

# Postcards from Iraq

## Training Iraqi Engineers

By Priscilla E. Perry  
Los Angeles District

As a supervisor in the planning division of the Los Angeles District, California, one of my tasks is to train individuals for success. It is a passion of mine to see individuals develop in stature and mature in experience. So when the opportunity came for me to train the Iraqi engineers in conducting facilities assessments of infrastructure, I was excited.

You see, Capacity Development is the wave or the “catch phrase” here in Iraq for undertaking sustainability of essential services such as water, waste water, electricity, solid waste and transportation. This is an important entity now in our contract awards for construction projects; it was lacking in previous years’ awarded projects. So, the object is to assess a province’s entire infrastructure and determine the level of operational capacity then provide a cost estimate for any necessary improvements in equipment, supplies, training, and people; basically anything that would sustain the system as a whole and provide economic improvement to the Iraqi people’s lives and economic improvement to the Iraqi government.

Our Iraqi engineers’ tasks are to conduct design reviews and provide independent government cost estimates for our construction projects. I felt that they were the perfect candidates for this type of work because of their different engineering backgrounds, and I knew that I could train them well because in LA District as chief of regional planning, we conduct lots of assessment work for local cities.

I was able to mimic an assessment form from our Gulf Region Division Water Sector and use it for our purposes. As a pilot program, the Iraqi engineers first went to a nearby province to perform work. After that, I made the necessary adjustments and sent them out to do the actual work. They performed marvelously!

With the new skills these engineers have learned, they will be able to help shape the future of Iraq and be a positive influence to others and be able to train other engineers alike. They will be able to use this skill long after we are gone. I can say that this has been the highlight of my tour. Essays!



Priscilla Perry standing next to the American, Iraqi and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flags. ( ARMY PHOTO BY MOHAMMED ALIWI )