



DGTTF IRAQ 2006-07:

POST-CONSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT TO DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES

BACKGROUND:

Development projects in Iraq face severe challenges due to high levels of violence and sectarian conflict which continue to threaten the political stability of the country. Public administration is directly affected by this environment. War, two decades of international sanctions and the policy of the interim US led government to remove all civil servants who were formerly associated with the previous ruling party have left the Iraqi civil service severely understaffed, under-resourced and poorly equipped to deliver public services.

In an effort to move away from the excessively centralized nature of the public administration under the previous regime, the 2005 Constitution had provisions on political and administrative decentralization through a process of devolving power to the governorates [18 in total], but without specific guidelines on implementation.

Engaging the political leadership and middle management of governorates in order to strengthen their participative planning skills was therefore of particular importance to an expanding civil service that was learning anew how to deal with its diversity following years of Baathist dominance. Iraq's governance reform efforts thus ran in parallel to concurrent efforts to establish a legitimate, representative and accountable government on national and local levels.

CATALYTIC & INNOVATIVE:

In order to support the ability of governorates to perform their newly assigned roles as envisaged by the Constitution, the DGTTF-supported project focused on

a detailed needs assessment of the capacity of local authorities to deliver services to the local population in response to the constitutional provision.

A nationwide needs assessment was commissioned to a group of local experts, on the basis of which a capacity development Action Plan based on best practices [e.g. UN-HABITAT, ISO standards] was devised. The Action Plan was formulated to address the capacity gaps identified during the needs assessment, and ISO standards were recommended for various training activities.

The initial needs assessment funded by the DGTTF project fed directly into the Support to Decentralization and Local Governance project which was later developed with a much larger budget [USD 6 million]. The Action Plan was also adopted by the MMPW as its training plan.

LESSONS LEARNED:

The project confirmed the relevance of the DGTTF to crisis countries. A relatively small financial allocation contributed significantly to a strategic area and was instrumental in building up a much larger development intervention.

In addition, in a context where post-conflict reconstruction is a priority, involving local actors from at an early stage on restoring basic services provides opportunities for building trust which can later be capitalized on as more sensitive areas of programming involving participation and

accountability are developed.

The project also benefitted significantly from using Iraqi experts. This projected a sense of national ownership vis-à-vis local authorities and promoted sustainability and the development of national capacity. In this particular case, and given the highly volatile security situation, the local experts, with their expertise and network, had a critical comparative advantage over external consultants.

Investments:

- USD 100.000 from DGTTF
- USD 6 million mobilized later.

Partners:

- Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works [MMPW]
- Ministry of Municipalities of the Kurdistan Regional Government

For more information:

- <http://www.undp.org/governance/library.shtml>
- <http://www.undp.org/oslocentre>
- DGTTF Coordinator: dgttfmanager@undp.org
- OGC: oslo.governance.centre@undp.org