

Transition to a Democratic Iraq

Iraq Transition Initiative

April 2004

In Iraq, USAID's Iraq Transition Initiative (ITI) supports critical projects that build and sustain Iraqi confidence in the transition to a participatory, stable, and democratic Iraq.

Working closely with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), ITI increases Iraqi support for the transition to sovereignty by providing quick-dispensing, high impact small grants. ITI has initiated 658 small grants in various stages of development, totaling more than \$44 million.

First Responders

In April 2003, the ITI program was one of the first on the ground in Iraq, implementing small grants for relief and reconstruction efforts. In August, ITI operations formally became part of the USAID Mission in Iraq, and its projects complement the Mission's local governance and community development initiatives.

Initially ITI's fast-paced assistance met critical needs—providing short-term jobs to Iraqis, restoring basic services, and encouraging protection of human rights. As the transition in Iraq continues, ITI now focuses on areas crucial to the process, including:

- **Civil society and civic education**
- **Transitional justice/Human Rights**
- **Conflict mitigation**



Office supplies are delivered to At Tamim Directorate of Water Resources under an USAID grant.



Hewar Saber, 19, attends a sewing class in the village of Tewala. An USAID grant provided the resources for the class.

Civil Society and Civic Education

Nationally, the ITI program collaborates with the CPA to expand citizens' understanding of and participation in the establishment of Iraqi institutions. Civic education and media outreach initiatives are used to inform the public about the constitutional process, election planning, and the transition to democracy.

Locally, ITI helps to enhance citizen participation in governance by identifying and supporting new local government and civil society groups, especially women and youth groups, and human rights organizations. Using small grants, ITI projects engage communities and emerging Iraqi leaders and help them address local needs.

Promoting Democratic Themes

Iraq's Contemporary Visual Arts Society is producing posters and leaflets on democratic themes that will be distributed throughout Iraq's 18 governorates. Focusing on the themes of democratic principles, the rule of law, and citizens' rights, the literature will help inform the public on Iraq's transition to democracy. The project is being funded by six grants from USAID worth a total of \$578,400.

In close cooperation with Iraqi nationals and the Coalition Provisional Authority, USAID is restoring critical infrastructure, delivery of healthcare and education services, expanding economic opportunities, and improving governance.

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Human Rights and Transitional Justice

ITI supports nascent Iraqi institutions and emerging citizen groups in documenting the Ba'ath regime's human rights abuses and promoting peace, tolerance, and reconciliation. USAID's small grants support the translation and distribution of human rights documents and the protection of documents that detail abuses of the former regime.

USAID helps local organizations, such as the Society for the Protection of Mass Graves, to preserve evidence of past abuses by training groups conducting mass grave exhumations and assisting Iraqi human rights advocates. USAID supports Iraqi efforts to prosecute perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

Conflict Mitigation

USAID focuses its small grant activities on current or potential conflict areas, using participatory methods to manage and mitigate sources of tension. Geographic locations of focus include the conflictive area in and around Baghdad, areas of south and south-central Iraq, and ethnically mixed locations in the north.

Ministry in a Box

Because many public buildings, especially ministries, were plundered after the war, USAID created the Ministry in a Box program, which provides furniture and office equipment that will allow 100 employees of the ministry to immediately return to work. The kits includes items such as desks, chairs, tables, filing cabinets, and a computer, printer, and photocopier. USAID has delivered 47 Ministry in a Box kits worth \$5.8 million to Iraqi government offices.



Sorting the documents of the Ba'ath regime. (USAID Photo)

Women's Initiatives

USAID funds the start-up and rehabilitation of women's centers, shelters, and associations and provides resources and training to women's rights groups and crisis intervention teams. The Baghdad Women's Centers Initiative funds a network of nine centers offering a range of services and opportunities to women in Baghdad. USAID is rehabilitating and equipping the women centers. Throughout the country, USAID has embarked on nearly \$2 million in projects to establish 20 women's centers.

Short-Term Employment

USAID funded a project in the low-income neighborhood of Sadr City that empowered thousands of residents to take charge of their environment. Workers cleaned hundreds of tons of trash, and USAID hired the drivers of 180 garbage trucks and 130 sewer workers and engineers. By the project's end, 15,000 people had worked to clean up their neighborhood.

Basic Services

Local governments throughout Iraq have been challenged to provide basic services to citizens. USAID support to Sulaymaniyah Governorate helped rehabilitate firehouses, allowing for the continuation of emergency services and encouraging volunteer support from the community.

Special Feature



USAID