



## SUCCESS STORY

# Iraqi Returns Home to Lay Foundations

**A businessman triples his output and creates 15 new jobs**



Photo: USAID/Jessica Morse

Abu Yahya's new stone crusher produces fine quality sand that he can sell below his competitors' price. After 16 years of exile from their hometown, Abu Yahya and his cousins now have a prospering business and a strong source of income.

***Abu Yahya used a USAID business development grant to purchase a stone crusher and generator. USAID has distributed 323 such grants throughout Iraq worth over \$2.7 million.***

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After living away from home for 16 years, Abu Yahya returned to his ancestral land and established a business that is literally building the foundations of Iraq's reconstruction — a construction materials company. A veteran businessman, Abu Yahya tripled his output and created 15 new jobs when he purchased a stone crusher and generator with a \$74,000 grant from USAID. The stone crusher pulverizes large stones into high quality sand that used to make concrete. The Kirkuk airport and a Sulaymaniyah highway bid on his output even before the machine was operable.

In 1975, Abu Yahya started a stone washing business on his family's land, sifting dirt from dried riverbeds into different grades of gravel for construction. The largest stones had no use, so they simply piled up on the premises. Now, after these stones are crushed, he will be able to sell them for \$6 per unit — \$2 less than his competitors who import high grade sand from Iran. This local source for materials reduces the cost and timeframe for large infrastructure projects in northern Iraq.

Abu Yahya has come a long way since his family was forced to flee the area. Gesturing to a small brown field on the horizon, he said, "I was born in this village, but now it is destroyed." In 1986, Abu Yahya's family fled when Saddam Hussein launched an "Arabization" campaign to force all non-Arab populations from the village. He and his family returned to their ancestral land after 2003. "It is the most wonderful feeling," he said. "This is my birthplace that I have been deprived of for 16 years."

Today, his business employs 35 men, all of whom were previously unemployed. Of these, 15 were hired solely to support the new machinery and its increased output. With steady incomes, the men can now send their children to school.

USAID has been working across Iraq to tap local entrepreneurship and provide Iraqis with capital and training to grow their businesses. Over the last 15 months, the USAID-funded project has awarded 323 business grants worth over \$2.7 million.