

New Freedom and Opportunities

Founding a New Democracy in Iraq

November 18, 2003

Iraqis have an unprecedented opportunity for a better life. Historic achievements in democracy, building, infrastructure, economic growth and social services are taking shape that could not have been achieved under the previous regime. The first six months of reconstruction efforts have laid a solid foundation for a free, just, and more prosperous Iraq.

Political Participation

After years of tyranny, Iraqis are selecting city and provincial councils, joining interest groups, and opening up governmental decisions—laying the foundations upon which a democratic national government can rest.

Representative provincial and city governments are rapidly emerging where the local populations are determining public investment priorities and restoring tangible services.



An Iraqi citizen participates in a neighborhood council meeting. For the first time, Iraqis can give voice to their preferences and publicly participate in open debate about the future of their country. (USAID Photo)

Local democracy gives voice to diverse community needs, enhances social stability, increases accountability in government and advances basic human rights.

- New leaders are stepping forward in city and provincial councils, in preparation for the work of national representative institutions.
- Throughout Iraq's governorates, more than 15 million Iraqis are engaging in local political debate through their representatives.
- More than 200 neighborhood advisory councils in major cities represent more than half the country's urban population.
- Key Iraqi technical officials and council members manage public budgets and planning in cooperation with U.S. advisors.



A recent shipment of grain to Umm Qasr port is being loaded onto trucks for delivery after being transferred into the newly restored grain silos. (Bechtel Photograph)

Strengthening the Economy

Critical repairs to infrastructure connect Iraq's economy with neighbors and the world:

- Electrical generation has surpassed pre-conflict levels.
- International telephone service is being restored.
- Umm Qasr port is open to humanitarian and commercial cargo and processed the first bulk grain shipment of 52,000 tons on Nov. 14.
- Baghdad International Airport receives daily commercial cargo flights.

Economic progress includes the establishment of the Central Bank, national and provincial budgets, and an inter-bank payments system.

- USAID and partners have created at least 60,000 jobs through subcontracts and the National Employment Program.
- The Ministry of Finance and USAID partners converted from old to new Iraqi currency, unifying the economy and allowing for managed economic growth.

Empowering Women

USAID supports women's groups in civil society to insure human rights, reforms to matrimonial laws, prevention of violence and abuse, and equal opportunities for women in education and employment.

With Iraqis and the Coalition Provisional Authority, USAID is restoring critical infrastructure, supporting healthcare and education, expanding economic opportunities, and assisting Iraqis with their own governance.



Iraqis Rebuild Their Country

Restoring Public Services

The Iraqi people's basic health and well-being has improved since February 2003. Service delivery is improving as Iraqis take the lead in managing critical public services.

Restoration of water treatment plants and pumping stations is increasing access to clean drinking water.

- Expansion of Baghdad's Saba Nissan water plant will add 225,000 cubic meters a day to the water supply (enough for 2 million people) by May 2004.
- Work is underway to rehabilitate 15 city and town water treatment facilities
- The Sweet Water Canal is being dredged and repaired, benefiting 1.5 million people in Basrah.

Reconstruction of wastewater treatment facilities is improving the health of millions of Iraqis while removing a major source of environmental pollution.

- Sewage from the 5.5 million inhabitants of Baghdad bypasses the ill-equipped treatment plants and flows directly into the Tigris River, affecting the health of inhabitants in Baghdad as well as even more downstream. All Baghdad's sewage treatment plants will be running at full capacity by October 2004.



Above: Loaders remove accumulated silt from a section of 1 of 2 storage reservoirs in the Sweet Water Canal project that supplies all the fresh water to the city of Basrah and environs. When completed it will serve 1.75 million citizens of the Basrah region. (Thomas Hartwell)



Oral polio immunization of a newborn in Iraq. (USAID Photograph)

Iraqis have access to primary health care, reducing sickness among children and allowing adults to work more productively.

- 3 million Iraqi children are immunized, with 20,000 more immunizations each month.
- 2,200 health care professionals and 7,800 para-professionals provide quality service throughout the country.
- 600 health care centers are being equipped with medical supplies, trained workers, and equipment, especially in the rural areas.

Partnerships of U.S. and Iraqi universities are improving environmental management, teacher training, legal education, public health training, and archeology.

The 3 million primary school children and 1.5 million secondary students benefit from over 1,700 rehabilitated schools, new textbooks, and classroom equipment and supplies.

- Graduation examinations took place on time in June and July.
- The new school year started as scheduled on October 1.
- All secondary school students received kits containing school supplies from pencils to calculators.
- Primary and secondary school enrollment levels now exceed pre-war levels.
- Trained 258 Master Trainers in Baghdad.

