

Repairing Basrah's Aging Water Plant



Photo: USAID/Ben Barber

Workmen repair pumps at the Unified Basrah Water Treatment Plant which supplies water to 40 percent of Southern Iraq's largest city, Basrah.

Built in 1936 by the British, the sturdy cast-iron pipes and bolts held strong and true but the system needed new valves, bushings, bearings and filters. USAID paid for the repairs, provided money to buy parts, and worked with Iraqi technicians to do the work.

In fact, said an aid official, it was the first time the staff at the Unified Basrah Water Treatment Plant had been given the authority to purchase parts on the open market instead of waiting for Baghdad officials to supply them under the tedious central planning of the previous Saddam Hussein regime.

The improvements provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development, working in coordination with the Coalition Provisional Authority, included standby electric generators in case power fails and chlorine gas to kill germs.

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