



FACT SHEET

U.S. COMMITMENT TO WOMEN IN IRAQ

“The women of Iraq’s courage and resolve are hopeful examples to all who seek to restore Iraq’s place among the world’s greatest civilizations. Their efforts inspire individuals throughout the Middle East who seek a future based on equality, respect, and rule of law. By working together, we will achieve our mutual goals and bring the promise of hope and security to Iraq and the world.”

—President George W. Bush,
July 9, 2003
Message to “Voices of Iraqi Women
Conference” in Baghdad.

The capture of Saddam Hussein on December 13, 2003 was greeted by many Iraqi women with joyful relief. As one woman reported from an Iraqi women’s conference taking place in Amman, Jordan, “Almost all broke into tears and sobs that the man who had managed to reach into each individual’s personal life and rip it apart by killing their husbands, sons and fathers -- raping and maiming their women -- was brought to justice.”

The United States is working with women in Iraq on programs that will broaden their political and economic opportunities and increase women and girls’ access to education and health care. In early 2003, the United



Students in Bagdad carry boxes of new school bags.

USAID Photo, 2003

States committed approximately \$2.5 billion in humanitarian and reconstruction aid to Iraq. In November 2003, Congress approved President Bush’s request for an additional \$18.7 billion over the coming 18 months. Some of these

funds will be used to restore Iraq’s infrastructure, while other portions are allotted to democracy-building, economic development, employment, medical, and educational needs, with full attention to the equal participation of women.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY

WOMEN AND THE NEW IRAQI FUNDAMENTAL LAW: In November 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and the Iraqi Governing Council agreed to a process to restore Iraq’s sovereignty, beginning with a fundamental law leading to a permanent constitution. They agreed that a bill of rights would ensure equal rights for all Iraqis regardless of gender, sect, and ethnicity. While the United States was disappointed that no women were appointed to the initial preparatory committee for drafting a constitution, we are strongly encouraging Iraqis to ensure that women and women’s rights are included in all facets of Iraq’s political transition.

IRAQI WOMEN IN GOVERNING, LOCAL AND MUNICIPAL

COUNCILS: With strong U.S. support, the Iraqi Governing Council, created in July 2003, included three women among its 25 members. Salimah al-Khaffagi was appointed to the Council in January 2004, replacing Dr. Akila Al-Hashimi, who was tragically assassinated in September 2003. Other women in key positions include Nasreen Sideek Barwari, the Minister of Public

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Works and Rend Al-Rahim, the Principal Representative of Iraq to the United States. Six out of the 37 members of the Baghdad City Council are women, over 80 women serve on neighborhood and district councils around the capital, and many others have been elected to district, local and municipal councils in other regions. The United States continues to encourage greater representation for women in Iraq's political institutions.

POLITICAL WORKSHOPS FOR WOMEN: In October 2003, hundreds of women activists attended a conference in Sulaimaniyah to establish a national women's umbrella organization that will serve as an overall clearinghouse, watchdog and advocacy group. Over 200 women community leaders participated in the *Heartland of Iraq* women's conference, in October 2003, at the University of Babylon in Hillah. In July 2003, Under Secretary Paula Dobriansky traveled to Baghdad to take part in *The Voice of Women in Iraq* conference, co-hosted by the CPA. More than 70 Iraqi women participated.

WOMEN'S CENTERS: The CPA is working with local women's groups to establish nine centers for women in Baghdad to provide educational programs, job skills training, rights awareness seminars, and mentoring programs. The newly renovated Fatima Zahra Women's Center in Hillah offers training in job skills, finance, political advocacy, legal services and abuse protection and safety. The United States



Iraqi women meet at the women's rights center in Hillah to discuss training programs.

USAID Photo, 2003

is also renovating women's centers in Karbala, Najaf, Al Kut, Diwaniyah, and Sulaimaniyah.

WOMEN SECURITY OFFICERS: Nearly 100 women have joined the police, prison guard and security forces. The CPA is developing new programs, including one aimed at recruiting more women to work as private security guards.

MEDIA TRAINING: The United States supports an Iraqi Women's Oral History Project. The project trains Iraqi women journalists in video-documentary techniques, the collection of oral histories from eyewitnesses and survivors of atrocities against women by the Saddam regime, and the production of a 50-minute documentary.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY



Iraqi women practice their computer skills at the Fatima Al-Zahra Center for Women's Rights in Hillah, one hour south of Bagdad.

USAID Photo, 2003



JOB SKILLS: The United States supports a number of women's job training projects. For example, the Women's Forum in Baghdad provides courses in health care, computer skills, dress making, and, eventually, a public library and English lessons.

INTEGRATION INTO THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC

COMMUNITY: The United States sponsored a delegation of Iraqi women leaders to attend the *Global Summit of Women* held in Marrakesh, Morocco in June 2003, and plans to include Iraqi women in the *Partnership for Learning* conference in Istanbul in 2004.

ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS: The United States has given \$6.5 million to local women's groups, including non-governmental, community and professional organizations. One example is the *New Horizons of Iraq*, a businesswomen's group, which meets weekly at the Baghdad Community Center.



HEALTHCARE

VACCINATIONS AND

NUTRITION: The United States, supported by the Iraqi Ministry of Health and UNICEF, has spent

almost \$5 million for 30 million doses of vaccines for children and pregnant women since July 2003. A \$2 million nutrition program has ensured that more than 100,000 pregnant women and nursing mothers and malnourished children under five years of age have received high protein biscuits.

TRAINING OF NURSES AND MIDWIVES: A grant to the Iraqi Nursing Association will support the recruitment and training of hundreds more women nurses and the purchase of new uniforms, bed linens and nurses' kits. Currently, there are only 300 trained and licensed women nurses in Iraq.



Health care services to women and children remain a top priority.

USAID Photo, 2003

EDUCATION



Students from the Hala Bint Khuwaylid secondary girl's school sign for and receive school bags.

USAID Photo, 2003

Schools in a Box that include furniture and classroom equipment have been distributed.

TEACHER TRAINING: Four hundred primary and secondary school teachers have already received the *Master Teacher Trainer* certification with another 800 to follow in the short-term, and tens of thousands over the long-term.

BABYLON UNIVERSITY DORMS: The United States is providing \$76,000 for the University of Babylon for the rehabilitation of two women's dorms, which enabled female students to return to classes.

HIGHER EDUCATION: Five grants valued over \$15 million were awarded to strengthen partnership between American and Iraqi Universities.

SCHOOLS: The United States has renovated more than 1,993 schools, enabling approximately 5.1 million students to resume their education

in October 2003. Five million books are being printed and distributed. Approximately 1.5 million *Student Kits*, 140,000 *Teacher Kits*, and over 10,100

January 20, 2004. Text versions are available online at U.S. Department of State, Office of International Women's Issues. (<http://www.State.gov/g/wil>). Please check periodically for updates.

POWELL MEETS WITH SEVERAL IRAQ WOMEN ACTIVISTS



US Department of State Photo, 2003

Secretary Powell met with several Iraqi women activists on April 23 in the Department of State, Washington DC. The women briefed the Secretary on the most critical needs for women and children in liberated Iraq. With the Secretary and later on the same day in an expanded meeting hosted by Under Secretary for Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky, with the representatives of interested NGOs, Human Rights organizations and USG officials, the women asked that priority be given to restore the educational sector, and to improve health care and social services for women and children, to foster political participation by women through training and exchanges, judicial and legal reform and human rights guarantees.

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT BUSH TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE VOICE OF WOMEN IN IRAQ CONFERENCE

JULY 9, 2003

I send greetings to all those participating in the Voice of Women in Iraq Conference.

Iraq's road to recovery from dictatorship to democracy will take time. The ability, strength, and determination of all Iraqi citizens, including the women of Iraq, will play a critical role in building an Iraq that is peaceful, prosperous, and democratic.

I commend all those attending this important conference for your strong commitment to creating an Iraq where the benefits of freedom and opportunity are available to all citizens. The women of Iraq's courage and resolve are hopeful examples to all who seek to restore Iraq's place among the world's greatest civilizations. Their efforts also inspire individuals throughout the Middle East who seek a future based on equality, respect, and rule of law. By working together, we will achieve our mutual goals and bring the promise of hope and security to Iraq and the world.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a successful conference.



Under Secretary for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky delivers the President's Message at the Voice of Women in Iraq Conference.

White House Photo, 2003