



SUCCESS STORY

Promoting a Free Press

Building a national media pool, promoting a vibrant press



Iraqi journalists attend a press conference in Baghdad.

Representing over 25 Iraqi press bureaus, the Iraqi National Media Pool helps reporters gain access to high profile stories and establishes professional reporting standards. “This is a real development for media in Iraq,” said one journalist. “It enables us to get firsthand information that was inaccessible before.”

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The first media pool of Iraqi journalists convened in the Baghdad Convention Center in September 2005 to celebrate their first successful collaboration and coordinate future pools. “This is a real development for media in Iraq,” explained a reporter from

Dijla radio who recently toured Abu Ghraib Prison as a member of the newly formed national media pool. “It enables us to get firsthand information that was inaccessible before.”

Iraq’s national media pool is comprised of more than 25 national media bureaus. The media pool helps manage coverage of high-profile events and people — journalists take turns attending events and they share stories, information, and photographs with each other. In the Iraqi national pool, four journalists are selected on a rotating basis to cover events on behalf of all the bureaus, allowing these individuals access to high-interest stories such as interviews, coverage of VIP

visits, and major media events. The most important component of the pool is the ability to disseminate information to as many members of the press as possible in a timely manner.

USAID helped launch the media pool in partnership with Iraqi media outlets and several U.S. government bodies, including the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and U.S. Military’s Combined Press Information Center. As part of the launch, USAID helped provide training in journalistic standards and professionalism for participating journalists.

The September 2005 meeting signaled that Iraqis were beginning to take ownership of the media pool. The journalists actively engaged in discussion and signs of an emerging leadership within the pool were evident.

Under Saddam Hussein’s regime, the Iraqi media and public information were fully controlled and censored, and the idea of free press was unheard of. Today, Iraqi journalists are working together to create an institutional environment where they have access to international sources and resources that will allow them to report to the Iraqi people and the rest of the world.

Photo: USAID