



## SUCCESS STORY

# Sewing Shop Provides Jobs and Hope

### A sewing shop trains and employs widows and disabled people



Photo: USAID

Two women learn techniques of measuring at the sewing workshop.

***A local organization received USAID assistance to open a sewing shop and training center for vulnerable people with few job prospects. The organization trained 120 people in one year, and hired 35 of them for its sewing shop.***

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“If Kirkuk is a little Iraq, then our sewing shop is a little Kirkuk,” said the director of a community organization that, with USAID assistance, opened a sewing shop near the northeastern Iraqi city of Kirkuk. “We are the littlest Iraq,” he added. The sewing shop employs 35 widows and disabled people that represent a range of Iraq’s diverse ethnic and religious groups.

The sewing shop is also used as a training center for aspiring tailors and seamstresses. Profits from the shop support the organization in its efforts to train and employ disenfranchised members of society. The organization has expanded its activities to include computer training and lessons in maternal health. Other members of the community have received specialized healthcare through the center’s support. The sewing shop also produces school uniforms at subsidized rates.

Salah, an employee of the sewing shop, has been crippled since birth and has had to depend entirely upon his family for support. “I applied for hundreds of jobs,” he explained, “but no one would hire me until now.” With his new source of income, it is now Salah’s family who depends upon him.

For years, Ban could not find employment and had been forced to pull her children from school so they could work. “It was painful,” she said. Now she works for the shop during the day and sews out of her house in the evening. Her income supports her children’s school fees and her husband’s health treatment.

USAID provided the organization with office furniture, sewing machines, and materials to establish the shop and training center. The response to the organization’s advertisement in a local newspaper offering training in sewing was overwhelming, but within one year, they had trained 120 people. Although the shop could only hire 35 of those trainees, most of the others have now established their own cottage sewing businesses.

Funding for the sewing shop and the community organization comes from one of nearly 4,000 grants implemented throughout Iraq.