

# Iraqis Involved in Community Action

Five NGOs work with Iraqi communities to build roads, schools, markets and other public services.

To help Iraqis emerge from decades of repression, USAID provided about \$70 million to create a Community Action Program (CAP) that helped citizens form civic organizations and select reconstruction projects in their communities.

The CAP drew on five of USAID's traditional allies in development and relief to carry out the reconstruction effort in Iraq: Mercy Corps, International Relief and Development (IRD), Agricultural Cooperative Development International and Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance (ACDI/VOCA), Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) and Save the Children.

One NGO funded a quick, tarred road across a seven-kilometer region of central Iraq where isolated villages had spent months of the rainy season unable to reach markets, clinics, schools and other services.

"People are grateful to me and they stop to thank me," said one Iraqi contractor who built the road under a CAP grant. As he stood under a blue sky on the freshly tarred road, local drivers and passengers stopped their pickup trucks and crowded vans to thank him with effusive Arabic greetings.

The CAP's aim is for communities to decide for themselves on the projects and contribute resources to both the work and the oversight.



Mercy Corps

A CAP project built safety railings on the stairwells in the buildings behind these children. Other projects remove sewage from the streets in many towns.

### Results

- Set up 650 Community Action Groups to back grassroots democracy.
- Committed \$48.4 million for 1,364 projects.
- Iraqi communities gave \$15.3 million in labor, land, and buildings to joint projects.
- ACDI/VOCA focuses on Mosul, Kirkuk and the Iran-Iraq border, completing 146 projects.
- CHF works in south central Iraq setting up community associations. Projects include access roads, sewage, water, school repairs, and swamp clean-up as well as community centers and sports clubs. They have completed 105 projects.
- IRD has completed 234 projects in Baghdad; 73 are focused on income and jobs.
- Mercy Corps completed 89 water, sewage, clean-up, and school projects.
- Save the Children completed 271 projects in the south. Focus on sewage, water, public health, and girls' education.



Ben Barber/USAID

An Iraqi manager of the company which built a seven-mile road under a U.S. contract outside Hillah, stands as cars begin to use the route.



Thomas Hartwell

Children at a kindergarten in Basrah. The school was refurbished through a USAID grant to Save the Children.



Thomas Hartwell

Young Iraqis practice their computer skills at a women's center south of Baghdad. The center also offers nutrition and health classes and plans to open an Internet cafe.

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▲ Work on Umm Qasr railroad begins

▲ Baghdad telecommunications exchange reopens

▲ Saddam Hussein captured

International phone service restored ▲

Locals councils created throughout Iraq ▲