

# Schools and Education

U.S. funds paid for Iraqi workmen to turn crumbling schools into freshly painted places to learn.

**S**ajad's elementary school in Basra, Iraq's second largest city with some 2 million people was typical of the country's run-down schools. As a workman climbed a wooden ladder last September to repair the leaky roof with a mixture of mud and mortar, Sajad's mother explained how both her nine-year-old son and her older daughter had missed many weeks of school last year when the rains came and water flooded the classrooms.

She said she had tutored her children at home so they scored at the top of the class but was very glad that the repairs would "make it easy for my son to go to school next year—before it was too difficult."

In addition to the roof, the workmen installed new tiles, paint, ceilings, toilets, bathrooms, water tanks, pipes, air conditioning the office and fans for classrooms.

Twenty-five years ago, Iraq had one of the best education systems in the Middle East. By the time U.S. troops entered the country, buildings were poorly maintained, teachers poorly paid and trained, and basic equipment and schoolbooks were lacking. Enrollment, especially for girls, had declined greatly.



Girls at a Baghdad school (above) carry boxes of school supplies. Creative Associates International delivered school bags (right) containing calculators, notebooks, pens and pencils to secondary schools throughout Iraq.

Thomas Hartwell



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**The repairs to our school "make it easy for my son to go to school. Before it was too difficult," one mother said.**



Ben Barber/USAID

Sajad, 9, sits next to his older sister Yasmine, 11, who is holding their baby sister as

they tell how much a U.S. contractor has improved their rundown school in Basra.



Ben Barber/USAID

Iraqi construction team hauls buckets of mud and mortar to the roof of Sajad's

school in Basra which had been leaking in the rains.



Ben Barber/USAID

Iraqi workmen at Sajad's school take a lunch break. Wall was notched for a new coat of plaster.

## Accelerated Learning



American Islamic Congress



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The Accelerated Learning Program is replacing old chalkboards, such as the one above.

Khamail (left) teaches math and physics in a city in southern Iraq. "They are so enthusiastic that they overwhelm me," she says of her students.

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi students dropped out of school in the last decade of Ba'ath Party rule, because they could not afford to pay the fees and bribes or because they had to help support their families. As a result many young people, especially girls, have received less formal education than their parents. In response USAID launched an accelerated learning program in the fall of 2003 to help particularly motivated young people to make up for lost time and do two years academic work in one.



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Some students in the Accelerated Learning program were so eager to continue their studies that they voted to give up their mid-year vacation.

### Results

- Renovated 2,300 schools on time for the opening of the 2003-2004 school year.
- Printed and distributed 8.7 million new math and science textbooks throughout the country.
- Set up 2,700 parent teacher associations.
- Trained 32,632 teachers.
- Distributed school bags and school supplies to 1.5 million students.
- Funded partnerships between five U.S. and five Iraqi universities.
- Distributed new school desks throughout Iraq.
- Encouraged girls to attend school again and helped push their registration up to 96 percent at the beginning of the school year. The figure for boys was 92 percent.

Within weeks of Saddam's fall, Creative Associates, which had the main U.S. contract to improve education, along with Research Triangle Institute, Bechtel, CHF and other NGOs and contractors, fanned out across Iraq to visit communities and respond to requests that their schools be fixed. Some 2,500 schools had been repaired by March of 2004.

USAID also worked with and funded UNESCO to print and distribute 8.7 million new science and math textbooks for grades one through 12, updating them and removing Ba'athist propaganda in the process.

At an elementary school in Baghdad, while workmen plastered the walls and installed fans, the headmistress was meeting in her office with the first parent-teacher association in her school—one of 2,700 supported by U.S. assistance.

For the first time, teachers, parents and school administrators met to decide how to improve education, to ensure students and teachers show up, to spend budgets and get the best books, materials and programs.

"This is the first time we have had this,"



Ben Barber/USAID

In an ethnic Kurdish village along Iraq's border with Iran, an Iraqi woman reads from her son's literature book. A U.S.-funded literacy team

taught her to read after the Al Ansar terrorist group controlling the village was driven out by U.S. and Kurdish forces.

she said. "The new PTA supervises the construction project and is receiving the new furniture, the refrigerator, the cooler."

In addition, 32,632 teachers have been trained through a USAID program which encourages interactive teaching, team work, and critical thinking. And 1.5 million secondary school students received book bags stuffed with pencils, crayons, pens, paper and other supplies.

Five grants worth \$21 million were also awarded to create partnerships between U.S. and Iraqi universities. The State University of New York at Stony Brook is working with Baghdad University, Al Mustansiriyah University/Baghdad, Basra University, and Mosul University on archeology and environmental health. The University of Hawaii College of Agriculture and Human Resources is working with the University of Mosul Hamam Al-Alil and University of Dahuk for strengthening academic, research, and extension programs. Other U.S. schools in the program are DePaul University College of Law, Jackson State University, and the University of Oklahoma.