



Challenges:

Under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, the brutal and autocratic rule of the Ba'ath Party created a legacy of suspicion, fear, and inefficient government. The regime afforded little opportunity to develop independent local government or civil society organizations.

Today, across Iraq, widespread efforts are fostering a representative government. USAID, working in cooperation with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), is helping Iraqis to put in place functional and transparent government processes at the local level, facilitating the delivery of essential services and enabling citizen participation in decision making.



Above: An Iraqi citizen participates in a neighborhood council meeting. For the first time, Iraqis can give voice to their preferences and publicly participate in open debate about the future of their country. (USAID Photo)

Local government is important as it:

Provides the foundation for democracy at the national level.

Promotes social stability when people have a say in their own government.

Increases financial transparency to **avoid corruption**.

Includes traditionally underrepresented groups for **increased diversity**.

Embraces civil society organizations, including local interest groups.

The Iraqi people are establishing democratic government

Iraqi neighborhood, district, and provincial councils represent the needs and opinions of their constituents to the Iraqi Governing Council and the CPA.

Key Iraqi technical officials and council members manage public budgets and planning in cooperation with US experts.

Iraqi officials lead the reconstruction of their own communities and provinces by restoring public services such as water, schools, and public sanitation.

Iraqi Civil society organizations now advocate for their communities and hold accountable local government.



Left: Mokhtars from Abu Ghrayek, 1 of 15 subdistricts of the Babel Governate, make notes while listening to a description of the basics of democracy and the selection process that will allow for delegates to select 20 members from their communities to a new district council. USAID is working to promote ongoing local governance projects throughout Iraq. (Photo: Thomas Hartwell)

Working in close cooperation with Iraqi nationals and the Coalition Provisional Authority to improve the lives of Iraqis, USAID is devoting substantial resources throughout the country to restore critical infrastructure, support the delivery of healthcare and education services, expand economic opportunities, and improve governance.

Moving Towards a Vibrant Democracy in Iraq

“This is the first time we do this. The Americans let us do this – a real democracy,” – Shatha Hadi



USAID photo

Shatha Hadi (above) stands in front of a meeting of her Karkh District Council, one of nine in Baghdad that were set up with the USAID's local governance program after the fall of Saddam Hussein. The councils address the needs of citizens including roads, sewage, security, education, and power. Hadi was also voted by the Karkh Council to represent the area on the Baghdad City Council.

Hadi, who worked in a bank before the downfall of Hussein's regime in April, said that USAID made it possible for the new councils to form and begin to take a role in running the city's affairs.

USAID, in cooperation with the Coalition Provisional Authority, is working with Iraqi government institutions to promote a culture of public service and a government accountable to its citizens. USAID is also working with citizens to identify their needs and priorities and to facilitate the communication of their needs to government representatives. Specific projects underway include school renovations, educating the public on issues addressed in a democratic society, fostering support for the rights of minorities, empowering women, providing employment services, and facilitating the delivery of public services such as garbage collection.

Right: A neighborhood council brings concerns to the Baghdad City Advisory Council. U.S. Senators Lugar, Biden, and Hagel were in attendance during a visit to Iraq. (USAID Photo)



Local Governance progress includes:

- In Iraq's 18 governorates, more than 15 million Iraqis are engaging in local policy discourse, either directly or through their representatives.
- Established more than 200 neighborhood advisory councils in cooperation with civil affairs units. Councils represent more than half the country's population and are present in all 88 Baghdad neighborhoods.
- Iraqi officials in local service departments plan, budget, and manage their resources. For example, officials in Dhi Qar are administering the delivery of public services to over 390,000 residents.
- Mosul city officials worked with US technical advisors to design a public awareness campaign on environmental issues, including a schools program, media outreach, and civil society initiatives.
- 58 Community Development Groups and 9 Women's Committees were established to address cultural practices in the Shia heartland that restrain public inter-gender mixing.
- Awarded more than 1060 rapid response grants worth \$50 million to date that have increased Iraqi participation in local government decisions.
- Iraqi civil societies meeting needs that have traditionally been neglected by government. For example, Kirkuk civil society organizations are addressing growing ethnic tensions in the Kirkuk.
- Iraqis have committed \$3.6 million to projects being conducted in their communities---totaling 18 percent of total project funding. The commitments have come primarily in labor, land, buildings, and in-kind contributions.

