

Iraq Update

Revitalizing Education

September, 2003

Challenges:

Prior to the nineteen nineties, Iraq's education system was one of the best in the Middle East. Due to system-wide neglect by the Ba'ath party over the past decade, however, schools fell into disrepair and educational materials became severely outdated.

Before the conflict, only one in six children had textbooks, teachers were unpaid, physical facilities were in dire condition, shortages of supplies and equipment were widespread, and the quality of education was in serious decline.

Systematic looting and destruction of public property, combined with the conditions described above, have left many schools currently lacking plumbing, wiring, lighting, desks, windows, and doors.



Girls in class at the Agadir Secondary Girl's school in the Saydiya neighborhood of Baghdad. Several rooms of the school were looted. USAID is refurbishing the school. (USAID photograph)

To meet these challenges, USAID is laying the foundation for sustainable, quality education in Iraq at the primary and secondary school levels.

The immediate goal is to return children to classrooms by October 2003 for the new school year, while increasing overall school enrollment and retention throughout the country.

On-going support to the Ministry of Education includes consulting on strategic goals, financial management and teacher compensation, as well as school administrator and educator training.



An Iraqi teacher correcting final exams in the Kirkuk school district. USAID assisted UNICEF and the Iraqi Ministry of Education in preparing and administering nationwide end-of-school-year exams, as well as the production of 15 million exam books, enabling children to complete the school year. (USAID photograph)

Progress includes:

- Completion of a "back to school" campaign with UNICEF that included delivering 1,500 school kits to help students return to classrooms last May.
- Revising 96 versions of math and science textbooks nationwide, printing 5 million copies.
- Purchase of 1.5 million student kits and 3,900 secondary school kits to distribute in time for the new school year.
- Granting \$5,000 to Ministry of Education offices in the 18 governorates for equipment and furniture needs.
- 5,000 primary and secondary school principals and supervisors are being introduced to current administrative and financial management techniques.
- Repairing and renovating 1,260 schools in time for the start of school in October 2003 and an additional 200 in the following months.
- More than 3,700 secondary schools have been inventoried to collect data on school sites and conditions, teacher-student ratios, parent involvement, supply needs, etc., to determine immediate and future requirements.
- 64,000 of Iraq's secondary school teachers will participate in training courses on "student-centered" learning and improved teaching methods.

Working in close cooperation with the Coalition Provisional Authority to improve the lives of the Iraqi people, USAID is devoting substantial resources throughout the country to restore critical infrastructure, support the delivery of healthcare and education services, expand economic opportunities, and improve governance.

Improving Schools in Iraq for the New Year



Mrs. Ahoud Zaiher -- Al-Kifah Al-Arabi Secondary School; Mansoor, Hay-Al-Montanah.

Mrs. Zaiher has been a physics teacher for 21 years. She has three grown children and graduated from the College of Science of Baghdad University. The Al-Kifah Al-Arabi school has about 450 students and 25 teachers.

When asked what she finds most rewarding about teaching, she replied, "[it is a] challenge and very satisfying; especially to teach the girls." (USAID photograph)

USAID will renovate 1000 schools in time for the new school year in 2003. An additional 200 schools will be repaired in the following months. It is also awarding millions of dollars in small grants for schools and communities.

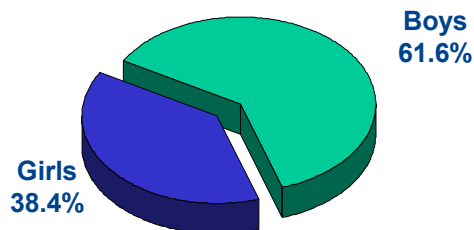
Mrs. Ahoud Zaiher In Her Own Words:

"When they see that as a teacher you are asking questions and not always saying yes and accepting things the way they are, the students will start to ask questions themselves ... Students can change easily; they are young! The changes start with the teachers. The books must be changed. No more Saddam, no more Baathists, no more killing, no more war."

"... everything will be changed in the new school year; not just the students but also the teachers."

"There must be big change. Teach the teachers first, to show that there is a different way, then the students will see by example and start to change, too."

Iraq Secondary School Enrollment by Gender



There are 112,000 secondary school girls not enrolled in the south and heartland regions of Iraq

Top left, the Al-Asseel boys school rehabilitation nearing completion. Note that all windows have been repaired, the school is freshly painted and the grounds have been cleaned. The stacks of desks visible in the right of the photo are waiting repair and refurbishment.

Bottom right, exterior school yard of the Al-Asseel boys school in Al Basrah before rehabilitation. The school had been looted, most of the windows had been broken (of which only some have been boarded-up) and trash litters the yard. (Photographs courtesy of Bechtel National, Inc.)

