actually came to work. They are committed to moving forward. And it was great to be involved in that process," Steve observed.

Building on Goodwill

The farmers built on the goodwill generated by the PRT to engage with local leaders in regular meetings chaired by the Diyala governor. Under PRT's watch, the farmers pitched their problems, questioned the wisdom of leaders, and lobbied for support to buy tools, and to build and fix wells, water pumps, greenhouses, and fish ponds.

Pushing for continuity and stability, Steve drummed up support for an agriculture development office. He tapped the University of Diyala and the Director General of Agriculture to set up a cooperative agricultural extension program to enhance education and training for farmers. He initiated video conferences to engage farmers in modern methods of crop production and management. The first ever Agriculture Unit Manager's Conference came to Baqubah, some 35 miles northeast of Baghdad.

With momentum behind him, Steve worked with Iraqi banks on programs for farmers to buy equipment. Traditionally, Iraqi banks refused loans to poor farmers who were considered too high risk. But now banks extended loans based on low-collateral lending and interest rate. Loans for tractors have been granted under the program.

Steve also helped put microfinance institutions on Diyala's map through USAID's *Tijara* program. The initiative offered farmers access to loans and credits to operate businesses. At the microfinance institutions, PRT members arranged for business development, financial services, and business skills training for each institution's operators and loan officers. The total number of loans disbursed since the inception of Al Thiqa microfinance institution in Diyala is 2,390 with an estimated value of \$5.3 million.

With money available, the farmers readily carried out hand- and aerial-spraying of crops that had not been sprayed since 2003. Diyala recorded a bumper harvest of dates this year.

On the face of it, Steve appeared to have notched up small victories with his winning ways and a pragmatic approach to development. He even produced a useful strategy to unleash the talent of his staff of 12 military and civilian Americans.

Iraqi Contributions Please

In recent months the Iraqi government has taken some measures to maintain the economic gains in Diyala. The central government has set aside part of its \$100 million reconstruction funds for projects that would provide public services for areas hit by military operations, and the provincial government is adding to its annual budget expenditures.

Steve completed his tour in July and is now at USAID/Egypt. ■



Bridging Communities

Barriers of fear and mistrust that separated Al Fadil (Sunni) and Abu Saifain (Shia) communities in Baghdad for the past 15 months came down. An interagency team at e-PRT2 identified the communities in conflict and then commissioned USAID's Iraq Community-based Conflict Mitigation (ICCM) program to study the root cause of the conflict and recommend solutions. USAID Representative Mark Wilt, in coordination with the military, helped facilitate the reconciliation by meeting with all key players in the neighborhoods. On Sept. 27, about 1,000 to 2,000 people spilled on to the streets removing the T-Walls that separated their communities. The leaders gave speeches praising the benefits of reconciliation, espoused their commitment to work together, and shared an Iftar (fast-breaking dinner during the holy Islamic month of Ramadan). Summing up the significance of the event, Wilt said: "Iraqi communities standing up means that the U.S. can stand down." Above: Col. Mark Dewhurst of 4 BCT MTN Commander demonstrates the power of unity with Khaled al-Qaisi and Faris Abdel Hassan, leaders of the Sunni and Shia communities, respectively. ■

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