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## *Capacity Development among the key building blocks for a renewed Iraq*

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Workers clean before beginning repairs at the Mussayib water treatment plant. (USACE photo)

**TALLIL, Iraq**—Part of the challenge of the U.S. reconstruction effort in Iraq is to ensure that new and rehabilitated infrastructure facilities remain in good working order and don't fall into disrepair over time.

Operations and maintenance were given short shrift during the prior regime. Overcoming this legacy of neglect is essential to protecting the investment made in rebuilding Iraq. And enhancing the capacity of Iraqis to keep their infrastructure in good working order is a key element in this quest.

A focus on capacity building in Iraq is not new. But as Iraq Transition Assistance Office Director Mark Tokola noted in Sep-

tember, it is coming into higher profile as the era of big-U.S. financed projects fades and increased attention is paid to trying to give the Iraqis what they need to maintain the many public facilities built and rehabilitated by the U.S.

The sustainability theme can be found running through a number of initiatives undertaken on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects.

Take the Mussayib Water Treatment Plant Rehabilitation project in Babil Province. The main emphasis of this capacity development initiative is to develop the ability of the Director General in charge of water and his staff to manage the installation, commissioning and maintenance of water network systems, said Fitsum Kebede, a project engineer with USACE. Paid for by Commander's Emergency Relief Program funds, the project is rehabilitating a pre-existing water treatment plant.

Key objectives are to provide technical training and repair parts and to oversee the water treatment plant workforce in repairing the plant, said Kebede, who also cited the goals of maximizing job opportunities for local Iraqis, assuring good quality of workmanship, and meeting safety requirements. And yes, delivering a fully operational water treatment plant at the end of the process.

Capacity development also is part of the effort to bring on line a batch of new health clinics, called primary healthcare

centers (PHCs). Many of these PHCs are nearing completion in the southern Iraq provinces. And Robin Parks, a health care project manager with the Corps' Gulf Region South District, said the Corps is making an investment in the future through a facilities transition engineer program.

Under this program, she said, Iraqis are trained and paid to work with contractors on PHC jobs to learn systems and preventive maintenance techniques in the expectation they will be retained by provincial authorities to work on PHC operations and maintenance after the centers open. The initiative includes new hospital projects.

"We have hired about 25 for the PHCs and we plan to hire three for the Maysan Surgical Hospital and three for the Musayib Maternity Hospital when construction starts" on those hospitals," Parks said. "This is a capacity building initiative. And two months after a facility is turned over to the local MoH (Ministry of Health), the engineer is also transferred over and begins to work for the MoH as the engineer for that facility.

"Their job is to work with the various contractors working at the site to learn the 'ins and outs' of their assigned facility," she added. "They take all training that is given, either formal or on-the-job."

The Nasiriyah Water Treatment Plant has been turned over to Iraqi authorities, but contractor personnel are staying on site until Dec. 10 to provide oversight of Iraqi personnel who are now operating and maintaining all equipment and facilities associated with the plant, according to Navy Cmdr. Mike Lang, officer in charge of the Corps' Adder Area Office.

In its oversight role, Lang said, the contractor is charged with watching operations at the main plant and all associated facilities and providing the Ministry of Water and Public Works with suggestions on operations and maintenance items.

There is also a water sector sustainment program where technical instruction is provided to Iraqis in the classroom and on-the-job training is provided at small water projects and rural water compact unit facilities throughout Iraq. And in the electricity field, training programs are offered for Iraqis in Jordan on a wide variety of topics ranging from contract law to protection from electrical shock and more such training within Iraq is being planned.



Workers begin initial work on rehabilitating a clarifier at the Mussayib water treatment plant. (USACE photo)

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