



USAID
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IRAQ

SUCCESS STORY

Former IDP Lays Foundation for Iraq

Through a USAID grant, an Iraqi businessman triples his output and employs fifteen men.



Abu Yahya's new stone crusher produces fine quality sand that he can sell at a cheaper cost than his competitors. After living as internally displaced persons for sixteen years, Abu Yahya and his cousins now have a prospering business and a strong source of income.

Abu Yahya used a USAID business development grant to purchase a stone crusher and generator. USAID has distributed 323 such grants throughout Iraq worth over \$2.7 million.

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After living as an internally displaced person for sixteen years, Abu Yahya returned to his ancestral land and established a business that literally provides the foundation for Iraq reconstruction. Abu Yahya, an Iraqi businessman tripled his output and created fifteen new jobs when he purchased a stone crusher and generator with a \$74,000 USAID grant.

The stone crusher pulverizes large stones, into high quality sand that will neither crack nor breakdown. The Kirkuk airport and a Sulaymaniyah highway bid on his output even before the machine was operable.

In 1975 he started this stone washing business on his family's land, sifting dirt from dried riverbeds into different grades of gravel for construction. The largest stones had no use, so they simply piled up on the premises. After these stones are crushed, he can sell them for \$6 per unit, \$2 less than his competitors who import this high grade sand from Iran. This local source for construction inputs significantly reduces the cost and timeframe for large infrastructure projects in northern Iraq.

Three years ago, Abu Yahya, couldn't have had this business. He gestures to a small brown field on the horizon. "I was born in this village," he explained, "but now it is destroyed." In 1986, Saddam Hussein's Arabization campaign swept through the land; Abu Yahya and his family were forced to flee, abandoning their business. They lived as internally displaced people (IDP) in Erbil. After the previous regime fell, he and his family returned to their ancestral land. "It is the most wonderful feeling," he said, "this is my birthplace that I have been deprived of for sixteen years."

His business employs thirty-five men, all of whom were previously unemployed; fifteen of these men were hired solely to support the new machinery and its increased output. With steady incomes, these men now send their children to school.

USAID's partner, Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA), has been working across Iraq to tap local entrepreneurship and provide Iraqis with capital and training to grow their businesses. Over the last fifteen months, VEGA has awarded 323 business grants worth over \$2.7 million.