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USAID/IRAQ COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM III

ACDI/VOCA FINAL REPORT

DECEMBER 22, 2012

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared on behalf of ACDI/VOCA under the USAID/Iraq Community Action Program Cooperative Agreement No. 267-A-00-08-00504-00.

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|--|
| ALC | Artificial Limbs Center |
| AoR | Area of Responsibility |
| ARFD | Almalwiya Relief Foundation for Development |
| AQI | Al Qaeda Iraq |
| AUIS | American University of Iraq - Sulaimani |
| BoQ | Bill of Quantities |
| CAG | Community Action Group |
| CDD | Community-Driven Development |
| CHF | Global Communities (formerly Cooperative Housing Foundation International) |
| CPP | Community Project Plan |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| CV | Curriculum Vitae |
| DG | Directorate General |
| DSM | Democratic Strategies of Mobilization |
| e-PRT | embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team |
| Gol | Government of Iraq |
| HHO | Al Hara Humanitarian Organization |
| ICAP | USAID/Iraq Community Action Program III (Also referred to as CAP III) |
| ICMA | International City/County Management Association |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| IP | Implementing Partner |
| IR | Intermediate Result |
| IRCS | International Red Crescent Society |
| IRD | International Relief and Development |
| JAT | Job Application Training |
| KAP | Knowledge, Attitude, Practice |
| KRG | Kurdistan Regional Government |
| LBG | Louis Berger Group |
| LC | Local Council |
| LCA | Local Council Association |
| LG | Local Government |
| LGP | Local Governance Program |
| LOP | Life of Project |
| M&E | Monitoring and evaluation |
| MRIWVF | Marla Ruzicka Iraqi War Victims Fund |
| MSI | Management Systems International |

| | |
|-------|--|
| NMC | National Media Consultant |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OFDA | Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance |
| OJT | On-the-Job Training |
| PC | Provincial Council |
| PCM | Project Cycle Management |
| PG | Provincial Government |
| PIF | Public Interest Fund |
| PMP | Performance Monitoring Plan |
| PPA | Provincial Powers Act |
| PPC | Provincial Partnership Conference |
| PRT | Provincial Reconstruction Team |
| QED | QED Group, LLC |
| RTI | Research Triangle Institute |
| SMART | Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound goal analysis |
| SWOT | Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis |
| TDT | Transfer Disputed Territories |
| TOT | Training of Trainers |
| USAID | U.S. Agency for International Development |
| USG | United States Government |
| WYAG | Women and Youth Community Action Group Network |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the USAID/ICAP program was to enhance Iraqi civil society and local government's ability to meet citizens' needs. Implemented by ACDI/VOCA and funded by USAID, the four-year program was completed on September 30, 2012. Active in four provinces of northern Iraq (Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah ad Din), ACDI/VOCA worked towards its goal through the following objectives:

Objective 1: Communities better articulate their needs and mobilize resources within and outside the community to solve common problems. USAID/ICAP mobilized partner communities through the formation of volunteer citizens groups who received capacity building training and funding from USAID. They learned how to identify needs and how to work with local government to propose, plan and implement projects.

Objective 2: Local executive and representative government in USAID/ICAP communities better meet the articulated needs of the community. USAID/ICAP focused on building the capacity of local leaders to work with citizens to identify and prioritize community needs and effectively advocate to provincial authorities. Government representatives trained together with citizens, helped implement projects and learned how to hold public meetings.

Objective 3: Civilian victims of conflict assisted. The Marla Ruzicka Iraq War Victims Fund was a vital component of the program, providing assistance to victims of U.S. Forces-Iraq operations by helping them establish and expand small businesses.

ACDI/VOCA successfully facilitated linkages between citizen groups, NGOs and government leaders in vulnerable areas of Iraq to solve socioeconomic problems through community-driven projects. Due to decades of centralization of government authority and service delivery, and a political culture of deference to central authority, Iraqi communities had little experience with advocating for their local needs or mobilizing resources to address these needs. Similarly, leaders at the community and local government levels had limited capacity to advocate for or address local priorities. To facilitate the ongoing democratization of Iraq, ACDI/VOCA empowered local communities and government offices to (1) identify and advocate for their own needs, and (2) seek and secure appropriate resources to fulfill such needs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ACDI/VOCA had an impact on millions of Iraqis. The community-driven development (CDD) methodology proved a valuable tool for social mobilization and grassroots democratization. Active citizen participation ensured that all people, including vulnerable populations such as those who are displaced, religious and ethnic minorities, women, youth and the disabled, were represented in the program.

Roles and responsibilities of citizens and government officials were clarified and strengthened throughout the program. CAG members identified, prioritized and advocated on behalf of community needs. Local councils (LCs) provided forums for community input and discussion of needs as part of national and provincial budget-planning processes. Provincial councils (PCs) prioritized competing community needs at the provincial level and allocated resources while line ministries provided technical expertise, approvals for authorized projects, and operational and monitoring support. In the Northern AoR, implementation of over 500 community projects, by 80 CAGs and 71 LCs contributed to sustainable and mutually reinforcing foundations for a new Iraq.

Nearly 500 small grants provided to innocent victims of war through the Marla Ruzicka Iraq War Victims Fund (MRIWVF) program component changed families' lives. Partnerships with Iraqi NGOs in the implementation of these projects reinforced the vital civil society link between citizens and government.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ASSISTANCE

The results of USAID/ICAP in ACDI/VOCA's Northern AoR have shown that it is possible to introduce a process of grassroots democracy into a population that has never known it. Moreover, it seems to have found fertile ground especially in respect to the demand side of governance.

To guarantee a balance between the demand and supply side of governance, continued support and oversight remains needed with regards to the legitimacy, authority and functioning of *qada* (district) and *nahiya* (sub-district) councils, as well as provincial level government. Only with the appropriate authority levels can local government representatives respond adequately and effectively to citizen requests and meet expectations. Further assistance is also required to bolster the vital civil society link between citizens and government. Continued capacity building of civil society leaders remains essential to provide an effective bridge between their community and government institutions.

I. INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENTS

Building upon the success of five years of implementing the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Iraq Community Action Programs (ICAP) I and II, ACDI/VOCA supported USAID's Transition Strategy under Strategic Objective 9 in "the strengthening of effective local government institutions in Iraq" through implementation of a third phase of the Iraq Community Action Program III (CAP III or USAID/ICAP).¹ The goal of USAID/ICAP was to increase the local government's ability to identify, articulate and better meet the needs of its constituency. Operating in its Area of Responsibility (AoR), the four northern provinces of Diyala, Kirkuk,² Ninawa and Salah ad Din, ACDI/VOCA worked towards this goal through the following objectives:

Objective 1: Communities better articulate their needs and mobilize resources within and outside the community to solve common problems.

- Sub-IR 9.2.1. Communities better able to mobilize resources within the community to meet their articulated needs.
- Sub-IR 9.3.1. Communities better articulate their needs.

Objective 2: Local executive and representative government in USAID/ICAP communities better meet the articulated needs of the community.

- Sub IR 9.2.2: *Qada* and *nahiya* officials better able to mobilize resources.³
- Sub-IR 9.3.2. *Qada* and *nahiya* better articulate community needs.

Objective 3: Civilian victims of conflict assisted.

- Sub-IR 9.3.3. Civilian victims of conflict assisted by Marla Ruzicka Iraq War Victims Fund.

Award Developments

In September 2008, USAID awarded ACDI/VOCA with Cooperative Agreement No. 267A-00-08-00504-00 in the amount of \$35,000,000 and a period of performance of September 30, 2008, to March 30, 2010. In 2009, USAID issued a modification that (1) extended the period of performance from April 1, 2010, to November 30, 2010, (2) provided an additional \$14,700,000 in incremental funding, (3) incorporated the Marking and Branding Plan into the Agreement, (4) authorized ACDI/VOCA to expand its operations into new communities, and (5) refined Objectives 1 and 2 of the program. An additional modification issued on December 21, 2009, incorporated partnerships between ACDI/VOCA and selected Iraqi nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for joint management of the Marla Ruzicka Iraq War Victims Fund (MRIWVF).

In 2010, the Agreement was extended to September 30, 2012. Additional funding of \$37,622,000 (totaling \$87,322,000) allowed the programmatic refocus in activities under the objectives to intensify and expand to other underserved communities, such as those in the Transfer Disputed Territories (TDTs), or with significant populations of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees. As USAID/ICAP evolved, adjustments were made to the program's indicators, results framework and Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) followed by implementing partners (Annex 5).

Marking and Branding

Over the course of nine years operating in Iraq, ACDI/VOCA developed and continued to revise a tiered system of threat rankings based on marking and branding assessments conducted through consultations with field staff, Local Government (LG) officials (mayors and local council members), Community Action Group (CAG)⁴ members and other community leaders, as well as representatives of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). These assessments were reviewed and confirmed by ACDI/VOCA's security team, USAID/ICAP senior management and provincial management. Given the unstable environment and continued threat to ACDI/VOCA staff, beneficiaries and other stakeholders, ACDI/VOCA classified targeted

¹ Throughout the report, USAID/ICAP refers to the third and most recent phase of the USAID/Iraq Community Action Program. References to the first and second phases are indicated by the use of 'USAID/ICAP I' and 'USAID/ICAP II' respectively.

² Following the nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company in June 1972, the former regime changed the name of Kirkuk province to 'Al-Ta'mim', meaning 'Nationalization' (Tripp, 2000; Dumper and Stanley, 2007). The name was changed back to Kirkuk in 2006.

³ A revision of the Results Framework in early 2010 removed Sub-IR 9.2.2 under Objective 2. Sub-IR 9.2.2 had been based on several assumptions, key among which was the holding of district and sub-district elections in 2009, which as of August 2012 have not happened. The revised PMP of November 2011 indicates that the 2010 change to remove Sub-IR 9.2.2 reflected the fact that the district and sub-district councils never gained the anticipated financial authority. This made the sub-IR and its five indicators irrelevant.

⁴ CAGs are comprised of democratically elected individuals who serve as board representatives of the community for purposes of USAID/ICAP only. They serve as volunteers. 'CAG' will be used synonymously with 'community' for purposes of this report.

communities into low, moderate and high-risk areas. This tiered approach to marking and branding permitted the appropriate, context-driven visibility of USAID assistance within each of the targeted communities.

In response to Modification No. 5, ACDI/VOCA updated its Marking and Branding Strategy during the final quarter of Year I. The updated plan included draft security assessments for each of the new communities in which the program undertook its operations. Slight modifications were made to the overall Marking and Branding Strategy at the request of USAID, including that all materials and deliverables at events, trainings, and meetings that were by invitation only (i.e. for a select group) or closed to the general public were fully marked regardless of the area in which the event took place (i.e. even if in a high-risk area).

Subcontracting Activities

To lead the local governance training component under USAID/ICAP, ACDI/VOCA had a sub-award agreement with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) from September 30, 2008, to October 31, 2010. During this time, ICMA was responsible for the design and implementation of local governance training activities under Objective 2. ICMA managed one expatriate staff (the Civic Participation Specialist key personnel position) and seven national staff. In addition, ICMA worked with nineteen part-time, short-term trainers. ICMA staff was fully integrated with ACDI/VOCA staff for the execution of the sub-award agreement. ICMA's final report is provided in Annex 6.

NORTHERN AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

ACDI/VOCA was one of four organizations implementing USAID/ICAP in four AoRs in Iraq. ACDI/VOCA's programming in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) ended on October 31, 2008. The first quarter of USAID/ICAP saw a smooth transition from USAID/CAP II, with ACDI/VOCA covering the northern provinces of Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah ad Din, setting a foundation for the program's inputs and activities towards meeting the goal of increasing the ability of *qada* (district) and *nahiya* (sub-district) councils to identify, articulate and better meet the needs of their constituency.

Demographic Profile

Detailed demographic and economic data for the Northern AoR is provided in Annex 7.

Challenges

Under USAID/ICAP, ACDI/VOCA gained a unique understanding of the complex development challenges faced by communities and LG officials in the Northern AoR. These challenges included:

- Historical centralization of Iraq's political and economic decision making
- Electoral and financial delays in making the transition to a decentralized structure of governance
- Weak understanding and experience among both citizens and LG authorities regarding the cornerstones of democratic governance (decentralization, devolution of power, LG structures and financial responsibilities, participatory decision making, public outreach and citizen input)
- Insufficient administrative and financial linkages among provincial councils (PCs), local councils (LCs) and communities
- Lack of effective collaborative mechanisms for budget execution and release of funds
- Unclear processes and mechanisms for intergovernmental interaction and cooperation

While many of these challenges existed to one extent or another throughout Iraq, the Northern AoR had unique challenges that made it even more difficult for local stakeholders to activate their own latent skills and mobilize their own or external resources:

Heterogeneity of population. Ongoing disputes among Sunni Kurds, Sunni and Shia Arabs, Christians, Turkmen, and other groups complicated political consensus and joint planning.

Disputed fiscal and political responsibility. Disputed or unclear *qada* jurisdictions between KRG and the Government of Iraq (GoI) as well as provincial borders hindered the provision of financial or technical services to communities from provincial or regional governments.

Internal and external border conflict and insecurity. Cross-border issues with neighboring countries or provincial jurisdictions created problems with root causes and solutions that are outside the control of local officials.

Resettlement and returnee issues. Significant resettlement created additional challenges to reconstruction and community development planning, especially when LGs lacked budgetary resources.

Political uncertainty of Kirkuk. The uncertain status of Kirkuk hindered political decision-making and impeded development.

Political uncertainty of *qadas* under Resolution 140. The uncertainty of these *qadas* is challenging in the context of election processes.

Operating Context

Security operations in ACDI/VOCA's AoR produced encouraging results such as a reduction in insurgency activities, finances, and supply networks, and led to the capture of several high-value individuals. Since the end of USAID/CAP II in October 2008, the average number of attacks executed daily decreased or remained relatively constant in all four provinces. In December 2008, it was announced that violence in Iraq fell to levels not seen since the 2003 invasion. With growing security, increased professionalism of the Iraqi forces and widening desire of the Iraqi populace to return conditions to normality, the situation continued to improve.

Nonetheless, a tenuous security situation and unstable political environment remained during implementation, sparked by the March 7, 2010, national elections and exacerbated by the lack of an Iraqi government, combined with the drawdown and withdrawal of US Forces in Iraq. Additionally, the city of Kirkuk and disputed territories continued to be highly volatile as the issue of whether they belong to the GoI or to the KRG remained unresolved.

At times, the provinces of ACDI/VOCA's AoR experienced the country's highest level of Iraqi insurgents/Al Qaeda Iraq (AQI) activity. Diyala province remained one of the most dangerous areas in Iraq, in particular Baquba city. In many ways the province is a microcosm of Iraq itself, with Sunni and Shia Arabs in near equal numbers to Kurds. In the past, insurgent and extremist groups have exploited this sectarian mix to stoke hatred and violence. In late 2011 the province was split by a major political crisis when the PC narrowly voted to declare autonomy, a move highly opposed by the central government as well as many people in the province. Ninawa province also remained one of the most deadly provinces within Iraq. Mosul in particular continued to see general attacks on government forces and officials on a daily basis despite security gains made elsewhere. An increasing number of attacks were seen in Kirkuk and Salah ad Din provinces over the last program year. Kirkuk, rich in oil and center of the Arab-Kurdish dispute, continued to face bombings against police, political figures and Christians. Salah ad Din remained at usual levels of violence, with attacks continuing and political crisis following the PC's declaration of autonomy.

Consequently, ACDI/VOCA's operating environment was difficult and dangerous for staff as well as for CAG and LC members to safely work in and move about. This significant challenge remained throughout the program since the military insecurity decreased but local population security risks increased through threats, extortion, and kidnappings of local people.

UNIQUENESS

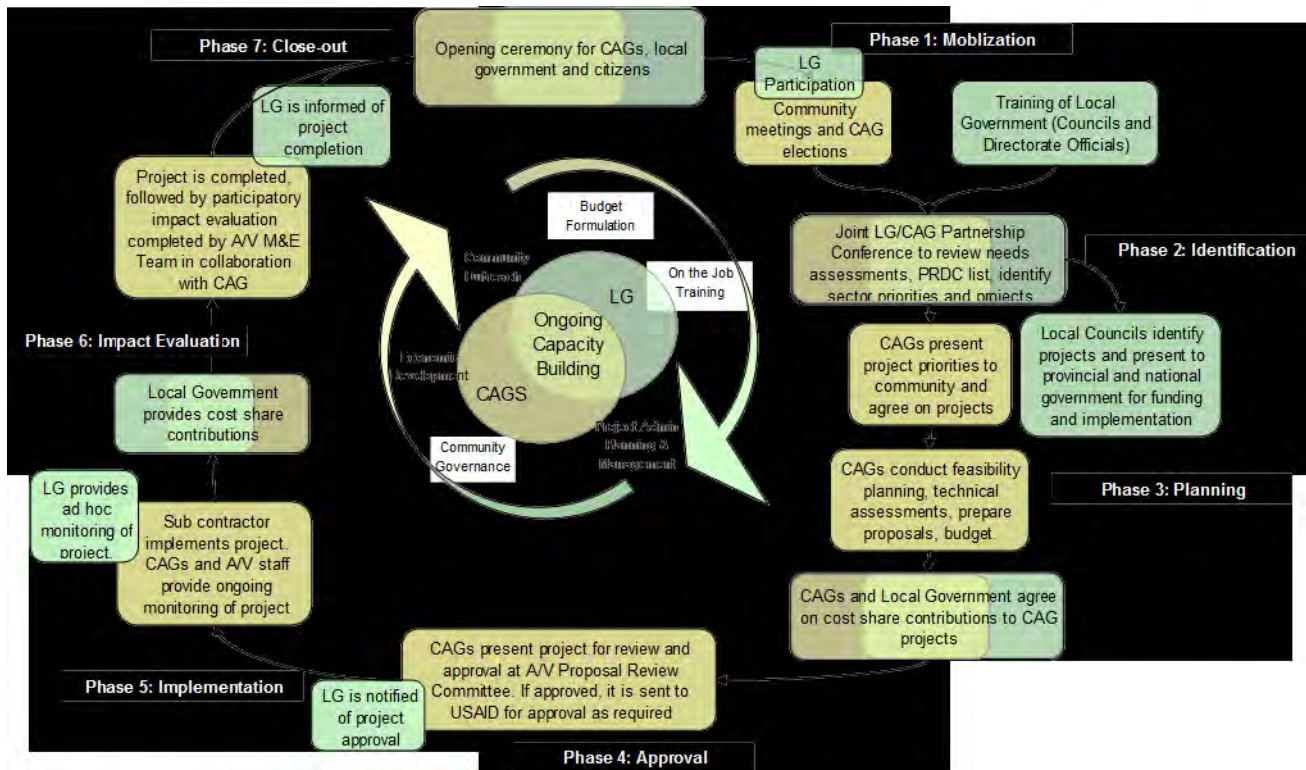
The USAID/ICAP program uniquely strengthened both the demand side and the supply side of governance. It worked to build the capacity of Iraqi citizens to effectively address pressing community needs. As demand needs supply to create equilibrium, and for governance to function best, the program also built skills of the LG, and increased cooperation between constituencies and their local representative and executive officials.

Within the Iraqi context and transition from an authoritarian regime in which citizens had little input with regard to development and community issues, USAID/ICAP emphasized the responsibility of CAGs for identification and prioritization of community needs. Different from most development assistance programming, implementation of CAG projects served as a means to the larger ends of community development and citizen participation through democratic processes.

II. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT

ACDI/VOCA took a community-driven development (CDD) approach to implementation that built capacity of ordinary citizens in setting community development priorities and instilled the skills and culture of participatory decision making into the development process, enhancing CAG capacity to identify projects and take ownership of them after completion. This approach allowed the entire community to benefit from both the *process* and the *projects*. The CDD process as designed by ACDI/VOCA is shown below:



Community Engagement

The first element of the CDD cycle focused on community engagement. Communities were given the opportunity to activate their own latent skills and mobilize their own resources to solve priority community needs. As described above, the core goal was for CAGs to identify their projects and take ownership of them after completion. To ensure buy-in, a cash or in-kind contribution was required from the community, LG or the private sector. The empowerment and engagement of elected LGs and representatives of central ministries was essential to ensure that local empowerment initiatives were embedded into broader processes of institutional change by integrating local investment programs with policy and institutional reform focused on decentralization.

Enhanced Local Government Involvement

As shown in the CDD cycle, ACDI/VOCA substantially expanded the role of LG officials in all phases of the program, especially in the community project implementation phases. The increased engagement of LG officials in project implementation provided important learning-by-doing opportunities, which together with the provision of training and technical assistance, strengthened the capacity of LGs to design and submit follow-on projects for Gol funding through line ministry directors general and the PCs.

Community-LG engagement, starting the mobilization phase, was key to the success of USAID/ICAP. With the newly expanded and clarified role of *nahiya* and *qada* councils,⁵ USAID/ICAP emphasized CAG linkages with LC members, as well as provincial and line ministry offices, where appropriate. In addition to facilitating meetings between CAG and LC members and providing opportunities for interaction at training events, formal CAG training enhanced the capacity of CAG members to work directly with democratically elected officers—local mayors and councilors, council members, and appointed officials such as local technical services officers—in both formal and overlapping relationships. By working together, the participatory planning activities, resource mobilization, project implementation and monitoring activities according to a local development plan were all enhanced.

⁵ Under the newly expanded and clarified roles and responsibilities, councils consult with their constituents to solicit their needs, advocate for solutions to these needs with provincial authorities, coordinate with LG executive and technical officials in providing needed services, and monitor and evaluate the quality and quantity of these services.

Graduated and Focused Methodology for Capacity Building

The third element in the CDD cycle incorporated ACDI/VOCA's capacity building strategy, which focused on citizens and local councilors. It introduced new systems of citizen engagement with government and defined new roles and responsibilities of CAGs and LCs to improve articulation of needs and achievement of improved public services while decreasing gender and demographic biases that previously impacted community access to government funds.

A detailed Stakeholder Community Development Reference Manual developed by ACDI/VOCA guided citizens and local and provincial level government on improving Iraq through joint community development. The manual is a toolkit and resource that helped beneficiaries better understand and therefore implement (1) the USAID/ICAP model, (2) what CDD is and why it is important, (3) mobilizing the community and how to build community-based groups, (4) advocacy and coalition building, (5) holding public meetings, (6) increasing citizen-government partnership, and (7) the community project management cycle.

CAG and LC assessments were the foundation of an effective, tiered approach to capacity building. Results informed the design of CAG and LC-specific capacity building initiatives. Initial training modules largely developed in Iraq were provided at three levels (basic/core, intermediate and advanced). Trainings were highly focused and participatory to enable CAG and LC members to reinforce new skills while actually using them. The main emphasis was on the CDD process of project prioritization and implementation. In addition, through a strong focus on public administration, CAGs and LCs were encouraged to be more organized and conscious of procedures and legal requirements so that they could respond to citizens' needs in a more efficient and effective manner. Outside of trainings, CAG and LC stakeholders were encouraged to exchange information and work together to define their roles and responsibilities.

As highlighted in the End of Project Performance Evaluation, ACDI/VOCA used a diverse team of trainers during training exercises to model cooperation across differences.⁶ This strategy was particularly helpful when implementing activities in divided communities and disputed territories, as "having a diverse representation—whether in terms of gender or ethnicity or age—ensures that training participants have at least one person with whom they feel they have a shared background" while demonstrating "healthy and productive relationships across identity divides."⁷

In addition to formal trainings, ACDI/VOCA provided CAGs and LCs with context-driven workshops and on-the-job training (OJT) that targeted the specific needs of unique communities, particularly in IDP/returnee and TDT areas. These capacity building measures encouraged CAG members to view LCs as joint partners willing to conduct and participate constructively in public meetings and initiate project specific sub-committees for planning specific programs and projects with citizen volunteers. This also sensitized LCs to integrated planning and effective and efficient use of available funding.

ACDI/VOCA implemented a three-pronged approach to formal trainings and OJT learning experiences to build stakeholder capacity and strengthen advocacy efforts. First, training and increased participation of local citizens built their relationships with local CAGs. Second, joint sessions increased the capacity of CAGs and LCs to advocate on behalf of their communities to provincial authorities. Third, involvement of PC members and mayors in trainings and conferences improved relationships and understanding between provincial authorities and their constituency. Strategic meetings and conferences with PRTs and other stakeholders improved coordination and collaboration with other implementing partners to engage provincial leaders.

The Marla Ruzicka War Victims Fund

Under USAID/ICAP's third objective, ACDI/VOCA assisted civilian victims that suffered losses as a direct result of military coalition activities in the Northern AoR. With the \$6.7 million allocated to the Northern AoR by the MRIWVF, ACDI/VOCA and its local counterpart NGOs assisted almost 500 families through grants of up to \$10,000 and completed 35 community projects of up to \$100,000.

Process

Building on the trust gained through past experience and its network of key local contacts, ACDI/VOCA identified, verified, and selected beneficiaries in collaboration with officials from LGs, hospitals, coalition forces, human rights groups, local civil society organizations (CSOs), and CAG members. ACDI/VOCA

⁶ USAID/Iraq Community Action Program III: End of Project Performance Evaluation. August 2012.

⁷ Ibid.

targeted three categories of civilian victims and communities affected by conflict: (1) families that lost one or more civilian members, especially breadwinners, (2) families that lost their house or source of livelihood, and (3) communities with damaged or destroyed buildings and infrastructure. Procedures to identify beneficiaries were developed in collaboration with other MRIWVF implementers within the Northern AoR's diverse and complex environment. A 2010 monitoring report indicated, "the process and procedures followed by ACDI/VOCA seem to be working well."⁸ The report confirmed ACDI/VOCA's strong network and noted "the relationship that ACDI/VOCA developed with partners, especially district and PCs, helped to push through the [MRIWVF] projects in a fairly seamless manner."⁹

As part of the selection process, ACDI/VOCA staff carried out site visits to collect the necessary documentation, conducted needs assessments, and discussed project ideas with potential beneficiaries. To ensure adequate targeting, quality project design, and appropriate sustainability measures, project proposals were developed in consultation with selected beneficiaries and reviewed by a project review committee comprised of ACDI/VOCA management and technical and operations staff. In accordance with the MRIWVF's major program thrust, assistance to families of war victims focused on replacing damaged property and lost livelihoods. The assistance was complemented by business development training and targeted technical assistance. Monitoring visits and the completion of evaluation reports ensured that project quality standards were met.

Linkages

MRIWVF activities played an important role in winning support and gaining community trust for subsequent USAID/ICAP activities and other USAID programs, thereby reinforcing the positive impact and sustainability of all development efforts in these communities. ACDI/VOCA further strengthened linkages among the three USAID/ICAP components by incorporating CAG members and LG officials into MRIWVF activities. CAG members and government officials helped to identify and verify MRIWVF beneficiary eligibility, and also identified and supported planning for community infrastructure projects. Lastly, ACDI/VOCA worked to link MRIWVF beneficiaries with their communities to develop advocacy skills related to war victims' assistance.

PROGRAMMATIC CROSS CUTTING THEMES

Gender Mainstreaming

ACDI/VOCA consciously addressed the need for increased gender balance under USAID/ICAP and its activities aimed at providing women with opportunities to play an active role in society. Most significantly, this was done through:

- Encouraging women's leadership through CAGs and LCs, youth camps, and in community development
- Supporting NGOs and women's centers
- Providing grants and training for women to start their own businesses
- Placing female apprentices in private and public sector jobs
- Making women's lives better through CAG projects

In January 2010, ACDI/VOCA conducted an internal gender and youth assessment of USAID/ICAP activities and operations. The outcomes of the assessment led to multiple interventions, including hiring a senior coordinator for gender and youth programs who facilitated a youth and women's caucus with LG officials and led a gender sensitivity training program for staff that emphasized ACDI/VOCA's gender policy. In Year 3, ACDI/VOCA introduced public interest fund (PIF) projects that aimed to increase involvement of women in targeted training and project activities. In addition, ACDI/VOCA undertook the following measures:

Indicators and organizational learning

- Identified gender sensitive indicators related to the extent of opportunities created under USAID/ICAP; such as leadership, management, CAG participation, and interaction with government institutions.
- Adapted lessons learned to increase women's participation and foster male respect for women's involvement throughout the project cycle.

Training and raising awareness

- Conducted CAG training on gender sensitivity measures and how to assess impact.

⁸ USAID/Iraq Community Action Program III: Program Interim Monitoring and Analytical Review: Partner Field Monitoring. May 2010.

⁹ Ibid.

- Provided training in confidence building skills and communication skills to both men and women so that each is able to articulate community decisions and events in front of community members using a culturally and socially sensitive approach.
- Raised awareness of community leaders (religious, civil, and governmental) to the benefits of gender equality through town hall-type meetings and other small group meetings.

Overall, 3,879,545¹⁰ women benefitted from the CAG projects under USAID/ICAP (51 percent of total beneficiaries). For CAG and LC trainings, 148 female CAG and LC members participated in trainings (five percent of total training participants). The LCs were initially created by the Coalition Provisional Authority, and only 1.5 percent of LC members were female. Despite these challenges, ACDI/VOCA continuously sought to increase the number of female CAG and LC members. In the extension period of the project, female representation of CAG members increased from about 15 percent (100 out of 689 total) to 18 percent (141 out of 772 total). Ninety-six women attended Provincial Partnership Conferences (PPCs) (8 percent of total participants). The PPCs drew heavily from Iraqi government officials such as governors, provincial council members, mayors, mukhtars and local council members, who were overwhelmingly male. Given the existing gender imbalance within the Iraqi government, ACDI/VOCA targeted existing female LC members and other female officials to ensure they were able to participate. Twelve women-specific vocational training projects were conducted and 1,327 total jobs were created for women, representing 5.3 percent of the total for both CAG and Marla-related project jobs created under USAID/ICAP. Most of the jobs created under USAID/ICAP, including almost all short-term jobs, were infrastructure-related field construction jobs in support of community priorities. While there are a few exceptions of women who work in these fields in Iraq, the vast majority of individuals doing physical construction jobs in ACDI/VOCA's AoR were men. During the program, 619 girls attended youth camps (45.3 percent of total youth attendees) and 995 female apprentices received temporary employment (38 percent of total apprentices). Over 284 women received grants through the MRIWVF (58 percent of the total people received grants). ACDI/VOCA believes this represents a success, as many USAID/ICAP communities were extremely conservative and required special efforts to be made, such as allowing male guardians.

Environmental Impact

Community-prioritized USAID/ICAP projects included numerous infrastructure development initiatives, such as the construction and renovation of schools, water systems, community buildings, and irrigation canals. Successful environmental review procedures and guidelines developed under USAID/ICAP I and II were applied to ensure that environmental impacts were given appropriate consideration in program design and implementation. These guidelines fully complied with USAID environmental regulations, namely 22 CFR 216. All USAID/ICAP engineering staff received training in their use. In addition, in October 2011, an infrastructure evaluation was conducted to review existing design methods and criteria, project management techniques as well as material availability and selection processes. ACDI/VOCA incorporated the evaluation's recommendations into its practices and procedures.

Ethics and Transparency

Building on its experience under USAID/ICAP I and II, ACDI/VOCA structured implementation and monitoring procedures to minimize the potential for waste, fraud and corruption of United States Government (USG) and Gol resources. ACDI/VOCA applied procurement policies and procedures that it had adapted and honed over five years of implementation in northern Iraq to ensure transparency and competition in procurement, as well as effective oversight and monitoring of activities in compliance with the relevant USAID regulations. ACDI/VOCA also undertook measures to disseminate ethics and transparency best practices.

Training and raising awareness

- Provided training to USAID/ICAP staff on the importance of ethics and transparency, ways to reduce waste, and measures to prevent corruption.
- Provided training on procurement procedures to local contractors and consultants with whom ACDI/VOCA worked under USAID/ICAP sub-projects to mitigate corruption and ensure optimal pricing and efficiency.
- Provided Ethics and Transparency training to LGs which examined principles of transparent operations, public procurement, project monitoring and evaluation and professional conduct in LG to create awareness about the cost of corruption and the benefits of transparent processes.

¹⁰ Double counting can occur as some women made use of more than one project in their community.

Guidelines development

- Developed and instituted guidelines for USAID/ICAP staff, CAG members and local project holders regarding waste, fraud and corruption to build accountability and transparency of operations.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

Monitoring and Evaluation Efforts

ACDI/VOCA undertook numerous efforts to facilitate organizational learning and adjust the USAID/ICAP strategy as needed to ensure the highest program impact on Iraqi communities. Internally, ACDI/VOCA's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts continuously tracked processes and outputs, enabling timely corrections as needed. Tools such as the CAG and LG scorecards¹¹ measured not only CAG and LG capacity, but also assessed the contribution of USAID/ICAP's CAG/LG capacity building interventions overall. Project beneficiary assessments looked closely at citizen's perceptions regarding participatory service delivery processes and the status of basic service conditions. Annual strategic planning forums brought together USAID/ICAP national and expatriate staff, as well as CAG and LG members. Monitoring results were used during program review and adjustment exercises. In addition, the following assessments and studies were conducted:

Knowledge-attitude-practice (KAP) survey. In 2010 an external consultant explored the status of knowledge, attitudes and practices of citizens regarding government service delivery, community-LG interaction, and confidence and trust in LG.

Baseline study for the USAID/ICAP extension phase.¹² In 2011 an internal assessment focused on citizens' perceptions of community level participatory service delivery.

Gender and youth assessment. In the beginning of 2010, an internal gender and youth assessment of USAID/ICAP's activities and operations identified mechanisms for further integration of these crosscutting issues into program activities.

Infrastructure evaluation. The external evaluation of ACDI/VOCA's infrastructure projects reviewed design methods and criteria, project management techniques as well as material availability and selection processes.

Apprenticeship assessments. The apprenticeship component was internally reviewed in 2010, while an external consultant visited Iraq in the final year of the program to document the model and develop a sustainable framework for localizing the apprenticeship program.

Media outreach and advocacy research. In 2012 an external consultant assisted in the implementation of a media outreach and advocacy strategy to promote and enhance the citizen outreach activities of LG and provide an effective means for community members to respond and express their concerns, needs and opinions to their elected or appointed representatives in government.

Learning impact assessment. At the end of USAID/ICAP an external evaluation was conducted to study the final impact of the program on communities in the Northern AoR.

At the completion of the above studies, detailed action plans were prepared based on conclusions and recommendations stated by the researchers. Adjustments to strategy, activities, and work plans were made accordingly. Results of the final learning impact assessment will feed into future programs implemented by ACDI/VOCA in Iraq and around the world. A full list of

Building the Capacity of USAID/ICAP National Staff

During the life of the program (Life-of-Project or LOP), staff capacity building expanded from preparing projects to developing a CDD program and decentralized implementation strategy. ACDI/VOCA emphasized staff development through OJT learning and participation in internal and external training courses.

ACDI/VOCA institutionalized a more decentralized organizational structure, and built staff development into its routine activities by developing comprehensive job descriptions, improving the staff performance evaluation process, translating texts, and giving employees more opportunities to develop their capacities through day-to-day practices.

In addition, staff participated in in-house training on M&E and performance monitoring. Team members received in-house English language instruction to prepare for proficiency (TOEFL) testing. Over the LOP, eleven ACDI/VOCA staff received their TOEFL certificate. Online courses in project management, financial management, presentation skills, language skills, and Microsoft Office programs were offered through

¹¹ This survey instrument was adopted from International Relief and Development (IRD) and finalized by all four USAID/ICAP implementing partners.

¹² The extension phase extended the USAID/ICAP program from December 1, 2010, to September 30, 2012.

ACDI/VOCA's ASPIRE Online program (including eCornell classes), an online professional development service offered by ACDI/VOCA to its staff working in programs around the world.

National staff attended external trainings such as those organized by USAID, Mercy Corps, and Management Systems International (MSI). ACDI/VOCA also partnered with the American University of Iraq–Sulaimani (AUIS) to further increase its capacity building efforts. The AUIS advanced trainings built the capacity and professional development of more than 100 national staff (83 percent male, 17 percent female) on project management with a focus on NGO and other civil society programming.

Localization and Handover of Responsibilities to National Staff

From the end of Year 2, international staff started handing over more responsibilities to national staff in preparation for their taking leading roles in program development and implementation. In December 2011, Community Development Department Director Dr. Suzanne Saulniers departed the country as part of ACDI/VOCA's planned localization efforts to transition Iraqi national staff into key positions to build local capacity. Mr. Sabah Mirza headed the department for the remaining LOP, and received close mentoring, capacity building and supervision in anticipation of his taking over the position. Increasingly, other national staff became either heads of departments or senior managers. For example, Ms. Asia Hatim was promoted from Coordinator to Senior Manager of the MRIWVF department, while Mr. Omed Rasul, previously a Project Officer, became the head of the Apprenticeship Program.

With supervisory support from international staff, national staff led strategic planning forums, developed program initiatives, conducted M&E surveys, created data management and analysis mechanisms, and prepared trainings and government outreach activities. National staff also represented ACDI/VOCA at international conferences and USAID meetings.

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KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

71

Local Councils mobilized

80

Community Action Groups created

355

Public meetings held by Local Councils for approximately 15,000 people

518

Community projects completed

491

Small businesses established with 'kick-start' grants

2,876

Community activists and local government members trained

2,604

Youth gained on-the-job experience through apprenticeships

24,975

Short and long-term jobs created

\$37.7 Million

Contributed by public and private partners in cost share and leveraging¹³

COORDINATION EFFORTS

USAID Coordination

Over the LOP, ACDI/VOCA coordinated closely with USAID/Iraq. The Country Director and key senior management staff regularly met with PRT and e-PRT leadership (Department of State, Department of Defense, USAID representatives). Key to PRT coordination was the establishment of five Iraqi-staffed ACDI/VOCA satellite offices

located near PRTs and provincial capitals. This allowed for regular, face-to-face meetings and interaction with relevant PRT representatives and civil affairs teams, providing an opportunity for ACDI/VOCA to present project accomplishments and to openly discuss project issues, including best practices, lessons learned, opportunities, and challenges. Additionally, meetings with the PRT provided the opportunity to give details of anticipated project activities and coordinate efforts between field PRT representatives based throughout Iraq and USAID/ICAP implementers.

Coordination with PRTs also included submission of weekly reports utilizing mutually agreed upon templates and consultative development of annual and quarterly work plans and reports. PRTs were consulted in the coordination with government officials, identification of CAG projects, identification of MRIWVF individual

¹³ Cost share is the portion of a project or program cost not provided by the US Government. It represents the portion of a funded project or program that the grantee must contribute in order to share costs related to meeting the project or program's objectives. This contribution may be in cash, goods, or services and must meet regulation (22CFR226.23). Leveraging represents additional non-USAID resources that are applied to a project or program. Leveraging parties can include the host government, private foundations, businesses or individuals. In-kind contributions such as volunteer time, valuation of donated supplies, equipment and other property and use of unrecovered indirect costs are allowable in accordance with OMB Circular A-110. Leveraging does not have to meet regulation (22CFR226.23). However, entities must be able to demonstrate whether leveraged contributions have been obtained as proposed in program implementation in order to determine whether the desired impacts from the alliances are being achieved.

and community victims, development of thematic CAG initiatives, security assessments and marking and branding assessments. Coordination meetings were conducted regularly on topics such as community health and democracy and governance.

Hosted by ACDI/VOCA, PRT delegations from the four provinces held numerous meetings with CAG and LC members and site visits to projects. The delegations discussed the CAG's project selection and prioritization process, the CAG's role in developing communities, and challenges faced by the CAG. Teams regularly visited projects to see firsthand the positive impact that USAID/ICAP had and will continue to have on the lives of individuals and communities in Iraq.

PRT COLLABORATION HIGHLIGHT: Rule of Law Team public outreach campaign

USAID/ICAP coordinated with the Kirkuk PRT's Rule of Law team through facilitation of linkages with the Council on Integrity (Kirkuk branch), which presented on outlets of reporting corruption at one of the USAID/ICAP CAG and LC trainings. Coordination efforts were very successful, leading to the initiation of a province-wide PRT Rule of Law Team public outreach campaign that was based on input from Kirkuk province CAGs in the fall of 2008.

ACDI/VOCA staff made a special effort to coordinate with representatives from the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and other donors and programs on IDP issues while in Baghdad for implementing partners' meetings. OFDA representatives were invited to attend coordination meetings with key staff dedicated to the IDP portion of USAID/ICAP. After all USAID PRT representatives left Iraq at the end of 2011, ACDI/VOCA continued to coordinate closely with USAID-Baghdad through the designated AOTR and the USAID Field Monitors for the Northern AoR. ACDI/VOCA continued its extensive field monitoring efforts, often conducted by non-staff to ensure objectivity, with results being incorporated in weekly and quarterly reports to USAID.

USAID/ICAP Partner Coordination

While USAID/ICAP was no longer coordinated through a formal USAID/ICAP Alliance, ACDI/VOCA maintained close coordination with the other USAID/ICAP implementing partners (IPs)—CHF, International Relief and Development (IRD) and Mercy Corps. ACDI/VOCA's Country Director and other senior staff participated in regular Chief of Party and IP meetings, as well as meetings organized by the local governance working group. Over the LOP, ACDI/VOCA also attended the post-award conference in 2008, and meetings to plan and finalize the Performance Management Plan (PMP) with QED. In most cases, CHF, IRD, Mercy Corps and ACDI/VOCA invited USAID/ICAP staff to each other's trainings and workshops. IP staff was encouraged to attend ACDI/VOCA events such as provincial partnership conferences in particular.

Provincial Government Coordination

As part of its overall remit under USAID/ICAP, ACDI/VOCA undertook a considerable amount of coordination at the Provincial Government (PG) level. ACDI/VOCA recognized the importance of strong relations with and support by provincial level officials for USAID/ICAP activities and community projects. Their support of activities was critical to obtain approval for implementation of CAG-identified projects and avoid duplication of government-funded projects. PC and DG officials actively participated as resource persons in joint trainings, confirming and/or clarifying project- and budget approval processes, and providing technical consultations. CAGs and LCs advocated to PCs about bylaws for public meetings and, through the PPCs, Petro-Dollar utilization in community projects. With the devolution of power from central government in Baghdad, provincial-level authorities were increasingly taking an interest in and exercising their authority with respect to development activities in their constituencies.

On numerous occasions, senior management and representatives met with the Governors of Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah ad Din. In each province, meetings were also conducted with PC deputy chairmen and several other PC members to discuss USAID/ICAP programs in the AoR. In general, provincial officials were pleased with USAID/ICAP programming and discussions primarily focused on improving coordination between ACDI/VOCA and the Provincial Planning Department to avoid duplication of effort in selecting projects for the provincial development plans. Field staff held additional meetings with assistant governors and director generals at the provincial level. Many provincial officials participated in and/or presented at USAID/ICAP trainings or conferences.

PROVINCIAL COLLABORATION HIGHLIGHT: Provincial Partnership Conferences

From Year 3 onwards, ACDI/VOCA staff conducted annual PPCs in each province that were closely coordinated with and attended by members of the four PCs and provincial authorities, including the governor, technical governors, and the NGO special assistant to the governor. (Photo right: MP Mutashar Hussain Alawi, Provincial Councilman Ali Al-Ajeely and Deputy Governor Ameen Aziz Jawad [left to right, respectively], open an exhibit on CAG-LC partnership at the Salah ad Din Provincial Partnership Conference in 2011.)



Governance Program Synergies

USAID/ICAP was designed as part of a larger governance portfolio that included the Local Governance Program (LGP), implemented by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), which worked with PCs on budget development and execution, as well as the Tatweer Program, implemented by MSI, that worked with national-level line ministries and their local representatives, the directors general. ACDI/VOCA's coordination efforts also extended to other projects implemented by the Louis Berger Group (LBG), the Iraq Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and Mosul Artificial Limbs Center (ALC), as well as the Iraq Foundation.

RTI Local Governance Programs and MSI Tatweer Program. ACDI/VOCA facilitated informal coordination with RTI LGP III and MSI Tatweer in the Northern AoR by sharing information and coordinating meetings on an ad hoc basis. Provincial work plans, M&E tools, and reports were shared with RTI and MSI, both to receive their feedback and to provide additional visibility for the work that USAID/ICAP was proposing in these areas.¹⁴

ACDI/VOCA coordinated with LGP II advisors in the development of the first tier governance training modules that were targeting LCs that did not receive this training under LGP II or were formed after the training was conducted by RTI. Representatives of LGP III participated in and/or presented at USAID/ICAP summer camps and annual PPCs.

LBG Tijara Economic Growth and Inma Agribusiness Programs. From Year 3, ACDI/VOCA worked closely with the Tijara Economic Growth program in Diyala for the district level investment conferences. Staff from LBG participated in the events and attended meetings and trainings. Staff of the Tijara Economic Growth program also joined the MRIWVF small business trainings and the PPCs.

Representatives of the Inma Agribusiness program worked with ACDI/VOCA on the establishment of the two agriculture-themed CAGs in Diyala and Salah ad Din. During strategic planning meetings the participants discussed future programming, including potential projects, funding sources, and ways to increase membership.

Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and Mosul Artificial Limbs Center (ALC). With funds from the MRIWVF, ACDI/VOCA supported ACL Mosul by supplying materials for production of prosthetic limbs. In 2010, ACL Mosul provided an initial 98 persons with feet and 60 persons with full lower-body limbs in addition to further supplies available for lower-limb rehabilitation for approximately two years.

Iraq Foundation. ACDI/VOCA cooperated with the Iraq Foundation that worked on democracy and human rights issues to improve the lives of Iraqis. Iraq Foundation staff participated in ACDI/VOCA's PPCs, while ACDI/VOCA staff was invited to a number of trainings organized by the Iraq Foundation with a focus on accountability, transparency and good governance.

III. ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE IN ACCOMPLISHING PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE I: COMMUNITIES BETTER ARTICULATE THEIR NEEDS AND MOBILIZE RESOURCES WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE COMMUNITY TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

The first objective of USAID/ICAP was to nurture an active civil society able to identify and advocate for priority community needs. It involved instilling democracy and citizen participation in decision making at all levels of government, from the grassroots up.

¹⁴ ACDI/VOCA had informal working relationships with individual RTI and MSI staff members. However, over the LOP several efforts to directly coordinate activities or trainings were canceled due to lack of interest (on the part of RTI/MSI staff), security concerns, and logistical constraints.

Sub IR 9.2.1: Communities Better Mobilize Resources

Performance Indicator 9.2.1.1 – Amount of cost share from community for CAG projects.¹⁵

- LOP target: \$850,105
- LOP achievement: \$410,395

Performance Indicator 9.2.1.2 – Amount of cost share from Gol for CAG projects.

- LOP target: \$24,401,173
- LOP achievement: \$25,372,844

Performance Indicator 9.2.1.3 – Number of projects with a community cost share component.

- LOP target: 41
- LOP achievement: 39

Performance Indicator 9.2.1.4 – Number of projects with a Gol cost share component.

- LOP target: 299
- LOP achievement: 372

Across northern Iraq, the program facilitated the formation of 80 CAGs with 772 elected members. These CAGs identified, prioritized, and advocated for community issues. Working in tandem with LG representatives, CAGs co-implemented 518 vital social and economic projects funded by USAID and with over 40 percent cost share from Iraqi government and community resources.

Community selection

In the Northern AoR, ACDI/VOCA established 80 CAGs (including two thematic CAGs) in 71 *qada* councils, covering about 80 percent of the total provincial jurisdictions. In Year 1, staff identified 53 communities to be mobilized under USAID/ICAP. Of these, 60 percent (32 CAGs) were communities not already mobilized under USAID/CAP II. This number eventually reached 69 CAGs in Year 2 and 80 CAGs in Year 3. No further communities were added in the final program year to allow for sufficient time to build CAG capacity and stakeholder trust. Annex 8 locates CAGs in each province on a map of the Northern AoR and provides security related data.

Of the 80 CAGs, 20 were located in the province of Diyala, 19 in Kirkuk, 23 in Ninawa, and 18 in Salah ad Din. Given ongoing sensitivity in Iraq over demographic data, there is no official data regarding religious, ethnic or other vulnerable populations such as IDPs/Returnees. ACDI/VOCA has attempted to generate unofficial demographic information for programmatic purposes based on reports, data and conversations with INGOs, local and provincial level officials and community members. Annex 9 provides unofficial maps outlining IDP/Returnee estimated populations and information on religious composition such as percentage of Sunnis in the Northern AoR. Please note that all information is for illustrative purposes only and is not official, as no such data exists.

Selection Process. To select new communities and refine capacity building packages, ACDI/VOCA, in consultation with USAID and PRT representatives, assessed the strengths and needs of all core and potential communities in the Northern AoR. The below selection criteria were formalized by ACDI/VOCA during program start-up:

| Community-Specific Criteria | District or Sub-District Council-Specific Criteria |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represented by a <i>nahiya</i> and <i>qada</i> council (has legal status) • Social and/or economic marginalization, including significant vulnerable populations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents at least 1,000 inhabitants • Demonstrated commitment to and willingness to invest in LG capacity building, infrastructure and service delivery |
| Joint Criteria for Community and District or Sub-District Council | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated commitment to program objectives and community-driven development framework (both on the part of the community leaders and on the part of LG officials and key agency representatives) • Minimum level of security required • Geographic location and potential for community clusters and sub-national linkages | |

In response to additional USAID funding received at the end of 2010, ACDI/VOCA's work intensified and expanded to communities in the disputed territories, or with high IDP/Returnee numbers. Additional

¹⁵ The combined cost share target from Gol and community resources for the first USAID/ICAP phase (October 1, 2008 – November 30, 2010) was 50 percent (25 percent Gol/25 percent community). This was revised for the extension phase to 50 percent for Gol and two percent for the community.

selection criteria were formulated by USAID as follows: (1) communities with high populations of IDPs and/or returnees, (2) rural communities in neglected areas that have historically been neglected and are just opening up to opportunities for community/economic development, (3) towns/cities where large neighborhoods of IDPs have settled but where the uncertainty of whether IDPs and returnees will actually remain for the long term has led to resistance of LG to provide much-needed support, and (4) communities within the TDT areas.

Targeted communities were also assessed according to the level of CAG performance (e.g. number and type of CAG projects and cost share performance, number of long- and short-term beneficiaries, scale of operations, the number of villages and beneficiaries they impact, and linkages with higher levels of government).

In addition, ethnic composition of communities was considered in the selection process. Newer communities were more likely to be added if they were either dominated by Sunni Arabs or had mixed ethnic populations, of which one was Sunni Arab. Communities were also chosen if there were indications of tensions and discrimination against one or more ethnic groups, or if they were located in medium to low risk security areas. In this way, the democratic training on equal access to government services could be obtained by all citizens and was not steered by ethnic favoritism.

Finally, PRTs were asked to nominate communities that were later confirmed by ACDI/VOCA's criteria. Each provincial list of communities was sent to the respective provincial PRT for review and approval.

After communities were pre-selected, ACDI/VOCA staff contacted LG officials of the identified communities to discuss the relevance of USAID/ICAP to the development of their local community development plans and to ascertain public sector support for expansion into their *qada* or *nahiya*. In some areas, meetings with tribal elders were important to ensure they understood and would support the program.

The selection of the thematic CAGs varied per network. The Agriculture Networks were self-selecting and member-driven in formation and program implementation. The Al-Baaj Sub CAG Network was recommended by USAID/ICAP staff and piloted to reach out to IDPs in former compound organized communities. The Women and Youth CAG Networks (WYAGs) were both project-driven and self-selecting.

Community mobilization

*“CAGs raise awareness among people about the need to rely on themselves.
Citizens are learning that they have to be involved in the decision-making process.”*
— Sabira, CAG member and director of a women's rights center, Ninawa province

After the selection of communities, introductory community meetings were organized involving LG officials (usually the mayor or *qada* and *nahiya* council chairperson), council members, representatives from sector ministries, and local indigenous leaders. During these meetings, ACDI/VOCA introduced the USAID/ICAP program, CAG mobilization process, and local governance training program, emphasizing the need of support from the LG in project design and planning and also in the form of cost share. Together with government officials and local stakeholders, arrangements were made for town hall meetings and CAG elections.

As part of the introductory community meetings, technical information was gathered to bring to follow-up meetings on resource issues and problems within the community. Data were compiled into a profile of the community's various sectors: education, health, water (potable and irrigation), and electricity. Over the LOP, community sector and socioeconomic profiles of each *qada* and *nahiya* were developed.

Town Hall Meetings and CAG Formation. Following dialogue among staff, LG officials, and key community leaders, the community convened a town hall-style meeting to discuss the USAID/ICAP process and community priorities. At the end of the meeting, citizens were asked to elect between seven and 11 CAG members. Unlike in USAID/CAP II, CAG formation under USAID/ICAP presented criteria that were more in line with grassroots democratic elections in three ways. First and most importantly, an odd number of CAG members were elected, not selected. Equal opportunity for access to the most appropriate individuals was promoted by following election processes such as secret ballot. This avoided bias favoring dominant leaders and created space for new faces. Second, it was required to select two LC members, ensuring the CAG

could build on existing relationships or influence in government sectors and receive the necessary support in getting public service projects approved. Third, ACDI/VOCA set participation targets by underrepresented groups ensuring representation of a broad spectrum of the community.

Over the LOP, 80 CAGs were created through town hall meetings in 78 communities.¹⁶ By the end of the program, these CAGs contained 772 members, an average of almost ten members per CAG. Women constituted about 18 percent of membership, with 86 percent of the CAGs having at least one female member. Overall, Arabs accounted for 57 percent of all members, Kurds accounted for 30 percent, Turkmen accounted for eight percent, and Chaldean-Assyrians accounted for three percent. Two percent were from other ethno religious groups, such as the Yazidi. Some 63 percent of the CAGs also included IDPs.¹⁷

PROGRAMMING FLEXIBILITY HIGHLIGHT: CAG Formation

In response to ethnic balance issues in Kirkuk city, CAG formation criteria were made flexible and a waiver was prepared for a special election procedure related to four CAGs in Kirkuk only. The new procedure took into account the strong LC demand to keep ethnic balance with equal ethnic LC and citizen member representation in each CAG (Arab, Kurd, Turkmen). Instead of two LC members on each of the CAGs, there would be three. The election of the remaining CAG members was equally balanced into two Arabs, two Kurds and two Turkmen.

During town hall meetings, ACDI/VOCA conducted participatory community assessments through resource mapping exercises where citizens assessed the available, scarce, and missing resources in the community. This tool was highlighted in a 2012 USAID/ICAP report, which stated that “this process of positive inquiry helped communities see themselves in a new light and appreciate local capacity and resources” while also encouraging “the development of a sense of community responsibility and empowerment to ensure that CAGs understood their role as community advocates”.¹⁸ The assessments and their processes enabled CAGs to understand the resources available and requirements for quality and cost effective solutions to identified needs. Emphasis was placed on using democratic and participatory processes to identify, analyze, and prepare a community projects plan that addressed community problems given a number of timing and budgetary constraints.

Project identification

“The partnership agreement we made [...] was critical to ultimate success. It meant we already had a relationship with the Local Council and other important community members, giving us the necessary contacts to convince the mayor to accept the project.”

- CAG member, Kirkuk province

Partner Conferences and Joint Agreements. One-day conferences were organized for CAG and LC members to discuss each other’s roles and responsibilities under USAID/ICAP and include agreed details in a joint partnership agreement. These conferences brought together LG and citizens to engage in sharing information, training, and project activities. The agreements established the working relationship between citizens and LG in community development, and enabled citizens to voice their concerns and negotiate which priority projects would be supported. In addition, they allowed the LC and mayor to democratically and transparently respond to the community. Over the LOP, every CAG signed partnership agreements with their respective *qada* or *nahiya*.

Community Project Plan. Utilizing enhanced skills from USAID/ICAP training and technical assistance activities, CAGs convened community meetings to identify and prioritize community projects. The CAG selected community projects based upon feasibility, sustainability, and prioritized community needs. Typical community projects selected under USAID/ICAP were the construction or rehabilitation of sewage systems, potable water systems, waste management, and small-scale electricity infrastructure, as well as health clinics, hospitals, schools, and parks.

Considerable emphasis was placed on the consultative process between CAGs and LG councils. As part of first tier trainings, community project plans (CPPs) were introduced and prepared by CAG members with citizen and government input and approval. CPPs identified projects and a general plan for how the projects

¹⁶ 78 CAGs were geographic (20 in Diyala, 19 in Kirkuk, 23 in Ninawa and 18 in Salah ad Din), while two were thematic (agricultural) CAGs covering Diyala and Salah ad Din provinces.

¹⁷ ACDI/VOCA. CAG Scorecard Assessment. July 2012.

¹⁸ QED. USAID/Iraq CAP III: End of Project Performance. Draft Final Report. July, 2012: p. 22.

would be funded, implemented, and maintained in a way that benefitted the community with minimal security risks and maximum benefit. The plans included projects for funding by USAID/ICAP with cost share from community and the Gol, as well as those proposed for direct funding from PCs or line ministries. For sustainability, the CPPs identified a project holder, normally a LG office, to which the project was transferred for operations and maintenance after implementation.

Final CPPs were signed by all CAG members, the LC, and the mayor, and became an advocacy tool with full community support for CDD planning. CAG members learned to advocate for their plan's approval and for government support for individual projects identified in the plan using the new decentralized government procedures for approving development projects. Enthusiastically adopting democracy at work in their communities, the LC and CAG usually convinced executive authorities of its value, which was then subsequently transmitted to the mayor.

In Year 2, the CPP gained momentum in its use as a guide for LC project submissions to PCs during annual provincial development budget planning requirements. For example, the Muqdadiya LC (Diyala province) reported that seven out of ten projects approved by the PC were from the CPP. In Year 3, the Kirkuk PC decided to allocate more Petro-Dollar funds¹⁹ to local community-proposed projects. Mayors and LCs of Multaqa and Daquq reported that a number of unfunded CPP projects received Petro-Dollar funds. In Year 4, 95 percent of the CAGs completed their annual CPP.

Community and government cost share

ACDI/VOCA followed a holistic approach that fully involved both citizen and government stakeholders in the entire project life cycle. As part of the project approval process, ACDI/VOCA worked with CAGs and the Gol to secure cost share. Despite initial challenges in obtaining this support, \$37,707,478 in cost share and leveraging was committed and verified for projects over the LOP. ACDI/VOCA received \$25,372,844 in cost share contributions from the Gol (plus an additional \$11,693,564 in leveraging) and \$410,395 in community contributions (plus \$230,675 in leveraging).

Community cost share was below target (\$410,395 secured out of a target of \$850,105). Community cost share remained harder than expected to obtain throughout the project due to many factors, including in part an absence of a culture of volunteerism and/or donating as well as a general perception of citizens that the government should be responsible for providing all services. On the other hand, governmental cost share secured at the community level over the life of the program exceeded the overall target (\$25,372,844 secured out of a target of \$24,401,173). Most of cost-share support was provided in the form of land and building donations (approximately 60 percent), time and labor (19 percent) and materials, supplies and equipment (15 percent).

Provincial approval

"I can only express my deepest appreciation and gratitude for the work and services the USAID/Iraq Community Action Program has provided ... which has brought us close to each other and enhanced communication between the community and the government."

—Rashid, Provincial Council member, Salah ad Din province

In Year 2, the advanced third tier trainings for CAGs and LCs focused on the newly established PG project approval and coding systems process as per the Provincial Powers Act (PPA, also known as Law of Governorates Not Incorporated Within a Region No. 21 of 2008), which outlined devolution of powers from central government to provincial authorities. ACDI/VOCA emphasized advocacy and the use of advocacy tools to work more closely with provincial DGs, secure projects, and gain government support in a timely fashion. Understanding the communication protocol and formal administrative procedures for LCs present project applications to PGs was essential to program success. Good relations were required with relevant PC authorities to ensure the project applications were actually received and properly passed through committees and council. In Year 2, the lack of release of annual provincial development funds became a great opportunity to move the advocacy for CDD and project planning forward:

¹⁹ The Petro-Dollar Fund was originally established by the Gol to provide compensation for damages done to the environment and to agriculture. As Iraq is a major oil producer, the Petro-Dollar Fund is an important resource for provincial-level government to improve services. However, constraints on distribution of funds persisted over USAID/ICAP's period of performance.

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY HIGHLIGHT: Project handovers as leverage for approvals

Despite the preparation of the PGs five-year plans for infrastructure projects and the approved national budget of \$72 billion, the release of annual provincial development funds for 2010 was significantly delayed. The newly elected PGs faced rising debts as previous administrations had been forwarded drafts for amounts above the allocated budget. The lack of project funds placed political pressure on the newly elected PGs. In response, USAID/ICAP emphasized the opportunity to implement attractive public service projects under its program, not requiring cash contribution from government to advocate for PC and line ministry approvals. As a result, training in community advocacy and joint CAG/LC action was pushed forward and DGs of ministries received technical and financial support to carry out CAG projects that were handed over to the DG as joint projects. USAID/ICAP communities used this handover of public service projects as leverage for quick approvals, technical services for project design, and cost share contributions. The program also helped CAGs develop advocacy strategies to work more effectively with PCs.

In Year 4 of USAID/ICAP, all CAGs advocated for and received project approvals from government authorities. In addition, in 2012, 60 percent of CAGs advocated and received funding for projects not implemented by USAID/ICAP. This was a significant increase from 2011 (48 percent).

Project implementation

*“Before the electricity project we had [electricity] only one hour a day—now we have at least eight!
This is a major improvement in our lives as we are able to run domestic appliances and keep businesses open.”*

—Beneficiary, Salah ad Din province

CAG Projects. Over the LOP, CAGs implemented 518 community projects. An emphasis was placed on visible public service projects that mattered to citizens. CAGs prioritized projects that improved access to public services for vulnerable community members and/or reduced constraints that prevented proper and efficient use of public services. The majority of projects improved electricity and water networks (32 percent), while many others focused on education (24 percent), public spaces (14 percent), agriculture (9 percent), and economic development (8 percent). The CAG projects created 17,732 short-term jobs (1 percent for women). As noted above, almost all of the short-term jobs were in typically male-dominated industries such as construction. However, women accounted for 38 percent of the 2,302 long-term jobs created.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Multi-purpose agriculture warehouse

The Kolajoo CAG improved the lives of over 1,250 farmers and livestock holders in Diyala province. With funding from USAID/ICAP, the CAG constructed a large multi-purpose agricultural warehouse as part of the Kolajoo Agriculture Section of Kifri’s District Office of Agriculture. The warehouse enabled local farmers to better receive, store, and accept seeds, fertilizer, grain and forage. It also facilitated reductions of crop waste and improved marketing efforts. The warehouse serviced farmers living in 36 neighboring villages. (Photo right: Seeds and fertilizer stocked at the new warehouse)



Results of an internal assessment²⁰ showed that 95 percent of the community members surveyed knew about CAG projects in their neighborhood, and 84 percent rated them as effective. According to the Learning Impact Assessment,²¹ there was a high level of community satisfaction with the CAG projects implemented. First, 97 percent of those surveyed indicated that the projects were used for its intended purposes. With respect to service improvement from installation of small projects, the vast majority (90 percent) perceived a high level of improvement. In another internal survey, 90 percent of community members interviewed stated that the CAG projects were meeting the community needs.²²

IDP and TDT Projects. From Year 3, ACDI/VOCA prioritized implementation of projects in IDP and TDT areas in response to input from USAID and PRT representatives and identified partner community needs.

While disputed territories and IDPs were two separate issues, they often came together as displaced persons returned to areas claimed by both the KRG and the GoI. This heavily impacted ACDI/VOCA’s AoR. Implementing projects in these communities was challenging as the status of these territories remained uncertain and IDPs/returnees were often difficult to reach for assistance. ACDI/VOCA’s solution was an

²⁰ ACDI/VOCA. Community Projects Beneficiary Assessment in Eight Communities. June 2012.

²¹ Philip Boyle. USAID/ICAP Learning Impact Assessment. Final Report. July 2012.

²² ACDI/VOCA. Quarterly Community Projects Beneficiary Feedback Survey Report. April 2012.

even greater focus on joint community and LG engagement. By bringing citizens and officials together to foster open communication and dialogue, problems of all segments of society were discussed openly.

Despite the challenges of working in disputed territories and with IDPs/returnees, ACDI/VOCA successfully built linkages between counterpart government officials from the GoI and the KRG in disputed areas and facilitated projects and trainings. Over the LOP, 68 TDT projects and 175 CAG projects which included IDP/returnee beneficiaries were completed, benefiting people from all segments of Iraq's population, including an estimated 270,475 IDP/returnee beneficiaries.

Given ACDI/VOCA's integrated approach to working with vulnerable populations, IDP/returnee and TDT-specific projects were not substantially different from other CAG infrastructure or supply projects. The CAG methodology allowed all community members to utilize joint citizen/local official trainings on advocacy, coalition building, project cycle management, and project monitoring. As community members, citizens in IDP or TDT areas were provided with the same opportunities to advocate directly to their LG that could then respond to their prioritized needs.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: School for displaced children

Although not traditionally considered a displaced community, the suburb village of Al Ethiyat in Hawija (Kirkuk province) was an area composed entirely of IDPs. In the village, children severely lacked school space, and were not able to join other schools in the area due to overcrowding. CAG members, supported by the LC and community members, advocated heavily for approval from the mayor for a school project. With the mayor's approval, the CAG used USAID/ICAP funds to purchase material for the construction of a new school for 165 students, all of whom were IDPs/returnees. Utilizing M&E training, the CAG carefully monitored the project, ensuring that it was completed properly. (Picture right: Al Ethiyat school)



Thematic CAGs. Over the LOP, a number of thematic CAGs were established to promote both horizontal and vertical community-level participation in the LG. The selection process of the thematic CAGs varied by network and had a large impact on the sustainability of the CAG. Only the networks that were self-selecting and member-driven in their formation and program implementation were highly functional and successful.

The most effective thematic CAGs were two agricultural CAG networks, one in Diyala and a second one in Salah ad Din. They developed strong horizontal linkages among CAGs of communities with predominantly rural farming livelihoods and vertical linkages with the DG of the Ministry of Agriculture. Together, the CAGs implemented eight different projects, reaching more than 700,000 beneficiaries. They continue to operate today.



CAG NETWORK HIGHLIGHT: Diyala and Salah ad Din

In certain instances, problems identified by communities were too complex for a single community to address. For example, while the majority of people in Diyala and Salah ad Din provinces relied on agriculture for their livelihood, outdated farming methods, low soil quality, and poor irrigation practices led to reduced output. In response, a group of CAG members from each province formed two network CAGs focused on agriculture. The Diyala and Salah ad Din network CAGs signed partnership agreements with directors and other officials from their respective provincial agriculture directorates. These agricultural network CAGs enabled farmers to collectively identify and communicate their needs directly to the LG and the directorate of agriculture, who then advocated on their behalf to the central government. This collaboration led to successful implementation of projects involving soil improvement, plant tissue and veterinary laboratories, plant nurseries, floodgates, and canal rehabilitation. (Picture left: Technicians at the new Diyala soil laboratory)

The Quratoo Youth CAG was elected in Diyala province. It consisted of eleven members, nine of whom were under the age of 26 at the time of the election. As a thematic CAG, the group was successful for three years, focusing on youth projects and community outreach activities that developed youth leadership throughout the *nahiya*. The CAG helped formalize the objectives, activities, and expected results for the summer camps. As the youth members became older, the group changed into a regular CAG. It continued its successful community development activities, emphasizing youth issues and also adding a focus on

IDPs/returnee inclusion and women's rights. Overall, six projects were implemented, reaching 17,470 beneficiaries. Thawra, a female teacher now aged 28, has been re-elected twice to the Quratoo CAG: "All my friends are proud of me since I joined the CAG - to them I am their representative."

Efforts were made to establish a network between Al Baaj district and Qahtaniya sub-district in Ninawa province to improve outreach to a large population of IDP minorities. Ultimately, the network was not effective in its collaborative efforts, and was subsequently cancelled. The community of Qahtaniya, however, did form its own CAG to represent the underserved minorities that lived there, and implemented two successful health and education projects that reached 36,516 beneficiaries.

WYAGs were introduced in all four provinces of the Northern AoR. They were successful for less than a year in Diyala and Kirkuk, where the WYAGs provided effective services for mobilizing youth, especially females, to attend youth summer camps and learn about the apprenticeship program. However, they did not identify a clear mandate for their individual provincial networks and were not allocated project fund support as a result. No WYAGs were established in Ninawa and Salah ad Din due to the more conservative nature of communities and security concerns.

In acknowledgement of the complexities that come with establishing and maintaining thematic CAG networks and to encourage further horizontal and vertical communication between individual CAG and LC members (within respective thematic but also regular CAG communities), a comprehensive 'CAG and LC Directory' was developed. This directory aims to help motivated community advocates, whether they are ordinary citizens, *qada* and *nahiya* officials, or other government representatives, to connect with each other and identify individuals that played a key role in the success of USAID/ICAP. The directory harnesses the skills of USAID/ICAP stakeholders and facilitates contact among citizens and the LG to collectively advocate to higher authorities at provincial and/or national levels in order to address a given issue.

Public Interest Fund Pilot Initiative. From Year 3, ACDI/VOCA promoted specific public engagement through its Public Interest Funds (PIFs). The new focus was on engaging citizens by organizing gender, youth, and other vulnerable populations by providing targeted training activities and quick impact projects. A maximum of \$10,000 was available per PIF project, and government involvement and agreement was not needed to move forward with selected projects.

Over the LOP of USAID/ICAP, 26 PIF projects were implemented, with clear and manageable goals designed to increase involvement of vulnerable groups such as women, widows, youth, and IDPs. The projects included sports tournaments to support youth rights, a neighborhood tree planting campaign, (environmental) health awareness and first aid campaigns for women and children, and vocational trainings for women. PIF projects reached 15,932 beneficiaries (60 percent male, 40 percent female). A third of the beneficiaries were children and young adults, while a fifth of beneficiaries were IDPs/returnees.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Sewing course in Multaqa

The Multaqa CAG in Kirkuk province prioritized income-generating activities for vulnerable women. The Sara Institute and Center, an experienced local NGO, organized a 10-day sewing course in Multaqa for Employment and Training. Twenty unemployed women, widows, divorcees, and other deprived women traditionally left dependent upon their communities due to their marital or socio-economic status attended the training. The participants were selected by mukthars and the mayor, and confirmed by ACDI/VOCA. The women learned how to sew and establish a home-based business or sewing shop to generate income and improve their lives and the lives of their families. In addition to the training, all women received sewing machines, as well as fabric packages and tool sets. (Photo right: Women showing their sewing products)



Even though a number of very successful PIF projects were implemented, many CAGs preferred implementing larger projects that had a more significant impact on the community as a whole and had a higher level of visibility. In addition, they favored the regular CAG prioritization and approval process that ensured projects were selected based on a transparent selection process that involved all stakeholders and was linked to provincial government planning procedures. This development is significant, demonstrating that transparency and accountability were embedded in community expectations, and underscoring the empowerment of community members.

Monitoring and evaluation

Throughout project implementation, CAGs actively engaged in monitoring ongoing activities by designating at least one CAG member to be in charge of each project. All CAGs were required to have an M&E committee tasked with monitoring project implementation from start to finish. This involvement enhanced community projects, as committees could identify and incorporate changes to improve projects under implementation. M&E committees also helped to ensure that the views and perceptions of a diverse group of stakeholders were taken into account for local development decisions.

Each M&E committee comprised of three CAG members (one of whom had to be a joint CAG/LC member) received a site meeting allowance to cover communication and transportation costs, if applicable. ACDI/VOCA worked with each M&E committee to ensure all committee members received training in basic project evaluation techniques, including how to conduct a proper site visit, check a bill of quantities (BoQ), and write a site visit report. M&E committee members participated in a minimum of three site visits per project: (1) the project handover to the contractor, (2) at least one random site visit to the project site to ensure projects were on target and project materials matched the BoQ in the original contract, and (3) the final project close-out (opening ceremony). M&E committee members reported back to the CAG during each monthly or bi-monthly meeting on what happened at each project site. All CAG members participated in project site visits either with the M&E committee or by themselves.

Engagement in monitoring activities increased awareness of CAG members regarding different ministry maintenance policies and procedures as well as technical specifications for equipment and project design. At the same time, LG officials learned about maintenance regulations, timeframes, and building in maintenance plans for the wholly government-funded projects. Internal assessment results gathered in July 2012²³ showed that in Year 4, all CAGs provided oversight or implemented M&E activities for projects.

At the community level, M&E staff utilized community-based participatory monitoring and oversight where CAGs played a decisive role in ensuring that approved USAID/ICAP projects actually addressed identified community needs, met set standards, and were implemented in an efficient and effective manner. In addition, feedback from ordinary citizens, CAG/LC members, and relevant technical ministries collected through regular surveys and assessments were at the core of decision-making. To strengthen CAG M&E capacity, the ACDI/VOCA M&E team provided training on the principles and practices of community-based M&E.

Project completion and close-out

"We are proud that CAG members and the Local Government provided the intensive effort that allowed us to develop the community and ensure basic services to citizens."

– CAG member (IDP/returnee), Kirkuk province

Upon project completion, ACDI/VOCA, CAG and LC members conducted a final site visit to ensure the project was satisfactorily completed. Project completion reports were finalized, including a handover document that acknowledged community ownership and responsibility for the project, as well as their duty and responsibility to hand over management and maintenance responsibility to the approved ministry.

Throughout the LOP, ACDI/VOCA encouraged citizen participation at project closing ceremonies, indicating project completion, closing of the CAG contribution, and handover of responsibilities to the designated government ministry. The ceremony was not just seen as part of the project cycle, but as verification to the community of the public benefits gained when citizens engaged in public service planning. Each ceremony was organized with CAG and LG participation. Often the mayor attended and contractors participated in the event. The ceremony reinforced to CAG and LG members their mutually agreed-upon roles in achieving projects. It helped the LG strengthen its outreach to citizens, as its efforts securing approvals at provincial level had been key to bringing the project into their community. Some of the liveliest ceremonies were held in Telafar (Ninawa province) at openings of six classroom projects. Before USAID/ICAP, no schools existed in the area and classes were held in a small house rented with community donations. In Hib Hib (Diyala province) the opening of a sports stadium turned into a large event when the former Governor of Diyala and a member of the Iraqi Parliament attended the ceremony and showed support.

²³ ACDI/VOCA. CAG Scorecard Assessment. July 2012.

Sub IR 9.3.1: Communities Better Articulate Needs

Performance Indicator 9.3.1.1 – Percent of USAID/ICAP-trained CAG members that report using their new skills to meet community needs and can give an example.

- LOP target: 71 percent
- LOP achievement: 64 percent

Formal CAG Training (links with Sub IR 9.2.2 and 9.3.2)

"In my view, the main achievement of USAID/Iraq Community Action Program has been the building of the spirit of confidence in people to be able to communicate with the government, whether it is the Local or Provincial Council. Through conferences, public meetings and individual actions, we have gained the confidence to raise the voice of the people directly to the government whenever needed."

- CAG member, Kirkuk province

Once a new CAG was established, ACDI/VOCA worked with CAG members in selected communities to conduct a rapid needs assessment of community strengths, needs, and priorities, utilizing participatory tools such as focus group discussions, community resource mapping, and matrix ranking. This assessment laid the foundation for the tiered capacity building framework. Through formal trainings, the capacity of 1,599²⁴ CAG members (92 percent male, 8 percent female) was improved.

From the start of USAID/ICAP, ACDI/VOCA decided to consolidate trainings for CAG and LC members, highlighting the importance of bringing together CAG and LC members for selected training and project activities. Moving towards joint trainings was also in line with an increased emphasis on advocacy and LG engagement under USAID/ICAP. More detail on formal CAG and LC trainings is included in the report sections that cover Objective 2. Annex 10 provides a complete list of training modules provided to both CAG and LC members.

Apprenticeship Program for Youth

"When I was at college, I learned my subjects theoretically. However, after signing the [apprenticeship] contract and starting to work in the lab, I am more able to apply the theories I learned. This makes me valuable to the community, and I feel that I am contributing to the development of my country."

- Niran, participant, Apprenticeship Program

The Apprenticeship Program for Youth (Apprenticeship Program) sought to enhance the skills of young Iraqis and increase their participation in the economy to help bridge the existing gap between the knowledge acquired through education and the skills required by the job market. The Program was unique in that it also sought to enhance the skills of human resource managers and develop workplace management skills at the LG level. Over the LOP of USAID/ICAP, six phases of the Program were successfully implemented in the Northern AoR.

As under USAID/CAP I and II, the Apprenticeship Program gave young Iraqi graduates aged 18-26 without prior work experience exposure to the workplace, OJT skills acquisition, and formal job search training to ultimately help them secure employment. The program also provided training to supervisors of apprentices, enabling them to more effectively manage and mentor young and inexperienced workers. An internal review of ACDI/VOCA's Apprenticeship Program in 2010 showed that "[its] operations [...], with the benefit of over five years of experience, are well established, and have been revised, redesigned and improved both between the [USAID/ICAP] programs and between different phases of the program itself."²⁵

Over the LOP, 2,604 apprentices (62 percent male, 38 percent female) from universities and technical institutes received training and were placed with private and public sector employers for four to five months. Apprentices were sourced from CAG members, who proposed candidates from their communities to ACDI/VOCA to interview. Capacity building efforts centered on the Job Application Training (JAT) and the Conflict Resolution Training. The JAT consisted of modules covering CV building, cover letter writing, and interviewing techniques.

Almost 200 host organizations were identified in cooperation with CAGs, LCs, and PRTs in the Northern AoR. Private sector involvement was ensured through strong collaboration with local chambers of

²⁴ In order to prevent double counting, joint CAG/LC members are counted only as CAG members for purpose of unique members trained. Total unique CAG and LC numbers trained are higher than the amount of current members as there has been turnover due to CAG elections and to members leaving.

²⁵ ACDI/VOCA. Review of CAP III Apprenticeship Program. January 2010: p. 13.

commerce within each province. Institutions that agreed to host apprentices were assessed on the number of potential job vacancies, the types of skills they were seeking in potential apprentices, their ability to provide support to apprentices, and their human resources management capacities. The program trained employers and supervisors on leadership, HR management, and conflict resolution so that they were better able to supervise new graduates without job experience in responsibly carrying out their work duties.

Sustainability. The program proved highly popular among participants (both apprentices and employers) and resulted in 50 percent of the apprentices finding permanent positions once their participation in the program ended (of which seven percent with their host organization, indicating that the skills developed by young apprentices were highly transferrable among firms).²⁶ There was ongoing demand from USAID/ICAP communities and LG to continue the program.

In June 2012, in an effort to institutionalize and localize the apprenticeship program model among Iraqi stakeholders, ACDI/VOCA conducted a Stakeholders Forum in Kirkuk, bringing together government officials, key CAG and LG members, NGOs and civic groups, key employers and educational providers, chambers of commerce, and program beneficiaries. The forum confirmed the need for the program and stakeholder interest; almost three-quarters (74 percent) of the participants believed Iraq needed an apprenticeship program for young people. An overwhelming majority (95 percent) stated that after the forum, they would like to be part of an ‘Apprenticeship Program Action Group’ that develops a strategy and takes action to establish an apprenticeship program in Kirkuk. A majority (90 percent) of participants said the forum expanded their belief that it is possible for stakeholders to take steps and get results in moving the program forward. However, challenges remain, with only 63 percent concluding that there were government ministries in Kirkuk capable of administrating the program, and 53 percent strongly agreeing that securing the budget remained the biggest issue.²⁷

Overall, the Forum provided a model for future stakeholder meetings and activities, obtained ‘groundwork’ ideas for program continuation, and enabled identification of ‘champions’ for future sustainability efforts. The current program model was considered suitable as a starting point for a localized model, but it was recommended to implement a smaller pilot approach in a single province such as Kirkuk. A pilot program would allow for (1) testing of new leadership, (2) assessment of long-term program interest in and commitment of leadership, apprentices and employers, and (3) collection of information about the availability of funds. Implementation in a single locale would also increase chances of a strong and focused stakeholder effort and maximize program success.

In response, ACDI/VOCA organized follow-up meetings in August and September 2012 specifically for Kirkuk stakeholders. As part of this, a concise manual for the Apprenticeship Program was developed and shared with participants. The Apprenticeship Program for Youth Manual (Annex 11) is a toolkit and resource guide designed to help motivated government officials and CSOs understand the need for and usefulness of an apprenticeship program and how to implement one. Officials responded enthusiastically and provisionally promised to implement similar camps.

Youth Summer Camps

“Being cooperative is one of the most important things we learned at camp. We also learned how to communicate, be wise and avoid judging people from a first impression.”

– Camper Asmaa

The Youth Summer Camp on Leadership and Local Government first took place at the end of Year 1. Second, third, and fourth round summer camps were organized in Year 2, 3 and 4. Each year, two camp sessions—one for males, one for females—targeted approximately 200 youth aged 16 to 24 years old from the Northern AoR that represented different social, cultural, and ethno religious groups. Aside from the annual inter-provincial summer camps, an additional three provincial camps were organized in Diyala, Kirkuk, and Ninawa. For all camps, CAGs and ACDI/VOCA staff reviewed application forms and in a fair and transparent selection process identified youth with leadership potential and who expressed a desire to share their experiences with others in community activities after camp completion. Over the LOP, 1,367 youth (55 percent male, 45 percent female) participated in the camps.

²⁶ ACDI/VOCA. Apprenticeship Phone Survey. May 2012: p. 3.

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 27, 28, 30.

Held in safe and neutral venues, the camps all undertook five days of participatory activities aimed at providing youth with: (1) hands-on experience designed to teach about Iraqi LG structures and procedures at district and provincial level, (2) interactive training on how to participate in local community development activities and advocate to LG for projects that would benefit their community, (3) practical experience on how to mobilize their peers to develop strategies that encouraged youth to develop an understanding of citizenship and leadership development, and (4) teamwork activities that encouraged cooperation among a diversity of persons, a commitment to advocacy, and an understanding of the meaning of rights of participation in community development. Group and individual skills were also developed in an enjoyable and respectful atmosphere through sports competitions, cultural events, small group exercises, and other recreational activities. The self-segregation along cultural and ethno religious lines traditional in many communities in Iraq meant that for most of the young people, it was their first opportunity to live, engage in joint activities and socialize with youth from different backgrounds.



CAMP ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS:

Provincial groups. In all four years, participants were split into five artificial provinces that mixed representatives of different ethnicities and regional backgrounds. The artificial provinces each formed their own identity, working towards a common goal in the election process on the last day of the camp. They instilled life in the artificial province by creating a name, logo, hand sign, and a cheer that further bonded them along these lines and not along the cultural differences.

Mock elections. Mock elections were seen as a highlight of the camp. They were fun, provided good-hearted competition, and taught campers the main concepts of the democratic process. At first, local provincial representatives were selected, after which nominations for the position of camp Governor were received. Culminating activities were the election of the Governor and a Q&A session for the new board by the whole camp. (Photo left: A young Iraqi female votes for the camp governor at the girls' summer camp)

Post-camp community projects. To encourage youth to take back to their community what they learned at camp and to further motivate them to become youth leaders, training and a \$200 budget was provided for post-camp small project activities. With support from their local CAGs, participants implemented projects such as distributing clothing to orphaned children, or purchasing streetlights for a dark neighborhood. Youth increased their confidence by making a positive change in the community.

Sustainability. ACDI/VOCA aimed to gradually transition management of the summer camps to provincial-level authorities, so that even after USAID/ICAP a similar camp model could be held annually within each province. ACDI/VOCA expected that securing the support of local and provincial level government and donors was easier for province-based camps. From another point of view, smaller camps are easier to implement, both logistically and cost-wise. In addition to inviting government officials to the camps, a draft localization strategy was developed that included concrete steps for interested DGs of Youth and Sports to take during the remaining time of USAID/ICAP and after its completion. Meetings took place with DGs of Youth and Sports to align ACDI/VOCA's camp model with the existing camp model of the DGs.

OBJECTIVE 2: LOCAL EXECUTIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IN USAID/ICAP COMMUNITIES BETTER MEET THE ARTICULATED NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

The second objective of USAID/ICAP was to make the LG more responsive to community priorities. This program component focused on building the capacity of LG representatives to work in collaboration with citizens to meet priority community needs in a democratic and transparent way. The governance program was built around joint activities, such as project co-implementation, on-the-job training, partnership conferences, and public meetings that provided learning-by-doing and linked government representatives to citizen advocates. Such activities also built trust between Iraqis, legitimized the government, and helped democracy grow.

Sub IR 9.2.2: Qada and Nahiya Officials Better Able to Mobilize Resources

Local councils are Iraq's first tier of government. They have power under Iraq's provincial authority laws to recommend and oversee development projects. Under USAID/ICAP, LCs were the primary government

representatives who received capacity building. Seventy LCs in Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa, and Salah ad Din signed partnership agreements with CAGs through USAID/ICAP. An additional LC in Mosul also participated in trainings. Annex 12 lists the LC partners by province. Through formal trainings, 1,277 LC members (98 percent male, 2 percent female) learned to partner with citizens to effectively plan and carry out development projects of enduring impact.

Training needs assessment

In Year 1, a local governance training needs assessment was conducted to determine specific needs of LCs. Following the results, a curriculum was developed for a tiered training approach, OJT activities, and partner conferences.

Specifically the training program focused on: (1) increasing the capacity of LG officials—mostly councils, but also local administrators and directorate officials—to pursue funding from the Gol, (2) increasing LCs' capacity and willingness to respond to locally articulated needs, and (3) increasing capacity and willingness of LG officials to participate with citizens throughout the project management cycle with efficiency and transparency.

A successful training of trainers (TOT) methodology initially developed under USAID's LGP I and II was adapted to fit the USAID/ICAP LG training curriculum. Sections on the PPA, media outreach and advocacy, and the importance of conducting opening/closing project ceremonies were incorporated into LGP TOT modules. Community leaders interested in being local trainers were recruited from the four provinces in ACDI/VOCA's AoR and received an intensive four-day training and practical experience teaching elements of the basic training component. Twenty-three trainers completed the TOT program, and then went on lead formal trainings and provided technical assistance to LG officials and CAGs.

From Year 2 of USAID/ICAP, LG officials and CAG members were brought together for most of the trainings and project activities. While many activities under this Objective address IR 9.2.2, IR 9.3.1, and IR 9.3.2, they have been listed only once under the IR that is most appropriate, with a reference to the IR overlapping contribution to achieving the other result.

Training for Qada and Nahiya (links with Sub IR 9.3.1 and 9.3.2)

"The USAID/Iraq Community Action Program has made us more organized through trainings and conferences. This has improved our managerial skills at the Local Council as well as taught us how to conduct public meetings and activate the role of citizens to pressure the government."

- Local Council member, Salah ad Din province

Formal Training for Local Councils (and CAG members). The LG training program was originally designed to start with core trainings that built upon the basic trainings delivered to LCs as part of the USAID-funded LGP II program. However, thirteen councils in Kirkuk and Diyala did not receive the basic training, so ACDI/VOCA incorporated the basic training sessions into training programs for the thirteen councils. During three-day basic trainings, 224 council members (97 percent male, 3 percent female) were introduced to various topics that improved their level of effectiveness and efficiency in serving their communities. Topics included council procedures, council members' roles and responsibilities, decision-making, code of conduct, council by-laws and ground rules, transparency and accountability, as well as dealing with media.

After completing the basic modules, core trainings were organized for a total of 527 LG officials (97 percent male, 3 percent female) from nineteen LCs. The three-day trainings covered topics such as leadership, council roles, strategic planning (including SWOT analysis and SMART goal analysis), visioning, negotiation, communication as well as collaboration and partnerships with CAGs. The training introduced the CAG concept to councils ensuring they understood formation and election processes of the CAG. As part of the strategic planning and visioning exercises, the councils drew maps of their district or sub-district, reflecting multi-year visions for their communities. At subsequent LG/CAG partner conferences, these vision maps were shared with the CAGs, who in return shared their community resource maps.

In the majority of basic and core governance trainings, CAG members joined the LC officials. In total, 1,599 CAG members participated in sections relevant to them. In addition, separate training modules were conducted for CAG members around topics such as community development, organizational management, project and resource mobilization, M&E as well as formation and board governing basics.



TRAINING HIGHLIGHT: Learning about the new electoral ‘open-list’ system.²⁸

USAID/ICAP training spent considerable time demonstrating the difference between ‘electing’ and ‘selecting’ representatives and effects of using different types of priority ranking practices on getting a final result from general voting. Learning about the new election ‘open-list’ system, CAG and LC members recognized that the individual voting form was more democratic, more accountable, and gave greater power to the individual voter than to the closed list. CAGs used the open-list system after core trainings at town hall meeting elections and at public meetings, motivating participating citizens by the empowerment of their own single vote. (Photo left: Community members vote during an annual CAG re-election)

Joint Context-Driven CAG and Local Council Training. With the completion of basic and core trainings, LC and CAG members continued the training cycle with the intermediate and advanced trainings. In Year 2, the formal USAID/ICAP capacity building plan for both LCs and CAGs was adjusted to include four main trainings: (1) basic-core and project cycle management (PCM) modules, (2) partnership conferences for LCs and CAGs, (3) democratic strategies of mobilization (DSM) and intermediate modules on planning, budgeting, citizen participation and advocacy strategies, and (4) advanced CAG and LG training that focused on building coalitions and networks, advanced SWOT analyses, and how to access alternative Gol resources such as Petro-Dollars for community development.

The trainings developed the capacity of LC and CAG members to prepare and adopt appropriate budgets and forward development budgets to the PCs for approval. Also, the training assisted *qada* and *nahiya* finance directors and officers in assigning accurate sector budgets according to LC project development plans. The training improved LC and CAG project management skills and improved their understanding of project oversight according to the Law of Governorates Not Incorporated Within a Region No. 21 of 2008. It also enabled them to distribute budget allocations among sectors with respect to citizens’ requirements and priorities. This training also encouraged LC members to participate with the public on the selection of projects and promote inclusive decision-making through public involvement. Overall, the joint training approach led to greater coordination and clarity of CAG and LC members’ roles and responsibilities and more approvals of CAG and LC project plans.

Overall, 152 CAG and 102 LC members attended the DSM trainings, while 192 CAG and 180 LC members received the intermediate trainings. The advanced trainings were provided to 179 CAG and 77 LC members.

Technical Assistance

“The USAID/Iraq Community Action Program brings people from many backgrounds and ethnicities together. At first, it was hard for us to communicate. Now we can accept each other for what we do, not who we are.

At the Local Council, we have started to select projects without paying attention to whether it is a Kurdish or Turkmen region, or if it is a disputed area. We look at the project as means to serve the community and no more.”

—Sami, Local Council member, Kirkuk province

On-the-job Training. The OJT program assisted LG officials to learn how to interact effectively with civil society groups by participating with the CAGs on project management cycle activities. At least 4,540 small training workshops were held at the individual LC level to reinforce topics learned during the formal trainings. These allowed councils to apply theoretical concepts at local and practical level. Specifically the OJT program provided consultation and training to assist LGs to prepare, submit, and advocate for well-designed projects to the PCs and national ministries.

Throughout the community development process, the LG participated by convening community meetings to enable USAID/ICAP staff to introduce the CDD approach and to provide positive sanctions that encouraged the use of this approach in their jurisdiction, including the formation of CAGs. The LG also joined meetings organized by CAGs to: (1) jointly identify and select priorities, (2) mobilize resources for cost share, (3) review citizen proposals and support CAG project initiatives, (4) keep the local and provincial government

²⁸ The new electoral law, approved on 6 December 2009, prescribed an open-list system that gives much greater power to individual voters than did the closed-list system previously employed. With open lists, voters have the option to cast ballots for individual candidates who are standing either alone or as part of a coalition, in addition to voting for an electoral list. In so doing, they rank a list’s candidates according to the number of votes they receive. By contrast, in a closed system the list’s leadership determines its candidates’ rankings.

informed of progress on projects, and (5) celebrate project completion. Furthermore, the LG provided support to projects prioritized by CAGs through the adoption of these projects into their own work program and research Gol funding opportunities.

An assessment in 2012 found that 99 percent of the LC members who received OJT used their new knowledge in decision-making and activities.²⁹ An overwhelming majority (96 percent) of the council members believed that the OJT was effective in improving LC performance.

By facilitating joint meetings, trainings and action on specific project planning and implementation, LGs and citizens experienced joint citizen-government collaboration and democratic decision-making, which led to LG institutionalization of greater citizen participation in management of local affairs. It also provided a platform for democratic leadership development within communities, strengthening community support for local councils and administrators and opening the eligibility pool for enlisting future council members.

Investment Conferences. Another key issue was how to encourage private sector investment in communities and facilitate more equitable access to Petro-Dollar funds. In Diyala, a special group session with mixed community and PC and executive government officials recommended more community outreach from the Commission on Investment. This led to the development of a series of community seminars on investment held initially in five districts in Diyala province, but later also in Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah ad Din. Overall, 1,143 people (71 percent male, 29 percent female) attended twelve seminars (seven in Diyala, one in Kirkuk, two in Ninawa and two in Salah ad Din).

The seminars covered types of investment and planning, including identification of targets and risks, as well as the importance of investment in community development. Participants discussed how to attract investors to the community, investor awareness of risk and rights, advantages and disadvantages for investors and local obstacles to business, such as security concerns and the lack of banking facilities.

Since the conferences were held, there was reported improvement in the licensing process and reductions to delays by officials of investment commissions, particularly in Diyala and Kirkuk. In Kirkuk and Salah ad Din provinces, which receive the largest Petro-Dollar revenue share from the central government in ACIDI/VOCA's AoR, PCs started to allocate Petro-Dollar funding together with the provincial development funds to finance participatory community projects. Previously all or nearly all Petro-Dollar funding was used for strategic large-scale projects only.

Network of Local Councils. ACIDI/VOCA brought together members of LCs from different *qada* and *nahiyas* for discussions about shared challenges and the different approaches to getting citizen input and conducting public outreach. These discussions were designed to show LCs that they were not alone in the challenges and needs they faced and provided them a support mechanism through which they could access new perspectives or ideas to help them better engage their communities and communicate about citizen needs.

Initial meetings were conducted with ten leading LCs from Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah ad Din to discuss the concept, feasibility and potential for a Local Council Association (LCA). These meetings were part of a pilot initiative that ACIDI/VOCA explored in building awareness for Iraqi LCs in the Northern AoR about forming an LCA. The pilot meetings were followed by consultations with all 71 LCs introducing the LCA concept. The association could potentially function as the collective voice of LCs in the national level decentralization debate and facilitate central government interaction.

Sub IR 9.3.2: Qada and Nahiya Officials Better Articulate Community Needs

Performance Indicator 9.3.2.1 – Percent of USAID/ICAP-trained LC members that report using their new skills to meet community needs.

- LOP target: 69 percent
- LOP achievement: 71 percent

Performance Indicator 9.3.2.2 – Number of USAID/ICAP-assisted LG councils that have formalized a community driven needs assessment project design and implementation process.

- LOP target: 70
- LOP achievement: 70

Performance Indicator 9.3.2.3 – Number of USAID/ICAP-trained LG councils that provide regular opportunities

²⁹ ACIDI/VOCA. LG Scorecard Assessment. June 2012.

for public input.

- LOP target: 70
- LOP achievement: 70

Performance Indicator 9.3.2.4 – Number of LG councils in the AoR that received USAID/ICAP LG training.

- LOP target: 71
- LOP achievement: 71

Provincial Partnership Conferences (links to Sub IR 9.3.1 and 9.2.2)

“Conferences such as this help eliminate the differences between the public and officials in terms of decision-making.”

- A Provincial Council member, Ninawa province

Introduced in Year 3, Provincial Partnership Conferences (PPCs) were designed to solidify PG support to systems being established at *qada* and *nahiya* level. The conferences, highlighted in USAID/ICAP End of Project Performance report³⁰ because of their participatory character, proved to be pivotal for the strengthening of relationships between CAGs, LCs and PCs. CAGs and LCs were able to use their advocacy skills to promote communities’ needs while PC members gained a stronger understanding of the USAID/ICAP program and the importance of collaborating with CAGs and LCs. In 2010, the PPC was the first time the new PCs and provincial governments held any large meeting with citizens, LCs and mayors since their election.

Over the LOP, CAGs participated in eleven PPCs with their respective councils. Their participation in the conference enabled them to present and discuss their resource maps and CPPs with PCs, and develop relationships that were necessary to submit project proposals and receive approvals for cost share or full funding from the Gol. As a result of these conferences, approval rates of CAG proposals increased and more community-prioritized projects were included in provincial budgets. Other major achievements of the PPCs were: (1) building partnerships between government counterparts in disputed territories in order to improve dialogue and services, and (2) introducing resolutions to require LCs to hold public meetings for citizen participation. Overall, 1,293 people (93 percent male, 7 percent female) attended the PPCs.

PPC HIGHLIGHT: Electricity provision in Kirkuk province

In Kirkuk province discussions between CAG members, USAID/ICAP engineers and staff, Directorate General (DG) officials and local councils members involved with a number of electricity projects never came to common solutions acceptable to all stakeholders. After two hours of animated discussion facilitated during one of the PPCs, agreement was reached on an issue that had been outstanding since 2005. As a result, a number of CAG projects were implemented throughout the LOP that improved electricity provision in the province. (Photo right: Arab and Kurd LC and CAG members shaking hands after a PPC in Kirkuk)



Public Meetings (links to Sub IR 9.3.1 and 9.2.2)

“Public meetings are a tool for building partnership in the decision-making process, which when officially adopted will lead to better identifying and meeting of community needs.”

—CAG member, Diyala province

The role of the LG was substantially strengthened when the public meeting concept was introduced in USAID/ICAP partner communities as a cornerstone of the program. It was further improved when the public meeting was integrated into the annual provincial development budget cycle set of planning activities. The meetings were a new step for government and citizens in a culture where voicing one’s opinion against government officials was not common.

Public meetings allowed citizens’ high-priority needs to be heard by responsive LG officials who could then advocate to the PC. Through a diverse set of training techniques, including modeling a town hall meeting as well as testing various communication and management styles, LCs learned on a practical basis how to reach out to citizens and be responsive to their requests. LCs were trained in how to analyze citizen comments, observations, and requests. At the same time, citizens learned how to provide appropriate inputs. The long-

³⁰ QED. USAID/Iraq CAP III: End of Project Performance. Draft Final Report. July, 2012: p. 19.

term objective was for LCs to better prepare their annual local project lists to submit to PCs that included key citizen priorities.

The introduction of public meetings as a PC requirement for project list preparation was a major breakthrough that followed the 2011 PPCs. The Diyala and Kirkuk PCs formally passed resolutions that required LCs to convene public consultation meetings to validate the submission of any project to the provincial-budgeting process. In the case of Diyala, the PC even indicated it would cover the costs of these public meetings. Ninawa and Salah ad Din PCs indicated they were considering similar requirements. LG representatives gained experience integrating citizens' articulated needs into their work, which not only enhanced their legitimacy in the eyes of the public but also demonstrated to provincial authorities the importance of local council contribution. Public meetings became an important tool for building partnership and trust into the decision-making process, which contributes to a more stable, democratic Iraq.

The USAID/ICAP End of Project Performance report also highlighted ACDI/VOCA's public meetings. According to the report, the Diyala and Kirkuk PC resolutions were "a direct result of ACDI/VOCA's active engagement of PC members, keeping them informed of program activities and including them in joint training sessions. ACDI/VOCA created space to place CAG members on equal footing, thereby providing an opportunity for them to demonstrate their value."³¹ Over the LOP, 97 percent of the LCs organized public meetings with government authorities.³² In total, 355 public meetings were held, attended by an estimated 15,000 people.³³

Media Outreach and Advocacy (links with Sub IR 9.2.2)

"Since the media tours, citizens have started turning to cameras deliberately to state their needs for services and projects. In addition, Local Council members have been using the media to their benefit, communicating their responses to citizens, herewith enhancing the relationship between the local government and citizens. Before the media tours, council members had never used the media as a communication tool before."

-Chairperson of Daquq Local Council, Kirkuk province

Internal assessments conducted in October 2011 and July 2012 showed that a very limited number of LCs used media to inform the public of its meetings and any action taken (0 percent in 2011 and 38 percent in 2012).³⁴ Hence, to complement and support existing USAID/ICAP activities, in Year 4 ACDI/VOCA piloted the Promoting Communication Between Local Councils, Communities, and the Media project. The overall purpose of this project was to develop and internalize dialogue and communication between LCs and their constituents that will continue beyond the completion of USAID/ICAP.

An initial survey conducted in May 2012 identified existing communication practices among CAGs and LCs. Results suggested that Iraqi media outlets were widely used as sources of information and that community members wanted to receive more information from the LCs. The survey also helped identify potential media outlets for LCs to use to communicate with their communities. Based on the survey results, a media outreach strategy was developed that included three major activities: (1) a media familiarization tour of CAG projects, (2) appearances by LCs and CAG members on local radio station call-in shows to discuss projects, and (3) the distribution of LC news bulletins containing a roundup of monthly council deliberations.³⁵

To implement this strategy, six National Media Consultants (NMCs) were hired to assist LCs in developing positive and sustainable relationships with local media and, ultimately, the local community. The NMCs, along with over 25 supporting USAID/ICAP field staff, participated in a two-day TOT that prepared them to advise LCs on media relations, created a common understanding on communications and media relations theory and practice, and ensured the project's objectives were clear. The TOT session was followed by a training workshop involving 27 LC Chairs and Media Committee Chairs from selected communities in the Northern AoR. During the LC workshop, LC and NMC provincial teams were tasked with applying the strategy to their own needs, with activities, roles and responsibilities, logistics, and timelines identified.

After the trainings, media familiarization tours were conducted, where selected TV, radio, and print journalists were taken on tours of completed CAG projects in each province. Feedback from the tours

³¹ QED. USAID/Iraq CAP III: End of Project Performance. Draft Final Report. July, 2012: p. 15.

³² Public meetings could not be conducted in a small number of LCs due to security concerns.

³³ Note that after 2011 attendance of public meetings was not tracked because meetings were organized by communities and LCs themselves.

³⁴ ACDI/VOCA. LC Scorecard Assessment. October 2011 and July 2012.

³⁵ Douglas Armour. Promoting Communication Between Local Councils, Communities, and the Media: A Strategic Work Plan. July 2012.

showed a strong media interest in participating, a positive media response for the projects visited, and a continued commitment in participating from the LCs. LC and CAG members enthusiastically participated in 16 radio discussions and community call-in shows about community projects. In addition, LC activities were highlighted in publications distributed through regular news bulletins.



MEDIA OUTREACH HIGHLIGHT: Media visit in Dibis

Reporters from satellite channels such as Zagros and Kirkuk, radio stations such as Baba Gurgur and Kirkuk FM, as well as print journalists from newspapers such as Tareeq Al Sha'ab and Sawa, interviewed LC members in Dibis about the USAID/ICAP process and supported projects. In response to a question from a Zagros channel correspondent about the impact of a potable water project, the Dibis LC chairperson explained: "This project has contributed greatly to eliminating violations on the main water pipe in Dibis by extending the network to all houses in the project area. This is encouraging displaced families to return and is contributing to the general stability of the region." The media visits gave LC members the opportunity to claim credit for the success of projects. As media coverage extensively highlighted program impact, LC members became more positive about and interested in further media outreach. (Photo left: Iraqi media interview a Dibis LC member)

According to the Promoting Communication between Local Councils, Communities, and the Media report (Annex 13), an evaluation of the pilot activities suggested "a strong interest among NMCs and LCs in implementing the [...] activities, and a favorable response from participating media." The report also conveyed "a renewed commitment from LCs to engaging with both media and the general public, and an acknowledgement of the community's essential role in local governance".³⁶ The pilot project succeeded in highlighting that improved communications could create improved relations and trust and a greater incentive to address common problems.

OBJECTIVE 3: CIVILIAN VICTIMS OF CONFLICT ASSISTED BY THE MRIWVF

The third objective related to the Marla Ruzicka Iraqi War Victims Fund (MRIWVF), which assists civilian victims of war who were unintentionally injured or killed by U.S. Forces-Iraq. The fund is connected to U.S. Public Law 108-111, the Emergency Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2003, which calls for assistance for families of innocent Iraqi civilians who suffer losses as a result of military operations. This USAID/ICAP component comprised of 'kick-start' grants to victims, individual family business startup grants and trainings implemented by ACDI/VOCA and MRIWVF counterpart NGOs as well as community development projects co-implemented by CAGs and ACDI/VOCA in areas affected by conflict.

Sub IR 9.3.3: Civilian Victims of Conflict Assisted By the MRIWVF

Performance Indicator 9.3.3.1 - Total number of MRIWVF recipients with new opportunities for sustainable income generation.

- LOP target: 474
- LOP achievement: 786

Performance Indicator 9.3.3.2 – Number of MRIWVF recipients (total projects).

- LOP target: 429
- LOP achievement: 534

Performance Indicator 9.3.3.3 – Total number of direct beneficiaries of MRIWVF projects.

- LOP target: 94,525
- LOP achievement: 61,347

Over the LOP, the \$6.7 million allocated to the Northern AoR funded 534 projects. From these projects, 491 served individuals or households, while 35 served entire communities. Eight projects comprised fixed obligation grants to the counterpart NGOs. In total, MRIWVF projects benefitted an estimated 214,446 Iraqis, with an estimated average of 61,347 daily users (51 percent male, 49 percent female).

³⁶ Douglas Armour, pp. 7-8.

Assistance to Individuals

"I named my gas station after Marla Ruzicka when I came to know who she was, how she came to Iraq to help those affected by war [...] to provide assistance and aid innocent victims, especially women, in order to ensure a free and decent life for them."

—Samad, MRIWVF beneficiary

Of the 491 individual projects, 22 percent were implemented in Diyala, 25 percent in Kirkuk, 19 percent in Ninawa and 34 percent in Salah ad Din. Most of the individual projects (92 percent) were implemented directly by ACDI/VOCA. In the final phases of USAID/ICAP, MRIWVF counterpart NGOs implemented 37 projects (8 percent) with oversight from ACDI/VOCA. The majority of the new businesses were home-based retail shops where construction materials, electronics, mobile phones or clothing were sold. The individual projects created 3,452 short-term jobs (less than 1 percent for women) and 782 long-term jobs (68 percent male, 32 percent female).



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Successful beekeeping enterprise

The honey produced by bees pollinating eucalyptus trees is reputed for its taste and medicinal properties. For the Taha family in Kirkuk province, it has brought financial stability to their lives. In 2005, Dekra, the 22-year old daughter of the family was accidentally shot by U.S. Forces-Iraq who were responding to a nearby attack. Her debilitating injuries meant she lost her job as a tailor, which was providing over \$200 a month for her family. Compounding this difficulty, her father became physically unable to work around the same period. In July 2009, the Taha family received training and a 'kick-start' grant through the MRIWVF to start a new business. Since then, the original 40 hives provided by the MRIWVF grant have been expanded to up to 120 depending on the season and provide for three long-term jobs. (Picture left: The Taha family exhibit a honey-comb)

Internal assessment data from 2012³⁷ showed that at the end of USAID/ICAP, 68 percent of the businesses were still operating the same business for which their grant was initially provided. Nine percent of the original businesses had changed their business focus but were still active, while 21 percent of the businesses had been closed.³⁸ Most businesses were closed because owners sold the business (53 percent) or the business had failed (36 percent). Beneficiaries identified limited financial resources, lack of market demand, and high rental costs as the main obstacles for business growth. The lack of market and profit were the main reasons for changing a business.

Capacity Building

"Meeting with other Marla beneficiaries, contractors and business people was very helpful in improving my knowledge and helped me learn from other's business experiences. I spoke with several contractors and now have their contact information for dealing with them directly in the future."

- MRIWVF beneficiary

ACDI/VOCA assistance to beneficiaries did not only consist of 'kick-start' grants to establish or enhance business activities with local market potential. It also included three-day business cycle management training and other technical support, attended by 981 beneficiaries (69 percent male, 31 percent female). The training included business management skills, marketing, pricing, profit calculation and tracking, and sources and advantages of credit. The training highlighted Islamic banking practices and the permissibility of using credit to strengthen and support businesses. Internal assessment data from 2010³⁹ showed that the concepts of business planning were new to most of the recipients; 96 percent were newly established businesses with little or no prior experience in business. Assessment results from 2010 and 2012 confirmed that all the respondents found the preparatory training very useful.

In Year 4, ACDI/VOCA piloted an initiative where it brought together MRIWVF beneficiaries and other stakeholders including NGOs, wholesalers or manufacturers, traders and government institutions as a network. To help ensure the sustainability of beneficiaries' small businesses, this network of MRIWVF beneficiaries shared new and or successful ideas, encouraged ongoing peer support and mentoring, and facilitated increased business development through wholesale supplying or other means. The network also reinforced the role of the counterpart NGOs in the development of Iraqi communities. Together,

³⁷ ACDI/VOCA. CAP III Program Marla Fund Project Assessment Report. June 2012.

³⁸ Missing data for twelve businesses (2 percent) that could not be reached for the survey due to changes in their addresses.

³⁹ ACDI/VOCA. CAP III Program Marla Fund Project Assessment Report. August 2010.

ACDI/VOCA and the MRIWVF counterpart NGOs ran a series of two-day trainings bringing together 353 MRIWVF beneficiaries, representatives of NGOs and micro-finance institutions, wholesalers, contractors, retail traders and government officials (80 percent male, 20 percent female). The trainings motivated participants to better manage their small business by improving their network and learning from others.

Community Projects

ACDI/VOCA also implemented other initiatives in addition to individual projects to ensure an enhanced and sustainable income for individual victims and families. During the LOP, ACDI/VOCA completed 35 MRIWVF community projects; 22 percent were implemented in Diyala, 22 percent in Kirkuk, 30 percent in Ninawa and 26 percent in Salah ad Din. Residents in communities supported by these projects had suffered both physically and psychologically from conflict between terrorists and US Forces-Iraq. Of the projects implemented, most were related to health (60 percent) and education (17 percent), while others were in agriculture, public spaces, water, electricity, economic development/income generation, and transportation sectors. The community projects created 703 short-term jobs and 4 long-term jobs.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Provision of prosthetic materials to the Mosul Artificial Limbs Center

ACDI/VOCA worked closely together with the Artificial Limbs Center (ALC) in Mosul. This center aimed to provide disabled persons living in Ninawa province with essential prosthetic materials and parts to improve their health condition and way of life. Most people registered with the ALC, and waiting for prosthetic services, were innocent civilian victims of US Forces-Iraq. A lack of raw materials to manufacture the prosthetic limbs caused a significant backlog of clients. Supported by five Ninawa CAGs (Ayadiya, Bartyla, Hamdaniya, Talkef and Telfar) and in cooperation with the respective LCs, ACDI/VOCA supplied the ACL with enough raw materials to manufacture prosthetic limbs for 28,000 registered people, including 13,000 children. (Photo right: ALC staff manufacturing parts)



Counterpart NGO Activity

“NGOs are the voice of the citizens. They are the link between the community and the government. They help develop our country, they encourage people to work harder towards improving their lives and they raise communities’ awareness on different matters that need attention.”
—Dayla, counterpart NGO Director

A key part of USAID/ICAP focused on building the capacity of Iraqi civil society. A major component of this was partnering with Iraqi NGOs in each of the four provinces of the AoR so that they could work as counterparts in the MRIWVF program. Specifically, in order to prepare for the eventual handover of the MRIWVF to local leadership, ACDI/VOCA entered into formal partnerships with four local NGOs, one per province in the AoR.

In response to Modification No. 6 to ACDI/VOCA’s USAID/ICAP Cooperative Agreement, in Year 2 ACDI/VOCA conducted a comprehensive organizational assessment of eleven Iraqi NGOs in the Northern AoR to determine their capacity to carry out a number of functions of the MRIWVF program, including beneficiary identification, awards, implementation, and monitoring.⁴⁰ Following the assessment, four NGOs with the highest rankings in terms of organizational and technical capacity were selected: Al Hara Humanitarian Organization (Diyala), Al-Murshed Center for Economic Development and Investment (Kirkuk), Amal al-Watan (Ninawa),⁴¹ and the Sahara Economic Development Organization (Salah ad Din). As part of the assessment, ACDI/VOCA also developed a proposed engagement and capacity development plan tailored to the selected NGOs’ respective strengths and weaknesses.⁴²

⁴⁰ Initially a list of fifty-nine potential Iraqi NGOs was developed by ACDI/VOCA. These NGOs were assessed based on the following criteria: (1) legal registration as an NGO; (2) non-partisanship; (3) focus areas and programming that complement the objectives of the Marla Fund; (4) a well-defined organizational structure; (5) a functioning Board of Directors or other governing body; (6) written development plans; (7) prior experience working with international donors; and (8) experience conducting training workshops.

⁴¹ In response to recommendations included in the MRIWVF partnership assessment (June 2010), ACDI/VOCA originally selected the NGO Development Center in Ninawa province. However, after major delays/non-compliance in startup administration work and activities, ACDI/VOCA decided to replace the NGO and establish a partnership with Amal al-Watan instead.

⁴² ACDI/VOCA. CAP III Program Marla Fund Partnership Assessment Report. June 2010.

In 2011, written agreements were prepared and signed with each of the four selected organizations outlining their respective levels of involvement and contribution in the program, as well as the training and technical assistance that ACDI/VOCA would provide. A number of no-cost extension agreements were also signed.

In Years 3 and 4, the NGOs carried out operations in identifying and vetting potential beneficiaries for individual MRIWVF projects, implementing 37 projects and providing follow-up monitoring and evaluation. The projects implemented by the NGOs reached 242 direct beneficiaries (49 percent male, 51 percent female), while 229 short-term jobs were created (100 percent male) and 66 long-term jobs (64 percent male, 56 percent female).

To build NGO capacity, a comprehensive technical training in systems and procedures was provided through formal and OJT in the areas of financial and project management, human resources, administration, monitoring and evaluation, information technology, and management information systems. TOT was provided after which the NGOs took over ACDI/VOCA's responsibilities for the three-day business cycle management training for individual MRIWVF project beneficiaries. ACDI/VOCA continued to provide oversight during these trainings until the end of USAID/ICAP.

Counterpart NGO Capacity Assessments. The capacity of the four counterpart NGOs was assessed a number of times during their involvement in USAID/ICAP. In response to a thorough review at the end of Year 3, three of the four NGOs, in Diyala, Kirkuk and Ninawa, were granted a no-cost extension of their fixed obligation grants to continue as partners with ACDI/VOCA. Based on the review, ACDI/VOCA also decided to replace Sahara Economic Development Organization with the NGO Almalwiya Relief Foundation for Development (ARFD) in Salah ad Din.⁴³ Immediate efforts were made to increase the capacity of ARFD staff through trainings already provided to the other three NGOs.

A second capacity assessment was conducted at the end of Year 4 in order to assess capacity enhancement of the four counterpart NGOs.⁴⁴ The Diyala NGO, Al Hara Humanitarian Organization (HHO), showed the highest capacity. Since its establishment in 2005, HHO has implemented projects funded by many national and international agencies such as the British Council, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Organization for Migration, Iraqi Civil Society Program, United Nations, and USAID's International Federation of Electoral System. The impact of USAID/ICAP on the capacity of HHO was evident in the NGO's improved documentation system and management of its diverse projects and activities.

The Kirkuk, Ninawa, and Salah ad Din NGOs demonstrated good capacity, and assessment results showed significant improvements since participation in USAID/ICAP and other USG-funded programs. Whenever possible, efforts were made to link MRIWVF recipients to other community development activities conducted by the NGOs. Support and capacity building was an ongoing requirement however, particularly for Amal al-Watan and ARFD. The assessment identified challenges notably in documenting follow-up on completed MRIWVF projects and management of new applications to the fund to avoid processing of repeat applications by applicants who had not been approved for assistance.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE

IMPACT

An external Learning Impact Assessment⁴⁵ was conducted at the end of the USAID/ICAP program. The purpose of this assessment was to evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of USAID/ICAP as it reached the end of its four years of implementation. The below summarizes the results of the Learning Impact Assessment, which follows the USAID results framework outline. The complete assessment report is attached as Annex 14.

⁴³ The partnership with the Sahara Economic Development Organization was cancelled due to a variety of reasons, including unsatisfactory human resources practices, quality control and monitoring of projects.

⁴⁴ Data are taken from ACDI/VOCA and NGO meeting notes as well as completed NGO assessment questionnaires. June 2012.

⁴⁵ Philip Boyle. USAID/ICAP Learning Impact Assessment. Final Report. July 2012.

Strategic Objective 9: Effective Local Government Strengthened

Intermediate Result 9.1: Establishment of legal, regulatory and policy framework for decentralized LG⁴⁶

Intermediate Result 9.2: Capacity of sub-national government to perform core functions is improved

- Sub-IR 9.2.1. Communities better able to mobilize resources within the community to meet articulated needs.

Intermediate Result 9.3: Outreach mechanisms and capacity for citizen participation in decision-making and local development are institutionalized

- Sub-IR 9.3.1. Communities better articulate their needs.
 - Sub-IR 9.3.2. *Qada* and *nahiya* better articulate community needs.
 - Sub-IR 9.3.3. Civilian victims of conflict assisted by Marla Ruzicka Iraq War Victims Fund.
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Strategic Objective 9: Effective Local Government Strengthened

According to the impact assessment, “relevance, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness of district-level service provision have improved as a direct result of USAID/ICAP activities”⁴⁷ in the Northern AoR. LC responsiveness to citizens’ needs had improved, and LC members were linked to citizen volunteers in CAGs in a well-structured process of public needs consultation, formulation, prioritization, and resolution. Beyond this, LG administrative and technical officials had been involved in “a highly innovative grassroots democratic process of citizen empowerment and consultation”.⁴⁸

IR 9.2: Capacity of Sub-National Government⁴⁹ to Perform Core Functions is Improved

The impact assessment concluded that “through participation in USAID/ICAP, LCs have improved their ability to perform core functions”.⁵⁰ These functions were to consult with their constituents to solicit their needs, advocate for solutions to these needs with provincial authorities, coordinate with LG executive and technical officials in providing needed services, and monitor and evaluate the quality and quantity of these services.

The assessment report also stated that by all USAID/ICAP stakeholders, and at all government levels, a new model of democratic governance had been internalized that directly addressed citizens’ basic rights to energy, water, health, education, sanitation, and environmental services.

Sub-IR 9.2.1: Community Resource Mobilization to Meet Needs. Community cost share was below LOP target, while governmental cost share at the community level surpassed agreed upon targets by approximately one percent.

Human resource mobilization, according to the impact assessment, was where the program had greatest success. CAGs were created to reflect the ethnic, gender and age divisions within communities, while LCs devoted a considerable amount of time and energy in working with CAGs. Local and provincial government employees of DGs and some PC members had also been involved in the planning, approval, and implementation of community projects. Through apprenticeship and summer camp programs, a significant number of youth were mobilized at the community level to meet their needs for employment, leadership skills, and expectations of democratic governance.

Improvement in Local Council and Local Government Performance and in the Quality and Quantity of Basic Services Provision

The impact assessment highlighted the impact of USAID/ICAP activities on the performance of LG related to service delivery. According to the report, “we can consider LC and LG performance to be improved to the extent it has become more democratic, open, participatory, and responsive to citizens’ real service needs.”⁵¹

There was a high level of agreement among Iraqi officials that both the quality and quantity of projects in targeted communities had improved. According to the impact assessment, this was due both to new projects and the demonstration effect of their systematic implementation. The report found that “many LCs and

⁴⁶ USAID/ICAP does not contribute to Immediate Result 9.1 hence this result is not covered in the learning impact assessment report or in subsequent sections of this report.

⁴⁷ Boyle, p. 3.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 53.

⁴⁹ Sub-national government in USAID/ICAP relates to sub-provincial, since it refers specifically to the roles and functions of the LCs at *qada* and *nahiya* levels. There are, however, other governmental entities below the national level, which include the PCs, provincial DGs, *qada* and *nahiya* administrators (mayors), and *qada* and *nahiya* representatives of the provincial DGs.

⁵⁰ Boyle, p. 54.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 21.

other officials stress that it was not the cost, size, or number of these projects that impressed them, but the skills and training they received and the democratic process that brought these projects to communities.”⁵² The transparent, efficient, and rapid bidding and implementation process promoted by USAID/ICAP also affected perceptions of governmental projects in beneficiary communities. While appreciation of projects ran high, overall satisfaction with service availability and delivery still tended to be low.

Impact on Local Government Performance

ACDI/VOCA provided a number of new channels for needs expression, such as CAGs and public meetings. According to the impact assessment, in targeted communities, a radically new process of citizen consultation had been established and many LC members maintained that they had institutionalized a process of public meetings with citizens. According to the Learning Impact Assessment, the meetings “have raised contact and communication with citizens to a new level and are open to all” and “they serve to air the expression of citizen complaints and requests for services in a well-structured public forum.”⁵³ Two provinces, Diyala and Kirkuk, had adopted legislation that required proof of citizen consultation through public meetings.

Citizen Perception of Needs Satisfaction

Even though communities were highly aware and satisfied with USAID/ICAP projects, according to the impact assessment they still did not feel that government service provision was sufficiently trustworthy or reliable.

Citizens in targeted communities were more aware of their right to express their needs to government and expect results though. The process of resource and needs mapping carried out in public meetings was fully transparent and had been internalized by the LG. The impact assessment report stated, “citizen consultation will not return to pre-USAID/ICAP procedures of consulting only local mukhtars, sheikhs, and DG officials.”⁵⁴ The report also mentioned that “following USAID/ICAP, it is highly unlikely that the traditional system of ‘government knows best’ will replace the USAID/ICAP-introduced public meetings and project list consultation with the general public. Once community members have the right to elect their LCs, they will express these expectations at the ballot box.”⁵⁵

IR 9.3: Institutionalization of Outreach Mechanisms and Citizen Participation

The assessment report indicated that the entire concept of outreach to citizens by LCs was largely due to the influence of USAID/ICAP. LCs and other LG officials had internalized the concept and value of citizen participation in local service delivery decisions. LC members valued the efforts of CAGs to bridge the gap between local councilors and their constituents.

According to the impact assessment, “the working relationships established between LCs and CAGs are solid enough to continue without further USAID/ICAP input.”⁵⁶ However, the report also mentioned that most LC and CAG members did not expect the CAG to last as an institution much beyond USAID/ICAP or similar support from an NGO with funding resources. Still, even without the CAG as a formal institution, “its demonstration of citizen participation in local governmental decision making will remain, [...] and the skills and personal contacts of its members will last.”⁵⁷

Sub-IR 9.3.1: Community Improvement in Needs Articulation. Communities analyzed and expressed their service needs in new ways following USAID/ICAP. Citizens now expressed their views through public meetings and freely elected CAGs. According to the impact assessment, “the creation of CAGs and the democratic process through which needs articulation proceeds is both innovative and productive.”⁵⁸

Sub-IR 9.3.2: LC improvement in Community Needs Articulation. Results from the impact assessment confirmed that *qada* and *nahiya* council needs articulation was considerably more accurate, rapid, efficient, and democratic. A democratic system of citizen consultation was now being practiced and institutionalized. LC members had been trained thoroughly and “should no longer need assistance to maintain the new

⁵² Ibid, 55.

⁵³ Ibid, 56.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 56.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 57.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 57.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 57.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 58.

process.”⁵⁹ It was also expected that LG and DG officials would insist on this, having watched and participated in open consultations and discussions.

Community Member Adoption of New Attitudes and Behaviors

As a direct result of involvement in the CDD cycle, new attitudes and behaviors had been adopted and were being practiced by CAG and LC members, mayors and DG officials. According to the impact assessment “there is every indication that CAG and LC members have been very impressed by the training topics and have fully endorsed the program model. Many have explicitly linked the model to implantation of democracy in Iraq.”⁶⁰

Sub-IR 9.3.3: Civilian Victims Assisted by Marla Ruzicka Iraq War Victims Fund. The MRIWVF component of USAID/ICAP was highly successful in providing grants to innocent war victims to start small businesses. The performance of grant beneficiaries was assessed in terms of economic viability and contribution to their overall livelihood. The impact assessment highlighted that the majority of MRIWVF beneficiaries found the grants adequate and responsive to their needs. Over two-thirds of the beneficiaries were fully dependent on the business as the only source of income for the family. One third reported partial dependence where the families complement from other sources of income.

According to the assessment report, an overwhelming majority of MRIWVF beneficiaries were either very satisfied or satisfied with their business. With regards to their overall life situation, again a large majority believed their circumstances to be improved.

Apprenticeship Program

Over 2,600 apprentices participated in six phases of the apprenticeship program since 2009. A phone survey conducted by ACDI/VOCA in 2012⁶¹ indicated that half of the apprentices were employed after the LOP of USAID/ICAP.

Another external review of the apprenticeship program (June 2012)⁶² suggested high value from the program. Most apprentices said their apprenticeships prepared them for skilled employment and helped them to develop maturity and self-confidence. Nine out of ten apprentices indicated they gained useful knowledge and skills from the JAT training and the Conflict Resolution training. Nearly all apprentices said their work-experience had made them more employable.

According to the review, supervisors said the leadership and management trainings were highly useful. ACDI/VOCA staff affirmed that the training given to supervisors had improved their supervisory skills.

Summer Camp Program

According to the external learning impact assessment, the most useful activities during the summer camps were meeting new people, leadership activities, human rights, democracy, and elections. Participating youth also felt that three aspects of their lives impacted by camp were personal courage, consistency, and drive.

Holding elections in these summer camps in the context of intentional ethnic mixing yielded longer-range dividends in democratic participation and ethnic tolerance, just as holding elections had done in town hall meetings to form CAGs. Participants quite clearly recognized the hidden agenda of democratic participation and ethnic mixing, whether in public meetings or camp activities. The impact assessment report stated that “pulling impressionable youth out of their local environments and [involving them in the summer camps] is undeniably an investment in the future of Iraqi society.”⁶³

REPLICABILITY, SCALABILITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

According to the impact assessment report, after implementing the same community mobilization and participation model over the last four years of USAID/ICAP (and for two prior program phases since 2004), the replicability and scalability of the model had clearly been demonstrated in the Iraqi context. CAG formation, LC and CAG training, town hall and public meetings, resource and needs mapping, project

⁵⁹ Ibid, 58.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 59.

⁶¹ Philip Hurst. Review of CAP III Apprenticeship Program. July 2012.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Philip Boyle, 53.

identification, costing, and implementation had been practiced in four of five jurisdictions of Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah ad Din provinces.

With respect to replicability and scalability in other cultural contexts in the Middle East or elsewhere, the impact assessment report noted that the USAID/ICAP model was replicable in any socio-political context where civil society was not yet active and government was the only or overwhelming presence.

Under the program, the core democratic of citizen rights to services, right of participation in addressing their needs, and the duty of LCs to represent their constituencies effectively had found fertile ground, as stated in the assessment report. “After practicing this form of grassroots democracy for several years, sustainability seems highly likely.”⁶⁴

Marla Ruzicka Iraq War Victims Fund

To ensure sustainability of MRIWVF projects, ACDI/VOCA provided beneficiaries with business cycle management training and technical assistance. ACDI/VOCA also worked to form business networks, such as networks of wholesale suppliers and grocery store owners, to ensure ongoing peer support to newly formed businesses. By involving community members in the selection of beneficiaries, sustainability was further increased. Where feasible, CAG members and LG officials signed off on community projects ensuring they did not only respond to MRIWVF criteria but also to community priorities.

Nonetheless, replicability, scalability and sustainability of both the MRIWVF small businesses and counterpart NGO implementation of the MRIWVF were questioned by the impact assessment report. Results showed that new businesses “continue to require a good deal of assistance [...] or many will simply fail.”⁶⁵ By the end of USAID/ICAP they still required significant hands-on support from field staff. In a similar fashion, the four counterpart NGOs were not yet capable of continued functioning without substantial assistance.

Apprenticeship and Summer Camp Programs

Replicability, scalability and sustainability sections for the apprenticeship and summer camp activities were included in Chapter 3 (Assessment of Performance in Accomplishing the Objectives), as major activities took place at the end of USAID/ICAP to localize both program models.

INNOVATIVE AND BEST PRACTICES

A number of innovative and/or best practices can be derived from the USAID/ICAP experience. First, the model wisely focused not on abstractions but on the most immediate and tangible of citizens’ needs: basic human services (electricity, water, sanitation, health, education, and environment). Benefitting from substantial financial resources, CAGs successfully implemented over 500 small, but very visible community projects, with this improving community service delivery.

Second, ACDI/VOCA’s CDD planning and implementation strategy brought about the institutionalization of “a highly innovative grassroots democratic process of citizen empowerment and consultation”⁶⁶ in the Northern AoR. The CDD framework incorporated wide citizen engagement, identified specific and formal roles and responsibilities of citizen elected leaders and LCs, and established democratic procedures for joint citizen-LG development processes. All of this brought understanding and appreciation for democratic governance at *qada* and *nahiya* level.

The very notion that LCs should have outreach mechanisms was a novel concept. The CDD process of introducing public meetings proved extremely valuable, as two provinces adopted legislation that required proof of citizen consultation in the form of such meetings.

Also, the introduction of the CPP tool was innovative to community leaders who knew only centralized planning. The CAGs welcomed this systematic method to identify its projects, organize for project approvals, project codes and link CAG projects with government procedures in a constructive, deliberate process. Successful community mobilization of the CPP resulted in the establishment of the CAG as a recognized group of citizen leaders helping to establish new activities and functions of government.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 59.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 47.

⁶⁶ Philip Boyle. USAID/ICAP Learning Impact Assessment. Final Report. July 2012: Page 53.

Third, the program model did not threaten existing authority structures, but rather assisted them to carry out what they already were supposed to do for the public good. In this way, the LCs were co-opted into program activities, with the formation of CAGs being necessary to introduce the benefits of civil society and grassroots democracy. Professional relationships were also built with PG actors, which improved local communities' ability to secure PC approval for projects through the existing approval process.

Fourth, ACDI/VOCA's context-driven and flexible capacity building approach was extremely successful. More traditional classroom style trainings were complemented by 'learning by doing' opportunities where the trainees used a variety of sensors in learning and practical exercises. Throughout the LOP both community and LG officials applied their new skills and knowledge in USAID/ICAP activities related to all project approval and implementation phases, including review, monitoring, procurement, and close-out phases. The 'learning by doing' process gave citizens and LG confidence in the use of democratic strategies to achieve positive community results.

Also, ACDI/VOCA's shift to fully joint CAG-LC training programs achieved trust and transparency between citizens and LG. This was built upon with specific advocacy activities and trainings and resulted in greater interaction and better understanding between CAGs and LCs. In addition, both CAGs and LCs better comprehended the role of PCs and how they could link with USAID/ICAP initiatives. Post-project, citizens and local and provincial legal government can continue to improve Iraq through joint community development, using tools such as the ACDI/VOCA Stakeholder Community Development Reference Manual (Annex 15).

Finally, a number of more specific program activities can be considered as best practices, such as the establishment of thematic CAGs, where especially the agricultural CAG networks functioned in an outstanding manner. The inclusion of an employer and supervisor training component in the apprenticeship program stood out in a program that was already considered a first in the Northern AoR.

V. IDPS AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

As a nation still emerging from conflict, Iraq has many vulnerable people including ethnic and religious minorities, IDPs/returnees, women, youth and the disabled. To help these vulnerable groups, ACDI/VOCA took an integrative approach to all program activities. Trainings, projects and other events were designed to jointly empower citizens and LGs to better meet all community needs in a more effective manner. Those needs, according to ACDI/VOCA's community assessments, were often similar, with Iraqis expressing desire for better service provision and responsive government no matter what region or group they came from.

Additionally, in accordance with USAID policies governing assistance to religious minorities, ACDI/VOCA implemented the program in a secular manner and did not specifically target beneficiaries due to religious affiliation or lack thereof. ACDI/VOCA worked to improve all Iraqi partner communities in an inclusive manner regardless of affiliation or status.

This holistic approach ensured that vulnerable populations had full access to all program opportunities, such as economic livelihood improvement small business grants, job training, community advocacy and infrastructure projects.

VULNERABLE POPULATION REPORTING

ACDI/VOCA tracked vulnerable populations as part of overall program baseline monitoring and demographic data gathering. Vulnerable population feedback regarding security and economic livelihood concerns was solicited on an ongoing basis through CAG representatives as part of overall program community assessments. Additional feedback was received during discussions held at town hall meetings, public meetings and in preparation of CPPs that incorporated community prioritized needs, including those of women, minorities, IDPs/returnees and other vulnerable populations. ACDI/VOCA did not, however, specifically disaggregate minority priorities from overall community feedback given the program's integrative and secular approach to program implementation. For identifying overall project vulnerable beneficiaries ACDI/VOCA used an extensive process of community profiling based on data from international

organizations, central ministries in Baghdad, PCs and line ministries, LCs, mayors and mukthars, as well as citizens and the organization's own staff.⁶⁷

Annex 9 includes maps highlighting vulnerable populations in USAID/ICAP communities in the Northern AoR. Annex 3 includes the vulnerable population USAID reporting tables.

IDPs/returnees

ACDI/VOCA took a holistic approach to integrating IDPs/returnees with their host communities and thus activities that incorporated IDPs/returnees were similar to program-wide projects and trainings. Additionally, in ACDI/VOCA's AoR, IDPs/returnees generally did not live in segregated compounds or camps, and as such only a very limited number of projects targeted only IDPs/returnees.

Extension phase⁶⁸ CAG projects:

- 270,475 estimated IDP/returnee specific beneficiaries (from all CAG projects)
- \$2,395,613 estimated USAID funding spent specifically/directly on IDPs/returnees
- 175 CAG projects that include IDP/returnee beneficiaries
- 131 IDP/returnee CAG members in 48 CAGs

Religious and Ethnic Minorities

As previously mentioned, ACDI/VOCA, per USAID mandate, implemented USAID/ICAP in a secular manner and did not plan activities based on religious status. ACDI/VOCA did not specifically ask beneficiaries of any program activity their religious or ethnic affiliation. The only way ACDI/VOCA tracked this information was by reliable estimates for each project based on community profiles.

LOP CAG projects:

- 813,687 total estimated beneficiaries
 - 162,243 Christians (Assyrian, Chaldean, others)
 - 76,176 Yazidi
 - 65,250 Muslim Shabak
 - 510,018 Turkmen
- \$5,756,691 estimated CAG project USAID funding on religious and ethnic minorities

Female Increased Leadership and Livelihood

Improving women's participation in public decision-making was an important part of USAID/ICAP. Especially in Year 3, ACDI/VOCA pushed for more women's representation in order to better integrate women's articulated needs into community development planning. As a result, the number of women CAG members increased from about 15 percent of CAG members (100 out of 689 total) to 18 percent (141 out of 772 total).

Another key part of the USAID/ICAP approach focused on increasing young women's leadership and economic livelihood. Women's lives were significantly improved through CAG projects that expanded electricity or water networks so that women no longer had to collect water by hand. Schools were built to improve education of girls, and training was provided within PIF projects on subjects such as sewing courses, highly benefiting Iraqi women. Other examples included the summer camps and the apprenticeship program.

LOP Summer Youth Camps and Apprenticeship Program:

- 619 female campers
- 995 female apprenticeship graduated

LOP CAG projects:

⁶⁷ All vulnerable population information is by reliable estimate only and information on IDPs/returnees has only been tracked since December 2010. Other limitations relate to the approximate nature of information, as ACDI/VOCA could not specifically ask beneficiaries of any project activity what religion or ethnicity they belong to. Some CAG or LC members may have self-reported that they are a Yazidi or Shabak for example, and if so, this has been tracked. Other constraints concerned the legal restrictions as well as the complex environment of the AoR. In some case ACDI/VOCA was unable to provide any information, such as for female-headed households, as this was not tracked.

⁶⁸ As previously mentioned, information on IDPs/returnees was only tracked since the extension period of USAID/ICAP (December 2010).

- 3,879,545 female beneficiaries
- LOP Marla Fund projects⁶⁹:**
- 278 female claimant individual Marla Fund Projects

Youth Improved Employment, Education and Vocational Training

ACDI/VOCA worked closely with youth in all aspects of the program. Communities recognized the importance of developing projects for and with youth. Many CAGs listed youth-related projects such as rehabilitation or construction of stadiums on their CPPs, supported repeated inclusion of local youth into every apprenticeship program, and actively identified qualified candidates for participation in summer camps. They also encouraged contractors to use young local laborers as well in physical infrastructure building. Youth CAG members became more active in project analysis and decision-making.

LOP Youth Summer Camps:

- 748 male campers and 619 female campers
- \$838,404 USAID funding

LOP Apprenticeship Program:

- 1,609 male graduates and 995 female graduates
- \$2,446,468 USAID funding

LOP CAG projects:

- 61 youth members
- 2,947,433 youth beneficiaries

VI. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Final Financial Report is attached as Annex 16, and the detailed breakdown of subcontracting activities is attached as Annex 17.

VII. COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHALLENGES

Over the LOP, challenges have been documented in the many quarterly reports submitted to USAID as well as in internal and external M&E reports. The below summarizes the greatest challenges faced by the program. Challenges specifically related to the political and security situation in the Northern AoR were described in more detail in Chapter 1 (Introduction) in order to provide context to programmatic information included in this Final Report.

First, the USAID/ICAP assumption that the role of the LG would increase in importance in providing for citizen needs appeared incorrect. The PPA did not allow *qada* and *nahiya* councils the (financial) authority needed to respond adequately and effectively to citizen requests. And as local elections did not take place, LCs were not able to increase in significance and legitimacy, considerably affecting the USAID/ICAP implementation strategy. In response, the Results Framework was revised in early 2010, removing Sub-IR 9.2.2 (and its five indicators) under Objective 2.

Second, the difficulty of securing PC approval for USAID/ICAP projects was significant throughout most of the LOP. ACDI/VOCA addressed this issue by altering its program approach in a number of ways. Increased emphasis was placed on the professional relationships between LC and PC members as well as increasing understanding on both sides concerning each other's roles and responsibilities. PPCs, one-on-one meetings with PC and LC members, and public meetings helped improve relationships and increase understanding. In addition, USAID/ICAP built the capacity of CAGs and LCs in the development of viable project proposals and feasibility studies that would be submitted to PCs. Substantial attention was paid to the (often shifting)

⁶⁹ Improving female head of household economic livelihood was not specifically tracked by ACDI/VOCA and data is thus not included in Annex 1. However, while it is impossible to know how many CAG project or other program activity beneficiaries are female heads of households, it was possible to make some inferences for MRIWVF individual projects. Those that have a woman listed as the main claimant are likely to be households headed by that woman. This is due to the fact that given the conservative nature of Iraq; if the male head of the household were alive he would likely be applying for the project, not the woman.

provincial approval process, including project-coding procedures. This tailored process facilitated a steady annual increase in the number of projects approved by the PCs in the Northern AoR.

Third, challenges throughout the entire LOP were experienced with working in disputed areas. Several communities in the Northern AoR lacked clarity about land ownership and which provincial government they should look to for approval and financial support of projects. This created difficulties for ACDI/VOCA with regards to its work with LC and CAG members planning and seeking DG approval for CAG projects in these areas, as well as receiving ministry cost contributions.

Fourth, the tenuous security situation and unstable political environment, sparked by national elections and exacerbated by the lack of a functioning central government, and the pullout of US troops, made the USAID/ICAP operating environment demanding. During most of the LOP, it was dangerous for staff and CAG/LC members to safely work in and move around the Northern AoR.

Fifth, constraints on accessing resources were significant across all levels of the GoI due to bureaucratic constraints, making community mobilization of resources challenging.

The often-delayed full release of annual GoI budgets in the Northern AoR, as well as the uncertainty about the way funds and potential Petro-Dollar revenues, would be allocated, caused challenges for USAID/ICAP implementation. Even when the budget and/or Petro-Dollar funding were released, there was no guarantee that provincial governments would not reallocate the funding according to their own priorities as opposed to those articulated by LCs.

A related concern was that limited annual GoI funds often reached the provinces and much remained unallocated due to limited staff at PG level. It was unclear whether already submitted projects needed to be reapplied for, which complicated subsequent CPP identification and priority processes. This also affected ACDI/VOCA's efforts collecting cost-share for its projects.

Sixth, unfortunately there was a lack of interest from other USAID implementing partners to formally collaborate or coordinate activities with the USAID/ICAP team. The expected facilitation by other USAID projects to provide access to provincial and national budget processes and cycles did not regularly occur. Whilst there were informal working relationships with individual IP staff, more structured information sharing and coordination with regards to implementation could have strengthened outcomes and USAID's overall mission in Iraq.

Seventh, long procedures of some directorates in handing over and closing projects challenged work plans. Some directorates had long and drawn-out procedures in handing over projects due to own internal regulations about forming committees to hand over a project and constituting another committee to receive the project and close it out. Most delays were faced with education and water directorates, who had the longest procedures, most likely due to the many projects they carried out per year and the checks and balances they placed on staff to ensure quality control.

LESSONS LEARNED

Over the LOP, ACDI/VOCA conducted numerous assessments and studies producing detailed program recommendations and lessons learned that were documented in subsequent reports. Results were used to adapt strategies and activities to ensure the highest program impact on Iraqi communities. For the purpose of this report, main lessons learned are described below.

First, even though a number of national ACDI/VOCA staff were moved into key management positions during the LOP, additional efforts should have been made at an earlier time in the program to build staff capacity and facilitate national staff promotions to leading positions. Responsibilities for implementation and management must be delegated to national staff gradually with continued oversight, mentoring and coaching from seniors.

Second, the insecure environment of Iraq limited access of both expat and national staff to project areas. Although efforts were made to close the gap between senior management in Kirkuk (and Erbil) and field staff in the district offices, a better system could be developed to increase contact between staff and improve project oversight. Regular travel from senior managers to the field should be a priority, while at the same time all field staff must be encouraged to regularly join meetings in the Kirkuk office.

Third, ACDI/VOCA concedes that a baseline study at the start of USAID/ICAP would have enabled the organization to compare before and after data, and consequently better assess change within communities, and in knowledge, attitudes and practices of beneficiaries in response to USAID/ICAP inputs.

Fourth, notwithstanding the significant monitoring efforts made by USAID/ICAP, a clearer strategic plan for the implementation, use of and relationship between these data collection efforts is warranted and would have resulted in a more efficient and effective accumulation of data.

Fifth, at the start of USAID/ICAP, more attention should have been paid to the sustainability of a number of USAID/ICAP components, such as the apprenticeship and summer camp programs. ACDI/VOCA spent substantial time and effort localizing both models, aiming to sustain the programs and ensure handover to Iraqi stakeholders. The organization realizes however that these efforts came fairly late in the program.

Ideally, resources should have been invested earlier in getting media attention for successful projects and citizen-government engagement. The security context however made it difficult in the initial years of USAID/ICAP to be completely open about implementation of USG-funded program activities. Only from Year 3, ACDI/VOCA involved the media in its program, believing public attention could significantly benefit citizens, LG and other program stakeholders whilst not bringing them in any danger.

A longer timeline would also have been appropriate for building capacities of MRIWVF counterpart NGOs.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Each aspect of the USAID/Iraq Community Action Program is like a road sign. We Iraqis are moving on the highway from authority to democracy and these signs help guide us, though we ultimately must choose our own path.”

—Local Government representative, Diyala province

USAID/ICAP was based on the premise that local community needs were best met by ensuring the active partnership of all community groups: citizens, LGs, and business and social leaders, in identifying priorities and designing interventions. USAID/CAP I and II focused primarily on building the capacity of CAGs to fill the gap of the LG and exercise true grassroots democracy by implementing projects on their own where necessary and in partnership with LG where possible to meet community needs. USAID/ICAP focused on furthering the evolution of community-centered development by building the capacity of LGs to assume their role as the locus of community needs assessment, prioritization, project design, funding and implementation. By providing high-quality technical assistance, training, and targeted funding to CAGs and LGs, USAID/ICAP helped the nascent Iraqi democracy move to the next level of organizational development and brought much needed community-driven development to Iraq’s citizenry.

The results of USAID/ICAP in the Northern AoR have shown that it is possible to introduce a process of grassroots democracy into a population that has never known it. Moreover, it seems to have found fertile ground in Iraq especially in respect to the ‘demand’ side of governance.

To guarantee a balance between the ‘demand’ and ‘supply’ side of governance, continued support and oversight remains needed with regards to the legitimacy, authority and functioning of *qada* and *nahiya* councils, as well as provincial level government. Only with the appropriate authority levels local government representatives can respond adequately and effectively to citizen requests and meet expectations.

Further assistance is also required to bolster the vital civil society link between citizens and government. Continued capacity building of civil society leaders remains required to provide an effective bridge between their community and government institutions. Advocacy, communication and media strategies are areas to be highlighted in this report.