

consortium of representatives from the Iraqi government and legal community. Both efforts have been successful. Iraqi parliamentarians have leveraged USIP-provided expertise to craft a package of technical reforms to the constitution that has been widely praised. The ICJI has also been successful in promoting modifications to the Iraqi constitution that will strengthen the independence of the Iraqi judiciary.

Government Coordination

To be effective civil servants and to overcome sectarian and ethnic divisions, Iraqi officials need training in negotiation, coalition-building, planning, and resource allocation. They must also develop the skills necessary to address a broad range of political, security, social, and economic problems. The Institute is running week-long training programs, enabled by sophisticated computer-supported simulations, to build these skills. The training has been given to a wide range of government ministries, judges, military officers, police, local officials, parliamentarians, and civil society leaders. Both national and provincial representatives have been included. Nearly 800 Iraqis have been served, with very positive results. The Iraqis involved consistently report that the experience is extremely useful, typically rating it 9 on a 10-point scale. Just as importantly, demand has steadily increased and USIP is now developing Iraqi capacity to meet this demand.



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PROGRESS IN PEACEBUILDING

IRAQ

The Current Situation

Security is improving in Iraq, but political progress is slow. The emerging political reality in Iraq is a weak and divided central government with limited governing capacity. Mistrust among leaders in Baghdad remains high. Key ministerial posts have remained unfilled for months. The Iraqi security forces have been strengthened but are not able to supply and sustain themselves or fight insurgents and militias on their own. The Kurdistan Region remains virtually independent.

On the positive side, various factors have brought about relative stability. The U.S. has formed local alliances with a number of organizations, including Sunni tribal organizations, that have decided to fight against Al Qaeda in Iraq. The Shia Mahdi Army led by Moqtada al-Sadr has more or less maintained its ceasefire but has not disarmed or demobilized. More U.S. forces have deployed into neighborhoods with Iraqi security forces. Provincial governments are beginning to invest significant resources and provide services, with strong support from the Provincial Reconstruction Teams. The results are notable: Anbar province and much of Baghdad are relatively secure, though Ninewa and Diyala provinces are still seeing significant violence.

Despite security improvements, however, Iraq will remain fragmented for some time, with numerous local factions competing for power. The rushed constitutional process left Iraq with continuing disagreements about the architecture of the Iraqi state. The government in Baghdad is too weak and divided to fill the power vacuum. Services and security at the local level are still unpredictable. The potential for inter- and intra-sectarian conflict remains high.

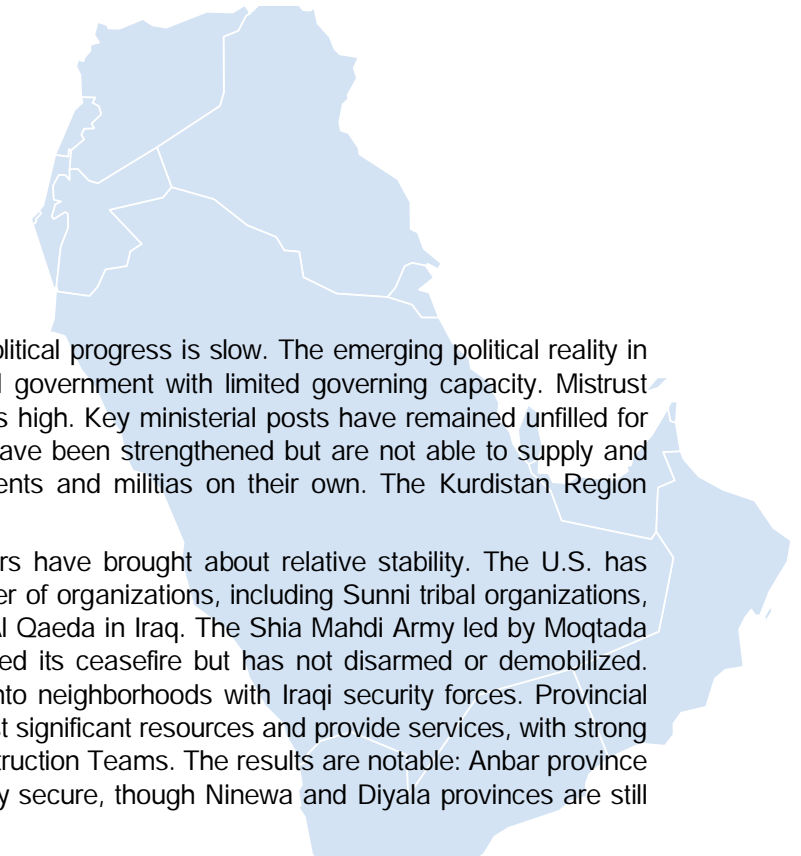
Going Forward

Long-term peace and stability will require sustained action at both the community and national levels. At the community level, Iraqis need to improve their capacity to build a state and to address differences through peaceful means. Moreover, they need to develop community-level civic, political, and economic institutions that are effective and that are organized on the basis of common interests rather than sectarian identity. On the national level, increasing government capacity, strengthening the rule of law, and crafting a wide-reaching accommodation among Iraq's leading political actors are all essential to a lasting, stable peace. USIP is actively working these issues at both the community and national level.

Community Level

Network of Iraqi Facilitators (NIF)

USIP understood early on that success in Iraq requires building peace at the community and neighborhood level. In 2004, USIP trained several dozen Iraqi conflict resolution facilitators to be the core of a network that conducts its own training programs, maps fault lines within Iraqi society, and mediates local conflicts. Since then, these facilitators have engaged in over 80 peacebuilding projects, working at the local level to strengthen cross-sectarian and inter-religious relationships, and to help resolve conflicts. The network does not shy away from the toughest cases. In March 2007, when violence in Baghdad was at a peak, USIP facilitators successfully brought together district council members from two conflict-ridden Baghdad neighborhoods, Adhamiya (Sunni) and Sadr City (Shia).



As was the case in Adhamiya and Sadr City, members of the facilitators' network have been responsible for declines in violence in many of the areas in which they have worked. Feedback from Iraqis, PRTs, and Brigade Combat Teams has been extremely positive. This success has generated a dramatic increase in demand for the network's services in places like Mosul, Tikrit and Tal Afar, as well as in Baghdad.

Leveraging this success, USIP has committed to training and supporting 100 additional facilitators. This new cadre is comprised of Iraqis from many walks of life -- tribal sheikhs, doctors, lawyers, and journalists -- and includes a substantial contingent of women. It also reflects the ethnic and sectarian balance of Iraq: Christians and Muslims, Sunnis and Shia, Kurds, Turkomans, and Arabs.

USIP has also just recently completed a series of nine working sessions with local leaders from three mixed Shia-Sunni-Kurd Baghdad neighborhoods. As a result of these sessions, a Sunni woman coordinated with Shia women from her neighborhood to facilitate the return of several Shia families that had been displaced. The Baghdad PRT is currently lobbying USIP to redouble the efforts of its facilitators in these neighborhoods to build on the connections and goodwill they have established.

The Mahmoudiya Peacebuilding Model

Mahmoudiya, a mixed Sunni-Shia district of approximately 500,000 people just south of Baghdad, has witnessed horrific violence since 2003. Terrorism, criminal gangs, and sectarian violence have forced people from their homes, damaged Mahmoudiya's social fabric, and destroyed its infrastructure.

In October, USIP convened a conference of 31 tribal sheikhs from Mahmoudiya (two-thirds Sunni and one-third Shia) who signed a path-breaking declaration committing themselves to bringing security to Mahmoudiya and to improving the quality of life of its citizens. The document not only identified specific objectives to be achieved over the next three years, but also included action plans. With USIP support, a local NGO is now overseeing implementation of the plan in cooperation with the local government.

As part of this implementation, the team recently convened a roundtable of Mahmoudiya tribal leaders and central government officials to help strengthen legal structures in the district. As a result, the Iraqi High Judicial Council agreed to send a circuit judge to provide oversight and to hear cases throughout Mahmoudiya.

A number of other follow-on activities are underway. In early 2008, Sunni tribal sheikhs involved in the conference agreed to rebuild a Shia mosque in Mahmoudiya destroyed by violence. Several important public works projects were also advanced by the agreement. And in March 2008, Sunni and Shia tribal sheikhs involved in the agreement walked together down the main thoroughfare of Mahmoudiya to demonstrate that the streets were safe and to encourage people to return to the district. Recognizing the success of the "Mahmoudiya model," Iraqis from across the country have approached USIP hoping to replicate it in their own communities.

The Hotspots Initiative

USIP is supporting a *Hotspots Initiative* to combat sectarianism through grassroots action in Iraq's most violent provinces. The *Hotspots Initiative* is still in its early stages but preliminary results are promising. A pilot program began in Kirkuk, which, because of its diversity and large oil reserves, has the potential to be the "hottest" of Iraq's provinces. *Hotspots* workshops were attended by a broad ethnic and religious cross-section of Kirkuk society. Participation by Kirkuk youth, essential to long-term peacebuilding, was particularly strong.

Iterative Peacebuilding Initiative

USIP also piloted its *Iterative Peacebuilding Initiative* in Kirkuk. This initiative brought together 36 community leaders for a series of intensive training programs. The initiative had three objectives: increasing conflict management skills, building relationships across ethnic lines, and promoting follow-on peacebuilding projects. Participants came from Kirkuk's three major Muslim ethnic groups (Arab, Kurd, and Turkoman), as well as the small Assyrian Christian ethnic group.

Participants also represented six sectors: religious leaders, business leaders, civilian political figures, security sector leaders, civil society leaders, and journalists. The program successfully strengthened relationships and resulted in a number of important, and still active, local projects. It will be replicated in other provinces in 2009.

National Level

National Dialogue Initiative

Local peacebuilding efforts are essential, but will have only limited impact without a strong national compact among political forces in Iraq. The 2005 constitutional process was rushed and did not include substantial Sunni participation. A Shia/Kurdish alliance imposed a highly decentralized state structure that many believe is not strong enough to hold the country together.

USIP is committed to a new national dialogue with wide participation. To this end, in 2006 USIP convened, with the United Nations, the first serious discussion among Sunni politicians and scholars (including "rejectionists") about how to pursue constitutional and legislative interests through political means. This dialogue resulted in a list of Sunni priorities that has helped guide ongoing constitutional deliberations, as well as bring many of the disenfranchised into the political process. USIP is now engaging with leading politicians to promote a reinvigorated national dialogue on how the country should be governed and power distributed.

Regional Dialogue

Stepped-up regional engagement—as advocated by the Iraq Study Group—is also essential to Iraqi stability, as well as a more stable regional order. Recognizing this, USIP worked with foreign policy and national security experts from Iraq and its six neighbors to craft the *Marmara Declaration*—a blueprint for regional stabilization. USIP is now supporting two follow-on Track 2 mediation efforts, one among religious leaders and another among media leaders from Iraq and its neighbors.

These mutually reinforcing dialogues, within and outside Iraq, help to generate the kind of solidarity that is necessary to stabilize the country and enable U.S. troops to withdraw as soon as possible.

Rule of Law

The rule of law is a fundamental building block of peace. Iraq's legal system, weak and irrelevant under decades of authoritarian rule, is in need of reform. The much-touted growth and improvement of the Iraqi Security Forces will result in peace only if these forces operate within a robust and effective legal framework.

USIP has a wide range of projects dedicated to strengthening the rule of law in Iraq. Early USIP efforts focused on Iraq's constitution. The Institute funded the public outreach unit of the committee charged with drafting the constitution and sponsored hundreds of working sessions involving tens of thousands of individuals.

USIP also provided expert advice to the Iraqi parliamentary committee for constitutional review, as well as support to the Iraqi Committee on Judicial Independence (ICJI), a