



For Immediate Release
 November 10, 2007
 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Event connects contractors, supports Iraqi businesswomen

By Shahrazad and S. Ahmed
 Gulf Region Division



Attendees respond to a question with a show of hands during the Nov. 3 Contracting Training & Business Networking Day held in the Baghdad International Zone. (USACE photo by Shahrazad)

BAGHDAD, Iraq—The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq and the Joint Contracting Command-Iraq/Afghanistan hold various Iraqi contractor meetings to help local businesses with networking with other contractors and to train Iraqi vendors how the search the U.S. Government

website for solicitations, how to fill out required applications and forms and to become familiar with the reply to tenders.

The Nov. 3 event held in Al-Rasheed hotel here in the international zone was the sixth contractor training and business opportunity day organized this year by the

USACE Gulf Region Division's capacity and development office. The November event was funded by the Taha-Kubba Group and attracted 85 Iraqi vendors, including 20 businesses owned by women.

Through these forums GRD seeks to facilitate networking and to serve as a liaison between U.S. companies and Iraqi vendors. Among those attending were representatives from the Air Force Center for Environmental Excellence, NIAC, Stanley Baker Hill, Laguna Construction, Kellogg Brown and Root, Wazn Company, Armor Group, USAID, MSI, *Izdihar* (prosperity), *Inma* (development), Provincial Reconstruction Teams, Embedded PRTs, many Non-Governmental Organizations and Iraqi contractors.

Scott Johnson, the local Partner Coordinator for *Inma* organization said, "It's very important for business people to continue to get together like this." He said it is especially valuable as Iraq is slowly getting back on its feet and people are returning to their homes.

Azza Humadi, women's issues coordinator with Capacity Development at the Gulf Region Division has been organizing similar forums for business leaders for several years. In addition to being inclusive of Iraqi business women, Capacity Development offers additional outreach and training efforts focused on the economic empowerment of Iraqi women. These events are highly appreciated by the Iraqi business women, who say they feel that they become stronger because of the program. One Iraqi woman who owns a start up company said, "It is a small company but it will grow! When I first started my job as a contractor, I started with GRD and JCC-I/A. They helped me a lot to gain experience and achieve success. That was great start for me. The support was distinct for the Iraqi women."

The Iraqi business women's community

continues to evolve to meet the need according to Humadi. She says the Iraqi business woman has improved her ability to challenge the conditions and work confidently on construction projects aimed at building a new Iraq.

Another woman Iraqi contractor, Basima said, "The GRD and JCC-I/A made a great job for our country and for us as contractors within the last three years. I myself with my company achieved many contracts, exactly 39, until now. Only three of them I could not complete."

Basima said she established her company in 2004 but did not successfully bid any U.S. government contracts until mid-2005. She credits the training and networking program developed by GRD and JCC-I/A and efforts of women's issues coordinator Humadi with her success. She credits the contractor meetings for much of the growth of her business. "Before, I worked only by myself, where as now I have six people working with me as permanent and many others as temporary depending on the volume and the type of the contract we work."

Larry Stanley, procurement manager for KBR said the conference was rewarding. "We were able to meet with many Iraqi suppliers and fully anticipate doing much business with many of them," he said.

The Joint Contracting Command – Iraq/Afghanistan and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division awarded \$20 million in 60 reconstruction contracts to Iraqi woman owned businesses for the month of October 2007. In September, women owned businesses received 154 contracts worth \$20.5 million, and in August, 160 contracts in excess of \$18.5 million.

Note: Shahrazad is a Public Affairs specialist with the Gulf Region Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Iraq. For more information, contact Grant Sattler, public affairs specialist at 54-665-1233 or email requests to CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil. For more information on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq, visit www.grd.usace.army.mil.