

Ensuring Closure of 2003 School Year

National Final Examination Program

March 2004

Following the official re-opening of virtually all 15,000 primary and secondary schools in Iraq by CPA and the Ministry of Education (MOE) on May 3, 2003, an important objective to ensure the orderly conclusion of the school year was established. This required the administration of a very complex, final national examination program across the country. Given the total collapse of the educational infrastructure, the Coalition Provisional Authority along with USAID was required to assume complete responsibility for the administration of the exam.



Teacher correcting USAID-administered exams (USAID Photo)

Coordinating a Security Plan

To ensure a safe environment for the exams after the conflict, USAID coordinated with Coalition Force units throughout the country to assure three important security measures:

- Since the Ministry of Education building was destroyed by fire during the conflict, an alternative, secure site had to be located and protected around the clock.
- The examinations would have to be transported overland by trucks without compromise.
- Approximately 30,000 MOE exam centers throughout Iraq required constant protection during the examination period, particularly for the grades 6, 9, and 12 examinations. These exams determine graduation from primary to intermediate and secondary school admission.

Developing a Strategy

In order to have adequate time to organize the final examination process, a decision was made to extend the school year through the end of June. In conjunction with Iraqi Advisors who were familiar with the requirements of the Iraqi Ministry of Education National Examination process, a plan was developed and a schedule outlined to obtain funding and administer prepare the exams.

Obtaining Funding for Supplies

The first step was to approve funding to UNICEF to provide for all essential equipment and supplies for the preparation, implementation, and correction of the examinations. To this end, a request was submitted to USAID, a rationale provided, and approval received for \$1 Million of additional funding to the UNICEF grant to cover these costs. Additional funding arrangements were made through UNICEF and UNESCO to access additional in-kind services of equipment and supplies from their regular humanitarian assistance programs to support the exams.

Developing and Administering Examinations

In collaboration with CPA, USAID also assisted the Ministry of Education (MOE) with developing and administering the National Examinations. This effort required close collaboration with the MOE national office Examination Director General and Director Generals in all of the 18 Governorates. This became a challenging undertaking because many of these newly installed Director Generals had no allegiance to the national MOE. Efforts were required to apply MOE examination policy consistently throughout the country and this was effectively accomplished. Leadership and coordination with the US military and MOE counterparts by the CPA/USAID resulted in the successful administration of the national examinations.

In close cooperation with Iraqi nationals and the Coalition Provisional Authority, USAID is restoring critical infrastructure, delivering healthcare and education services, expanding economic opportunities, and improving governance in Iraq.