



SUCCESS STORY

Making Jobs for the Jobless

A carpentry shop trains carpenters and creates job



Photo: USAID/Jessica Morse

Najjar and his co-workers discuss plans for their carpentry cooperative.

USAID supported a non-profit carpentry workshop that employs 12 men and has trained 35 others, all of whom have since found jobs as carpenters.

Eighteen-year-old Najjar abandoned his dreams of becoming a mathematician after his father died suddenly. As the sole breadwinner in his family, Najjar quit school and started working in construction. When his small wage could not cover the rent, his family was evicted. “We had nowhere to go,” he said.

Not knowing where to turn, he applied for a job at a small carpentry workshop that is part of a USAID program to empower local residents to identify and meet community needs. This particular workshop focuses on youth development. It fosters leadership, independence, and financial stability among youth between the ages of 18 and 24. Profits from the furniture, doors, and bookshelves sold by the carpentry shop are reinvested in the youth center to purchase sports equipment, internet access, and secondary school supplies.

The manager of the carpentry workshop explained that this is an effort to provide “jobs for the jobless.” Najjar is one of 12 full-time employees in the not-for-profit workshop. With his wages, he can pay the rent and support his family. The work schedule allows him to attend school in the afternoon. A youth center has offered Najjar a university scholarship upon completion of his secondary school studies.

The shop also holds training seminars to improve the carpentry skills of local residents. The training resulted in sustainable jobs for all 35 attendees. Three separate 15-day workshops — An Introduction to Carpentry, Bookshelf Making, and How to Establish a Carpentry Workshop — gave community members sufficient skills to either join an existing carpentry enterprise or start their own.

This is one of nearly 4,000 small community development programs USAID has implemented throughout Iraq. Designed as a grass-roots program that instills self-confidence and self-reliance in participants, the program champions local solutions to local problems by building ownership and capacity in neighborhoods across the country.