

Revitalizing Iraq's Education System

Teacher Training Program

March 2004

Under the Saddam Hussein regime, the Iraqi education community was isolated from the international community and was not able to participate in educational innovations. In collaboration with the Coalition Provisional Authority and the Iraq Ministry of Education, USAID has implemented a dual strategy that has focused on emergency interventions supporting the rehabilitation of schools and laying the foundations for critical educational reform. USAID's teacher training program for secondary school teachers and administrators was implemented nation-wide through a cascading set of programs between September 2003 and February 2004.

The Purpose

In support of the Ministry of Education's effort to upgrade the quality of teaching in Iraq's classrooms, USAID's teacher training program laid the foundation for changes in teaching philosophies by encouraging teachers to freely express themselves and participate in decision making on training content. Through a five day training program, sessions included concepts like leadership, critical thinking, mutual respect, freedom of expression and team work.



"It's the first time in the history of teacher training in Iraq that a trained teacher has trained his supervisors. This is very new to us and frankly it has given us value and improved self esteem."

—USAID Baghdad teacher training participant



Above: Teachers at a training session at Al-Sharkia high school for girls in February 2004. USAID Photo

The Program

The teacher training program, which was implemented by USAID's RISE program, was developed through a consultative process with the Ministry of Education and the Iraq education community. The Ministry of Education, coordinating with the RISE team, spent two weeks conducting cross-country surveys and interviews to determine needs and identify a pool of trainers for the teacher training initiative.

From September to November 2003, 860 master trainers were trained and in February 2004, 31,772 additional secondary school teachers and administrators were trained nation-wide. During the training sessions, the teachers discussed lesson plans, learning strategies, classroom management, performance and measurements, punishment and reward, and community-parent-school relationships.

Teacher Training Totals

	Females	Males	Total
Trainee Totals	17,513	14,259	31,772
Master Trainers	264	596	860
Grand Total	17,777	14,855	32,632

Special Feature



A teacher at the Baghdad teacher training participates in the discussion on new education techniques. USAID Photo

Introducing New Education Techniques

In addition to promoting a change in teaching philosophies, the training also has a practical component which introduces new teaching strategies, such as new methods of creating lesson plans. One content supervisor said, *"I have been a teacher for 30 years and I didn't expect to change my methods of teaching and class management. I came to the training to prove that I do not need any extra training, but frankly after three or four days of training, I have found the new ideas and methods helpful. I also benefited from the exchange of ideas and techniques in my group. When I return to my school I will share with my colleagues what I learned and encourage them to participate in the training."*

Promoting Education Based on Mutual Respect

During the teacher training, participants took part in workshops on class room behavior, discipline and counseling. In response to these workshops, one teacher stated, *"This week I can feel a total change not only in our country and myself but within my whole family. Every day when I left the training, I responded to my children's misbehavior in the new ways you taught us rather than shouting and hitting them, I sat down and talked to them calmly. I feel that we are free now not only in the way we teach but the way we parent. We must work together as a team to create a new generation of Iraqis."*

Encouraging New Ideas

An underlying theme of the training was the promotion of a tolerant and democratic atmosphere both in the training sessions and in classrooms. An Islamic Teacher was so inspired by these ideas that he stated, *"I would like to teach not only the Islamic religion in our high schools but also teach a course that combines all existing religions in the world. This would promote respect and tolerance of all religions and sects". He also added, "that ignorance and having the wrong ideas about other religions leads to prejudiced ideas and stereotypes."*



Baghdad Teacher Training Graduation Ceremony

Graduation

In February, graduation ceremonies were conducted for more than 30,000 teachers and administrators. After receiving his certificates, one teacher stated *"Now I feel free for the first time since the Americans liberated Iraq from Saddam. I never knew what freedom is until I participated in the training this week because I was free to express my opinion without being intimidated. Now I also see that listening and respecting others is part of freedom. You taught us in the workshop about values that with freedom comes responsibilities."*

