

Iraq

USAID Iraq Community Action Program



In Iraq, ACDI/VOCA works to enhance the local government's ability to identify, articulate and better meet the needs of its constituency.

ACDI/VOCA implements the USAID Iraq Community Action Program in four provinces of northern Iraq: Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah ad Din. The program has three objectives:

Objective 1: Improve communities' abilities to articulate needs and mobilize resources to solve common problems.

Objective 2: Enhance local executive and representative government in USAID/Iraq Community Action Program communities to better meet the articulated needs of the community.

Objective 3: Civilian victims of conflict assisted by the Marla Ruzicka Iraq War Victims Fund.

ACDI/VOCA, with support from USAID, has implemented projects with 5,823,109 beneficiaries

Based on the successes and lessons learned during the first two years of implementing the program, ACDI/VOCA continues to build upon the establishment of effective and responsive local government institutions in Iraq. ACDI/VOCA is further strengthening the link between local government and community, increasing the capacity to successfully mobilize resources while institutionalizing citizen participation in local planning and budgeting activities.

Community Action Groups Respond to Community Needs

Between 2008 and 2010, ACDI/VOCA mobilized 69 community action groups (CAGs). These groups identified, managed and implemented essential economic, social and infrastructure community projects. They advocated for the projects and received support from their local councils (LCs) and provincial government officials.

ACDI/VOCA assisted the CAGs and LCs through community mobilization and governance training. Joint training enabled CAGs and LCs to better work with line ministries, mayors



and local and provincial councils to resolve community development issues in a democratic, transparent and participatory manner.

Completed Projects Benefit Community Members

ACDI/VOCA facilitated community mobilization activities in 27 districts and 42 subdistricts, and completed 269 projects. These projects represent increased capacity of ordinary citizens to actively participate in setting community priorities, a new culture of participatory budget decision making in the development process and successful collaboration between Iraqi citizens and government in planning community development priorities.

Additionally, ACDI/VOCA completed 385 Marla Ruzicka Iraqi War Victims Fund projects. These helped 2,224 innocent victims of U.S. forces-Iraq military operations to establish or expand a business in order to generate income that will help them obtain rehabilitation care. Overall, ACDI/VOCA, with support from USAID, has implemented projects with 5,823,109 beneficiaries (some individuals have benefited from multiple projects), and generated 15,269 short-term and 1,993 long-term jobs.

Taking the Lead: Female CAG Members

Greater visibility for women, with more leadership positions and roles, is helping change Iraqi society. Seeing women in management positions encourages other women to embark on career paths and helps change perceptions and restrictive cultural traditions.

Gulshan, a 43 year old CAG member, laughs as she explains how she has "revolution in her blood." Proud to be a female CAG member, Gulshan says that she "was elected to represent the women in my community. I am always encouraging women to take leadership roles, since there is scarcity for women's organizations and women's public presence in this community."

Improving women's participation in public decision making is an important part of ICAP. In the third year of the program, ACDI/VOCA pushed for more female representation in CAGs to better integrate women's needs into community development planning.

Currently 18 percent of all CAG members are

women. These women are role models for a new generation of Iraqis.

"I'm happy for myself because I've become someone with a strong position among my community," says Sheren another female CAG member. "The support I've received from women in the community who trust me as their representative has given me great confidence."

Dedicated Community Activists

Sabira is not only a CAG member but a director of a women's rights center and manager of a kindergarten. She lives in a community located in an area composed of many religious minorities such as Assyrian Christians and Yazidis.

A successful community advocate, Sabira is a married mother of three children. Juggling two jobs, volunteering as a CAG member and taking care of a family in today's turbulent Iraq requires dedication. Sabira, a highly optimistic and energetic woman, is just such a person.

When elected to her local CAG, Sabira says that she "felt happy to take on responsibility in participating in the decision-making process regarding community development." She hopes to motivate other women.

"I have learned many things in this program," Sabira says, "such as how to make decisions which benefit the greatest number of people, how to develop proposals and how to take responsibility in obtaining approvals from local government for projects."

Looking Forward

ACDI/VOCA will continue to implement the USAID Iraq Community Action Program using this model. It will improve upon successful activities by placing particular emphasis on building advocacy skills and organizing support linkages between citizens, CAGs and LCs at the Qada (district) and Nahiya (subdistrict) level. This will especially be done in transfer disputed territories (TDTs) and in areas of high concentrations of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and IDP returnees.

Updated: 3/12