



SUCCESS STORY

Community Leaders and Entrepreneurs Gain Business Skills at Baghdad Center

District Council partners with Baghdad Small Business Development Center to provide training in business skills



Certification ceremony at Baghdad Small Business Development Center

“The course was an unprecedented opportunity for me to improve my business,” said one program graduate, who manages a private school and plans to enroll in additional Baghdad SBDC programs.

On July 11, 2007, the first graduates of a business-skills program developed in partnership between a local district council and the Baghdad Small Business Development Center (SBDC) received certificates marking their completion of “How to Start Up or Improve a Business.” Supported through *Izdihar*, a USAID-funded program promoting private sector development, the five-day course at the Baghdad SBDC teaches modern business principles and strategies. Participants — a combination of community leaders and business owners — learn how to craft business proposals and marketing plans, manage finances, leverage technology, and access credit.

With the knowledge gained through the course, community leaders are now better equipped to identify and improve local industries, and business owners can use their newly acquired skills to expand or enhance operations. Municipal officials and course organizers believe the program will help create a more vibrant business climate in the area. For the district council, the partnership with the Baghdad SBDC has also strengthened its ties to the community and emphasized its commitment to serving the needs of its citizens.

In addition to the Baghdad SBDC, *Izdihar* currently works with four other regional SBDCs. This SBDC concept builds on the experience of existing Iraqi business associations and business centers, particularly those with excellent relationships throughout their communities. Since the effort was launched in November 2006, 671 business leaders (37 percent women) have received training to improve their skills and expand their businesses. *Izdihar*-supported training in how to access credit has connected dozens of businesses to banks and local microfinance institutes.