



# IRAQ

## The Current Situation

Iraq stands at an important juncture in 2010. The broadly credible and vigorously contested national elections held in March were an important milestone, but also underscored the persistent fault lines within Iraqi society. Once formed, the new government will face a myriad of challenges such as addressing major outstanding political disputes, providing effective governance and reintegrating Iraq into the region. On the security front, the achievements of the last few years have been largely maintained as U.S. troops withdrew from Iraqi urban centers in 2009. However, Iraqi Security Forces will be heavily tested after the expected U.S. drawdown in August. The recent resurgence of mass casualty attacks underscores the underlying fragility of the situation.

Although the U.S. role in Iraq is diminishing, the work for Iraq in reconstruction and nation-building is in many ways just beginning. The past seven years have been dedicated to stabilizing the country and creating legitimacy for the Iraqi government. These are still crucial challenges, but there will be a shift in the nature of international support to Iraq towards civilian technical assistance for initiatives such as capacity-building programs and delivery of essential services. A lot has been invested in Iraq, and a withdrawal without proper support for Iraqi institutions could threaten the important gains that have been made.

## Going Forward: USIP in Iraq

Since 2004, USIP has maintained a permanent field mission in Iraq, with an outstanding Iraqi and American staff who provide essential on-the-ground support to USIP's programs. Experts in Baghdad and Washington implement projects aimed at:

- **Promoting moderation and reconciliation;**
- **Strengthening governance and civil society;**
- **Giving the next generation a stake in peace and stability**

## Promote Moderation and Reconciliation

*USIP is building on its successful efforts to promote reconciliation by broadening the scope of dialogue at the grassroots and national levels.*

- **Network of Iraqi Facilitators:** Since 2004, USIP has trained over 120 individuals to conduct grassroots peacebuilding initiatives in the most violence-prone areas of Iraq as part of the Institute's Network of Iraqi Facilitators (NIF). Led by an active core of approximately 40 facilitators, the NIF brings together local government, tribal, religious and civil society leaders to prevent and resolve conflicts at the local level. Members are selected from across Iraq's geographic, ethnic and confessional landscape.
- **Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Reconciliation Support:** In 2007, USIP staff and NIF members, in coordination with the Mahmoudiyah PRT and the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, assisted tribal and local government leaders in forging a groundbreaking peace accord in the South Baghdad region formerly known as the "Triangle of Death." Local leaders and the U.S. military refer to the accord as a "turning point" in putting one of Iraq's most violent regions on a path to

lasting stability and peace. USIP continues to work with PRTs to produce similar successful results throughout some of Iraq's most conflicted areas. In Diyala province, USIP staff and facilitators are helping community leaders establish priorities to provide better basic services and enable the peaceful return of internally displaced persons to the region.

- **Confronting the Truth: Transitional Justice in Iraq:** USIP has distributed over 440 Arabic and Kurdish language copies of its film *Confronting the Truth*, which explores truth commissions and transitional justice around the world. In coordination with the Ministry of Human Rights, USIP supports screenings and dialogues surrounding the film, to spread awareness of the potential role of truth commissions as Iraq confronts its own painful past.
- **Facilitating Community Discussions on Religious Peacemaking in Iraq:** In 2009, USIP premiered an Arabic language version of the documentary film chronicling interfaith reconciliation in Nigeria, "The Imam and the Pastor." The film resonated deeply with religious leaders in attendance from all 18 of Iraq's provinces who requested its broad dissemination. USIP is now developing a curriculum to accompany screenings and training for religious leaders to facilitate community discussions on religious reconciliation and pluralism.
- **Preventing Media Incitement to Violence:** USIP's Center of Innovation for Media, Conflict and Peacebuilding, continues to work with Iraqi government officials, media regulators and private sector media stakeholders to mitigate inflammatory coverage of conflict in Iraq. In addition to supporting independent regulatory efforts to counter incitement, USIP will work with Iraqi media to build self-regulatory capacities and resources, such as the "User Guidelines for Preventing Media Incitement to Violence in Iraq - Elections Edition". These guidelines, developed in collaboration with Iraqi media professionals, are designed to encourage conflict-sensitive coverage of elections and were distributed to media and government offices prior to national elections in March 2010.
- **National Dialogue:** USIP for several years has contributed its expertise and convening skills to a national dialogue among Iraqi parliamentarians focused on reconciliation issues. Organized principally by the Italian nongovernmental organization Ipalmo, this dialogue has improved inter-sectarian and inter-ethnic understanding, moderated political positions and helped to open a path towards a more formal reconciliation process both in parliament and in Iraqi society.

## Strengthen Governance and Civil Society

*Institutional capacity-building is essential to Iraq's long-term stability. USIP projects aim to bolster Iraqi institutional capacity and strengthen civil society organizations.*

- **Toolkit for Collaborative Problem-Solving: Focus on Women:** USIP is implementing a three-phased project to provide Iraqi women leaders with tangible leadership/management skills, enable coalition-building and forge a shared vision for Iraq. The project targets leaders from the parliament, provincial councils and civil society, building their individual and collective capacities to solve problems and improve services at the local, regional and national levels.
- **Strategic Economic Needs and Security Exercise (SENSE):** Well over a thousand senior Iraqi decision-makers have benefited from this interactive, computer-supported program that teaches negotiation, coalition-building, and effective resource allocation skills. This intensive 5-day program is designed to encourage cooperation and coordination across government and civil society institutions. Managed by USIP's Baghdad office, the SENSE program is staffed and delivered by and for Iraqis.
- **Property and Land Policies:** Iraq is estimated to have 2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) whose plight is an ongoing flashpoint for violence as they seek to return to their homes and recover property. USIP is bringing together senior Iraqi officials, civic leaders

and international experts to assist the Iraqi government in developing and implementing a strategy to enable the safe and durable return of Iraq's displaced community. USIP's Network of Iraqi Facilitators is working to increase public awareness of services offered by the government and is implementing projects locally to help mitigate violence.

- **Reintegrating Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) through Media:** In support of its initiative to help the Iraqi government design sound property policies and effective public information campaigns about services available to IDPs, USIP is collaborating with Iraqi media partners to produce a series of public service announcements (PSAs). The project is designed to foster public awareness about the daily challenges faced by IDPs, thus facilitating their safe return.
- **The Justice System and Judicial Independence Initiative:** USIP has played an instrumental role in helping create the Iraqi Committee on Judicial Independence (ICJI), a consortium of representatives from the Ministries of Human Rights and Justice, the judiciary, the legal community, civil society organizations, academia and the media across Iraq. USIP's legal experts provide technical assistance to help ICJI develop sound consensus-based policies and advocacy strategies to promote judicial independence. Separately, USIP has worked with Iraq's national and regional judiciaries to improve the effective administration of justice in Iraq.
- **Protecting Minority Rights:** USIP is working with the Council of Representatives, Iraqi minority leaders and civil society organizations to identify challenges to minority communities and develop strategies to protect their rights and interests.
- **USIP Grants in Iraq:** USIP's grant program is a well-respected source of funding and support among Iraqi civil society organizations that aim to resolve conflict and promote peace. USIP has funded 61 projects in Iraq since 2004, and will grant an additional \$1.2 million to Iraqi organizations in 2010. USIP assists organizations throughout the application process, and places heavy emphasis on monitoring and evaluation to ensure maximum efficiency and impact.

### **Giving the Next Generation a Stake in Peace and Stability**

*The next generation in Iraq faces the challenge of transcending the effects of their recent past, and embracing democratic values and human rights. USIP projects help Iraqi youth emerge from the cycle of violence by giving them a stake in peace and stability.*

- **Iraqi National Civic Education Development Project:** USIP is facilitating cooperation between government education officials from federal Iraq and the Kurdistan region and providing technical assistance in strengthening civic education in Iraqi elementary and middle schools. In 2010, USIP will complete a Civic Education Teacher's Manual and begin providing teacher-training for Civic Education teachers from across Iraq.
- **Developing Peace and Human Rights Educators:** USIP is helping to develop the field of peace and human rights in higher education in Iraq through teacher training, developing and disseminating curricular resources, fostering academic research, and strengthening linkages between academics and civil society. In 2010 and 2011, USIP's cadre of educators will begin training fellow academics in effective teaching methodologies.
- **Peace Media for Iraqi Youth:** Through a multimedia peacebuilding program for Iraqi youth, USIP and its local partners aim to actively engage the next generation of Iraqi peacebuilders. In 2009, 30 Iraqi teens from across the country participated in a series of challenges that were filmed as a 30-minute documentary entitled "Salam Shabab" ("Peace Youth"). Aired on three Iraqi television channels in early 2010, the program also featured a parallel social networking Web site (<http://salamshabab.com>) to enable the youth participants to connect with their peers

and to share their peacebuilding experiences. Based on the pilot documentary, the "Salam Shabab" team will produce a 6-10 episode TV series to expand the community of young Iraqis seeking to bring peace to their country.

### **Lessons Learned**

Drawing from exit and post-deployment interviews conducted by USIP of Americans returning from Iraq, the Institute produced an award-winning DVD on "The Iraq Experience" in 2004. The Institute is now incorporating such best practices and lessons learned, from Iraq and elsewhere, into a series of courses being taught at its Academy for International Conflict Management and Peacebuilding.

### **Distance Learning**

In a parallel effort to the Academy, the Institute has launched a series of online courses for distance learning. The first of these courses presents an introduction to conflict analysis, utilizing analytical tools and illustrative case studies. It is now available in Arabic, for use in Iraq and elsewhere. An Arabic-language version of an online course on interfaith conflict resolution is currently being developed; future courses in negotiation and mediation will also be made available in Arabic.

### **Policy Focus**

USIP was the facilitating organization for the Iraq Study Group, which was a forward-looking, independent assessment of the current and prospective situation on the ground in Iraq and how it affects the surrounding region as well as U.S. interests. Following the success of the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group in 2006, USIP continues to convene regular expert working groups to discuss policy options for mitigating the present challenges faced in Iraq. In-house research fellows regularly publish articles, books and option papers are furnished to the public.



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