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# Best Practices Database

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## Baghdad Neighbourhood Rehabilitation, Baghdad

*Iraq*

Best Practice

New for 2002

### Categories:

Environmental Management:

- environmental health
- pollution reduction
- urban greening

Infrastructure, Communications, Transportation:

- safe water provision
- sanitation
- waste-management and treatment

Urban Governance:

- human resources and leadership development
- partnership development
- resource mobilization

**Level of Activity:** Neighbourhood

**Ecosystem:** Arid/Semi-Arid

### Summary

After more than 10 years of sanctions, local governments of Iraq have no longer been able to meet the housing needs (housing, water supply, sanitation, solid waste collection etc.) of their people. To put the concept of community participation into practice, pilot schemes of essential remedial measures have been undertaken in four low-income neighbourhoods in Baghdad. These areas are characterised by severe dilapidation of the living environment, infrastructure and services. The pilot schemes aim at improving the living conditions in human settlements in Iraq through the support of NGOs and the inhabitants themselves, thus reducing the burden on the municipalities. UNOHCI and UNDP supported the project with additional funds to promote this pilot concept and to train the residents on self-management and local leadership, to improve and maintain the quality of services provided to them, with the help of the newly established service co-operatives. In addition to institutionalizing this concept within the municipalities, for this purpose information and awareness section was established at each municipality. The project also provided some elements as income-generating tools for the co-operatives thus providing job opportunities for the residents of the target areas.

ECHO-Humanitarian Aid Office allocated further funds to the project for rehabilitation of water and sanitation services that served the target neighbourhoods and adjacent areas. The Aid office also supported and improved the capacity of the Baghdad Municipality to upgrade and improve the environmental conditions in which the people are living, addressing the immediate needs of the targeted communities, and reducing health hazards, utilising the new supplies from the oil-for-food programme

## **Narrative**

### **SITUATION BEFORE THE INITIATIVE BEGAN**

The residential areas of once modern and sophisticated towns were in a sad state. Streets with large potholes collected raw sewage from overflowing septic tanks, uncollected garbage and rubble accumulated in open spaces with no attempts to manage the menace. Electrical, water supply and sewage systems, rendered inoperable during the Gulf hostilities and only partially restored, were unable to cope with the demand. Services were all but cut off by the municipalities.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIORITIES**

All Iraqi settlements were affected. A number of consultations and workshops were held with the community residents to identify, list the problems and priorities in the selected settlements and to propose solutions to them. The main problems were; declined social services, poor sewage disposal, inadequate and unsafe water supply, poor or non-existent garbage collection; devastated health infrastructure; the crises of the educational institutions; the lack of recreational areas; dilapidated schools; and broken down Primary Health Care Centres.

During planning for solutions the communities had to agree to their contributions, while the required services from Baghdad municipality in both solving the problems and in maintenance of those solutions were jointly identified.

### **FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES**

The objectives and strategies were based on the premise that, despite severe constraints, much can be done to improve the living conditions in human settlements in Iraq through the support of NGOs and the inhabitants of the deteriorating neighbourhoods. The municipal authorities, recognising the obligation to halt the degradation and to protect the neighbourhood infrastructure would be able to focus their support on these technical tasks, which the communities are unable to improve.

The underlying idea was to support community participation in undertaking neighbourhood rehabilitation. The communities and the municipalities were brought together through joint workshops and meetings to form a lasting partnership. The establishments of co-operatives by the communities in co-ordination with the co-operative federation to work as focal points, and the establishment of a Task Force for neighbourhood rehabilitation on the Municipality's side were seen as significant strategic moves towards co-operation to achieve sustainability. In the prevailing circumstances it was acknowledged that both partners would need support and capacity building to be able to do-and continue doing - their respective parts of the work.

### **MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES**

In the chosen areas, neglected with a very sophisticated infrastructure networks (comprising water supply, sewerage, drainage, electricity and pumping stations) were hardly functioning and needed more inputs than both the communities and municipalities. Thence the request for external funds and spares, to which UNDP, OIP and ECHO responded. They agreed to finance the pilot initiative from humanitarian contributions for Iraq. Technical and human resources were mobilized through recruitment of a local executive team of engineers. Baghdad Municipality appointed a co-ordinating team and local NGOs helped in selecting volunteers from among the residents. LJM-HABITAT brought in knowledge in community participation and technical advice and other UN projects were approached for other humanitarian activities within the target areas.

Neighbourhood task groups were formed for implementing block-by-block activities. The executive team and municipal engineers identified scarce local municipality equipment to support the community activities and planned for other necessary support to organize the community contribution

at block level. Door-to-door surveys were carried out to understand the social fabric of the target communities disseminate the spirit of community participation.

A publicity consultant followed up the progress during all stages of implementation and helped plan and develop educational campaigns through posters and by TV spots. A solid waste consultant was provided by the Municipality to determine the problems in waste disposal, to draft recommendations for improvement and to look at recycling as a source of income, which proved to be very rewarding money wise but because of environmental hazards it was not implemented.

## PROCESS

There were two major challenges to meet. First, to win the trust of the communities and to convince them that they stand a better chance in getting the Municipality's attention to their problems, if they participate in keeping their living environment clean and green. The second one was to convince the Baghdad Municipality, that with community participation its work will be less, easier and more rewarding and that resources directed to those communities, who respond, would be better and more economically used.

Given the poor urban living conditions due to breakdown of services and maintenance the communities had resorted to apathy and blamed the Municipality for the lack of services and the dilapidation of their living environment and services. On the other hand the Municipality's very few functioning vehicles, plant, machinery and equipment, affected the Municipality's ability to serve the target areas. The state of mind on both sides was therefore incongruous to partnership without intensive training, which had a strong resemblance to counselling. The psychological suitability, patience and ability to speak to, listen and deal with the communities were proven to be of utmost importance for the Site Teams. Likewise, changing attitudes within the Municipality's staff by the Project Management required seniority, diplomacy, and perseverance patience and negotiation skills. Preparations for consultations and workshops with both parties required time and careful planning.

There was no prior preparatory work with the target communities. The Executive Team to bring the partners together - to make community participation happen - had to be sensitised, orientated and trained excessively first. If they were not, lack of sensitivity and a wrong approach could have ruined the entire effort. Further, they were expected to train the Municipality staff in dealing with the communities. As community participation had not been introduced earlier in Iraq, passing the message to the large population of the neighbourhoods (2200 households, about 22,000 people) was a major task. Sensitizing them on the benefits of community participation was not simple and could not be done rapidly. The people had been enjoying full services in the past and were angry of their discontinuation, making it more difficult to build trust in their would-be partner. The Municipality was well aware of this and looked down at the communities as arrogant and ungrateful people. Therefore both parties were approached carefully to make them more open to the idea of teaming up. Local NGOs were instrumental in persuading the communities to approach and accept the Municipality as a partner. Mutual trust among the municipal staff and the residents was then built up through joint meetings and activities in cleaning up the environment.

Slowly the initial problems were overcome. New horizons of dealing directly with the communities emerged, the communities realised that they could identify their problems and priorities, and can communicate with the municipalities for help, it was obvious that their willingness to participate in improving their neighbourhoods was increased. Baghdad Municipality's involvement in solving problems, identified by the communities, raised expectations of better co-operation and developed understanding of how to deal with the communities. The establishment of a co-operative service society by the on each site residents. Initially reluctant to understand the value of establishing such a society, is the proof that the message eventually got through.

The problems that remain to be solved are: (i) the limited human and material resources of Baghdad Municipality due to international sanctions; (ii) the difficulties and the time needed to deal with different establishments and public institutions; (iii) the right approach with Baghdad Municipality for

the means of empowering the new Focal Unit to be able to react to the communities' requests; and (iv) the impatience of the residents (who are unaware of some of these problems) in case of any delays in improving their living environment conditions (environment, health, economy, recreation, etc).

From the local government side, the Baghdad Municipality was the main partner to the communities. The local Municipalities at the locations of the sites joined later during works implementation, supplying materials, manpower and equipment.

## RESULTS ACHIEVED

Community participation has been introduced as a municipal service and maintenance tool and is working. Institutionalisation of the approach has started by the establishment of a focal UNIT at the Baghdad Municipality. The project areas are cleaner than the other surrounding neighbourhoods and sewage overflow is no longer a major nuisance. Environmental health has improved, the co-operative societies take care of their facilities and children play on clean playgrounds. Other neighbourhoods are now asking to join the project.

Engineering rehabilitation works were carried out to solve immediate problems. These works were carried out either by the Baghdad municipality or through the additional funds that were allocated to support Baghdad Municipality in the process of the installation of electromechanical equipment that increased the access to safe drinking water and decreased sewage flooding within the target areas and the neighbouring areas.

The project encouraged the establishment of community-based-organizations, civil society organizations, and other forms of non-governmental entities, which contributed to the efforts to reduce poverty and improve the living conditions in the target areas. The project also reviewed and adjusted its framework to respond to the special needs of people living in poverty and low-income people, and provided income generation opportunities to tackle unemployment and enhance sustainable livelihoods.

The impact, which showed satisfactory results, was measured through surveys carried out within the target areas on the resident's satisfaction, responsiveness of the municipalities towards the residents, visible evidence of improved environment (mainly disappearance of solid waste heaps, access to enough drinking water, no sewage overflow), community development, and responsiveness of the residents towards the municipalities.

## SUSTAINABILITY

In the current situation of very limited resources available for the Baghdad Municipality, continuation of external support to consolidate the project gains and to empower community- and support organizations is a prerequisite to sustainability. When the situation will improve and after further appropriate training in dealing with the communities, the Municipalities will be able to take over more responsibilities and replicate the process in other areas on their own.

The municipality of Baghdad (through the recently established Focal Unit) shall follow up with the local municipalities and the service co-operative societies at all sites to maintain the infrastructure and service networks. These include solid waste disposal, water supply, the cleaning of sewers and maintaining the pumping stations in order to ensure an acceptable environmental standard.

The communities will participate and be active in keeping their yards and open spaces clean, manage on-site solid waste disposal, keep up their new amenities and organise community involvement in neighbourhood management. The establishment of the co-operative societies is providing the necessary institutional tool to continue these activities. Income generating services and activities are planned, like production of low cost wear by the resident women and the establishment of co-operative funds for the welfare of all the residents during the hard times the country is passing through. The local representatives of the Iraqi Women's Federation will follow up the activities through visits to the

families in order to promote the sustainability of the community participation concept and to improve the social standard in the neighbourhoods. The Youth Federation will follow up the required upkeep and maintenance of the football fields, playgrounds and green areas. Representatives of the NGOs and prominent residents in each community will contact the local municipality for assistance in such required activities, which the community cannot perform alone.

To enhance the sustainability of the activities performed within the target areas, the project will strengthen work with communities and provide direct support to the newly established community organizations and support the established operational Focal Unit within the Baghdad Municipality.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Community participation is possible, successful, and can be used in Iraq to improve the living conditions considerably in urban neighbourhoods. However, the approach needs to be institutionalised and continuous training arranged to make it sustainable by the municipalities. The most positive thing is that the project opened new horizons in dealing directly with communities. In spite of all the problems encountered as stated above, the residents show very good response to any improvement in the services and the environment around them. Some residents were not able to participate in joint activities due to their difficult living conditions. However, they will be able to do so in the future through the co-operative service society. Due to economic hardships people tend to expect personal financial benefits for any service of co-operation. However, the improved living conditions have convinced the people that they have the power to change their own living environment if they have the will and if they organise themselves and that partnership and dialogue with the Municipalities are the keys for better access to services.

In spite of initial problems the residents show very good response to any improvement in the services and the environment around them. The Municipality has managed to gain some trust. The communities have understood that they can no longer depend on Baghdad Municipality for a major role in providing services, because of the poor condition of the Municipality's equipment, shortage of manpower and very limited maintenance budgets.

Allocating additional funds to support Baghdad Municipality in the process of the installation of the equipment received through the Memorandum of Understanding for water and sanitation services, as the neighbourhoods concerned. This will improve the health environment and enhance the efficiency of the concept of community participation.

## TRANSFERABILITY

The future of community participation in Iraq is dependent on political will. At the moment the will seems to be there, demonstrated by the acceptance of the project by the Government and the realization by the municipal authorities, that no other approach has yielded such positive results. An additional benefit is the changed attitude towards each other on both sides: the communities and municipalities have learned to work together.

The initial scheme is being planned to be replicated in other Baghdad neighbourhoods and will perhaps be repeated in other towns nation-wide. The concept of community participation, unknown before in Iraq, seems to take root in residential neighbourhoods, once the approach and its benefits have been understood. Good co-operation between the community and the Municipality of Baghdad resulted in regular garbage collection and sewerage cleaning. Benefits of co-ordination with other Agencies and NGOs have also been realized and can be of help in other localities.

The new approach can ensure planning for optimum use of the Municipalities' limited equipment as a complementary contribution to the neighbourhoods' efforts of self-help

## Key Dates

Â· December 1999 Establishment of Service Cooperatives

Â· January 2000 Establishment of Municipality's Focal Point

Â· December 2001 Establishment of Information and Municipal Awareness Section

Â· January 2002 Implementation of (TQMN) handbooks for the municipal staff

Â· January 2002 Tripartite review and evaluation of the project

## References

- A) Announcement of the establishment of the coop. in AI-Shulla City / Government of Iraq official gazette, No. 3 814, dated 21.02.2000, page No. 1 1.
- B) Announcement of cooperative election for permanent members in Saddam City/ Federation of Youth, AI-Ba'ath AI-Riyadhi, No.4523, dated 07.02.2000, page No. 4.
- C) Announcement of the establishment of the coop. in Saddain City / Government of Iraq official gazette, No. 3794, dated 04.10.1999, page No. 10.
- D) Report on the initiative in Saddam City/ Deputy Mayor for Technical Affairs, AI-Qadisia newspaper, No. 150, dated 2.10.1999, page No. 2.
- E) Report on the initiative in Saddam City/ Director General of Saddam City Municipality, Nabidh AI-Shabab newspaper, No. 190, dated 19.07.1999, page No. 4.
- F) TV spots taken from the educational posters prepared by the project team were shown on Government of Iraq TV channels, July- November 1999, 6:00- 10:00pm.
- G) A 9 min. film prepared for the participation in the Dubai International Award for Best Practices to Improve the Environment with project presentation CD.
- H) A 15 min. film covering the whole period of the project implementation (April 1999-December 2001).
- I) Three posters for the Environment Day celebration.
- J) Two articles in the widely spread weekly magazine (Alif-Ba) for two consecutive weeks.
- K) A 3min. TV spot about the project on the Iraqi Television.
- L) Another article in the widely spread weekly magazine (Alif-Ba).
- M) Article in AI-Zawra weekly newspaper.
- N) Article in Iraq Daily newspaper.
- O) New ten minutes film covering the activities of the pilot project and its extension.
- P) Two new educational posters on the proper use of water.

## ADDITIONAL PARTNERS

- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs: Administrative support.
- Local Cooperative Service Societies,
- local representatives of the community residents,
- The Federation of Iraqi Women: administrative and political support
- The Federation of Iraqi Youth and Students: Administrative and political support.
- United Nations Development programme (LTNDP): Financial and administrative support.
- United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF): Financial support.
- United Nations Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator (UNOHCI): financial support.
- Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO): Financial support.
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme/ UNHABITAT: Technical and administrative support.

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**Type of Organization:** Local Authority

## Partners

Baghdad Municipality/ Baghdad

**Type of Organization:** Local Authority  
**Type of Partner Support:** Financial Support

Ministry of Education/ Baghdad

**Type of Organization:** Central Government  
**Type of Partner Support:** Administrative Support

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs/ Baghdad

**Type of Organization:** Central Government  
**Type of Partner Support:** Administrative Support

## Financial Profile

YEAR	TOTAL BUDGET US \$	Partner A (% of the budget)	Partner B (% of the budget)	Partner C (% of the budget)
1999-2002	724,529	UNDP - 35.81%	GOI - In kind	Oip-64.19%
2000-2001	385,516	ECHO - 100%**	GOI - In kind	Â
2001-2002	781,456	ECHO - 100%**	GOI - In kind*	Â

\*Government of Iraq supplied some of the electromechanical equipment imported through the MOU.\*\* Implemented under project framework, the rehabilitation works directly related to the alleviation of the negative effects of the sewage overflow to the environment in the rehabilitated neighbourhoods

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