

# Postcards from Iraq

*Dear Mom and Dad,*

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It troubles me that our American media won't report the good news about Operation Iraqi Freedom, but they won't—as you know from watching the news. That hasn't changed from when I was in Baghdad last year.

But, a lot *has* changed...although it will take more than four short years to help a country that has been neglected 40 years. The Iraqi people are much more patient than we Americans. Remember the joke about the Iraqi man who wanted a job, and when the merchant dismissed him by telling him to come back in 50 years, the old man asked, "What *time* in 50 years?"

So, the Iraqi people go to work everyday, *if* they can. The Corps of Engineers works hand-in-hand with them, both with the hammers and shovels of reconstruction, as well as diplomatic capacity building and sustainability—to enable the new provincial governments to deliver essential services to their Iraqi citizens.

I feel like Paul Harvey, (*and now, the rest of the story*), but remember the Iraq Reconstruction Program? More than 2,900 of the 3,479 projects are complete now!

We had an event last week at a large water project on the Great Zab River that brings safe, drinkable water to 300,000 Iraqi citizens. According to those who track and report such things, the Reconstruction Program's water projects have added 449,200 cubic meters per day of water treatment capacity to Iraq—benefiting an estimated 2.4 million Iraqi people so far. Electricity generation has increased by 1,420 megawatts added to the national grid and benefiting 1.3 million Iraqi homes. Oil production, healthcare clinics and hospitals, security training academies, fire stations and border forts, village roads, and railway and aviation projects, and schools—last but not least the schools. Almost 325,000 Iraqi students now sit in more than 800 refurbished or newly constructed schools, with running water and electricity, windows and toilets that work. No more mud floors. Many of these children and teachers still have no desks or school supplies, but when I look into their eyes, I see hope, and they're so proud of their new schools, and excited about learning, and that's everything...because I believe we're all responsible for children, regardless of biological parents, circumstances, or the country in which they try to live.

I love you, Mom and Dad...and thank you for supporting my decision to do this again. I couldn't do this without you.

*Live, love, laugh!*  
LuAnne



(above) Kurdish school children resettling back into Iraq attended classes in these weather-torn tents until the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund made new schools possible for them. (below) The Panja Ali school is one of two newly-constructed schools that opened recently in the Kirkuk Province. (photos by LuAnne Fantasia)

