



SUCCESS STORY

Entrepreneur Tastes Sweet Success

An entrepreneur expands his shop, creates jobs, and satisfies his nation's sweet tooth



Photo: USAID/Jessica Morse

Baskets of nuts and sweets made from fruits line the walls of the Hasarat Sweet Shop, a local fixture for 30 years.

A USAID grant helped the Hasarat Sweet Shop expand its business to outlying regions and create steady local employment. USAID has awarded 323 grants to small and medium sized businesses as part of an effort to develop a competitive and efficient free market economy in Iraq.

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With a deep entrepreneurial spirit and some seed capital from USAID, Mr. Sabah has transformed the Hasarat Sweet Shop, a 30-year-old local fixture in northern Iraq, into a thriving business that is creating jobs and contributing to regional growth.

Mr. Sabah, the owner of the small shop, was overjoyed when a grocery store in a neighboring governorate placed an order for four tons of his specialty, Naana Kaisi, a traditional Iraqi fruit candy. This one order equaled nearly two thirds of the Hasarat Shop's annual sales of 6.5 tons. A few months before, he would not have been able to fill the order. But that had changed.

The shop's fruit candies — made from dried apples, figs, and apricots — are renowned throughout the region. Due to storage constraints and inefficient production machinery, Mr. Sabah was only able to sell his sweets from the store in his small town. USAID stepped in, funding a grant of \$5,000 for stoves, drying trays, mixer machines, and workspace renovations. Mr. Sabah invested \$1,050 of his own money to purchase storage boxes, commercial heating pots, and natural gas cylinders. The new equipment increased his production rate from five boxes of Naana Kaisi a day to 60.

He had planned to hire four new permanent staff with his expanded business capabilities. However, the product was so well received in the expanded market, that he had to hire 27 new people. Many of these workers are women who operate the machinery from their homes, enabling them to watch their children while earning a wage.

As he expands his business into outlying cities and provinces, Mr. Sabah demonstrates Iraqi entrepreneurship at its best. USAID and its partners have been working across Iraq to tap these natural business skills and provide Iraqis with the capital and training necessary to grow their businesses.

In just over one year, the USAID-funded alliance has awarded over \$2.7 million in grants to 323 small and medium sized businesses. Although a sweet shop is only a small player in a large country, it is part of the new foundation of a competitive and efficient economy in post-war Iraq.