

Water, Education and Disability UNICEF
Agreement number 53998
AidWorks number INJ142

INDEPENDENT PROGRESS REPORT

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Aid Activity Summary

Aid Activity Name	Water, Education and Disability, UNICEF		
AidWorks initiative number	INJ142		
Commencement date	1 February 2010	Completion date	31 Dec 2012
Total Australian \$	\$11,110,600.00		
Total other \$	n/a		
Delivery organisation(s)	UNICEF		
Implementing Partner(s)	UNICEF		
Country/Region	Iraq		
Primary Sector	Health, Education, Disability		

Acknowledgments

The author thanks the AusAID and UNICEF staff who contributed their views and experiences via telephone interviews to assist with this progress review. She also thanks Geoff O'Keefe in AusAID Canberra for managing the review and Nick Martinez, ERF Canberra, for supporting the review process.

Author's Details

Karina Veal has an independent practice in education for development, advising national governments in developing countries, and international agencies. Main clients are UNESCO, ILO, UN Women, GIZ and AusAID. Karina Veal has a particular interest in reconstruction / redevelopment of education and training in countries recovering from conflict or disaster.

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Executive Summary

AusAID has provided AU\$11.1mill to UNICEF to deliver a national program across Iraq aimed at increasing access for children in primary education through two main measures:

- providing water and sanitation services and introducing hygiene education in 200 schools
- providing a child friendly experience based on appropriate policies to integrate children with disabilities in (largely the same) 200 schools.

The rationale for the program is twofold. Water and sanitation facilities in many Iraqi schools are extremely poor, and poor facilities impact negatively upon school attendance (especially for girls). Disability rates for children in Iraq appear to be much higher than the assumed standard rate in developing countries yet policies and strategies to allow these students to participate in mainstream education in Iraq are extremely limited.

The UNICEF program has been contracted to run for a 35-month period from 1 Feb 2010 to 31 December 2012. This independent progress review, conducted during March 2011 falls, therefore, just after 12 months of operation – and one third of the way through the full program cycle. On the evidence available so far, it is concluded that progress appears on track for the water and sanitation and hygiene (WASH) component, and behind schedule for the disability component. Delay in starting the disability component follows directly from delay in completion of an antecedent disability project.

Whilst this particular program (AidWorks #INJ142) is a 'new' program it builds upon work undertaken in two smaller, earlier projects implemented by UNICEF with AusAID support. One focussed on water, sanitation and hygiene interventions and the other on mainstreaming educational opportunities for disabled children and youths.

In early 2010 agreement was reached between UNICEF and AusAID for a new AU\$11.1mill integrated Water, Sanitation and Disability program to run from beginning of February 2010 to end December 2012. The experiences and research from the earlier projects underpin design and implementation of the 'new' program. The integrated program has two objectives, expressed as:

Objective 1: Increase access to water and sanitation services in targeted primary schools. This will include sustainable operations and maintenance, training and capacity building, and participatory hygiene education focusing on life skills.

Objective 2: Increase the inclusion of children with disabilities into the education sector, through the development of contemporary and inclusive policies, strategies, programming approaches and initiatives which will also seek to improve the quality of education for children with disabilities.

Each objective is addressed by separate project components that are largely independent of each other.

This progress review finds, on the basis of documentation provided, that:

- I. Relevance of the program is highly aligned to needs within Iraq and to Australian development priorities.
- II. The earlier WatSan project appears to have been substantially completed within time and resulted in improved WatSan facilities in underserved areas of Muthana and Erbil Governorates.
- III. The earlier disability project was not completed on time, and delays with that project have impacted upon the start date of the disability component of the new program.
- IV. Progress to date with the new program at the end of its first 12 months of operation reflects the status of the two earlier projects.
- V. The WASH component appears to be on track in terms of progress of activities undertaken and planned. Expenditure to date is low, but this is explained by the first year consisting largely of planning, with (more cost intensive) construction of WASH facilities at target schools set to commence.

VI. The disability component is clearly behind schedule. Whilst this is largely explained by the delay in the research findings, it may have been possible to have re-oriented the work plan and made a stronger start.

VII. Knowledge (by AusAID staff) of program history, processes and progress could be stronger with closer contract management throughout.

It is recommended that AusAID:

1. Step up oversight and contract management for the program: for example request missing reports, financial statements and risk management strategy.
2. Monitor expenditure patterns regularly and be in position to react early if program continues to be under-expended.
3. Continuously review progress, especially with disability component – will it make up time lost?
4. Commence discussions on longer-term sustainability – can Government of Iraq take over and manage nationally at end of AusAID/UNICEF period?

Evaluation Criteria Ratings

Evaluation Criteria	Rating (1-6)	Explanation
Relevance	6	The program is clearly targeted on areas of high need. The program has high alignment to EFA goals, MDG targets, Iraq UNDAF and goals within the Iraq National Development Strategy 2007-2010.
Effectiveness	4.5	At this point of implementation the program is not fully on track to achieve its stated objectives but the reasons for delay are explained and there is no reason at this stage to be unduly concerned.
Efficiency	3	It is difficult to make an assessment on the quality of financial and human resource utilisation for the project since so little data is available. The lack of data is itself a concern.
Sustainability	4	There is no indication yet of efforts to secure ongoing funding at the conclusion of the UNICEF/AusAID Agreement. Stronger commitment by Iraqi government and community partners would be a necessary step and there is little evidence so far of advances in this area.
Gender Equality	4.5	Both components of the program have the capacity to improve educational outcomes for girls and hence advance women's equality. For extra points, data on gender impact would be provided.
Monitoring & Evaluation	3	This is an area for improvement. The Agreement between AusAID and UNICEF stipulates various reporting requirements that do not appear to have been met by UNICEF. Nor does there appear to have been follow-up on these matters from AusAID.
Analysis & Learning	6	The program is based upon sound technical knowledge and continuous learning. UNICEF's education activities since 2007 have aimed to boost access to primary education and they have had a long involvement in the disability sector in Iraq. Their organisational experience and learning is brought to this program.

Rating scale: 6 = very high quality; 1 = very low quality. Below 4 is less than satisfactory.

Introduction

Preliminary Note

This is a review of a small (AU\$11.1million) program one third of its way through, being delivered in a dangerous and uncertain environment by implementing partners some distance away from management oversight in Bagdad, Amman and Canberra. It is being implemented in a country where the prevailing business culture tolerates high levels of corruption. This review is being undertaken as a desk review based upon documents of variable quality and clarity. No independent validation of results was possible, and the impact (if any) of this lack of validation upon review findings cannot be known.

Background to the Activity

AusAID has provided AU\$11.1mill to UNICEF to deliver a national program across Iraq aimed at increasing access for children in primary education through two main measures:

- providing water and sanitation services and introducing hygiene education in 200 schools
- providing a child friendly experience based on appropriate policies to integrate children with disabilities in (largely the same) 200 schools.

The rationale for the program is twofold:

- water and sanitation facilities in many Iraqi schools are extremely poor, and poor facilities impact negatively upon school attendance (especially for girls)
- disability rates for children in Iraq appear to be much higher than the assumed standard rate in developing countries (maybe as high as 14 per cent rather than assumed 10 per cent) yet policies and strategies to allow these students to participate in mainstream education in Iraq are extremely limited.

Educational attainment across Iraq is uneven; there are specific pockets where educational attendance rates are extremely low. Global experience shows that educational gains are made more easily in cities and in communities within mainstream culture. Achieving universal primary education requires implementing strategies to directly target marginalised communities outside of the mainstream if enrolment and attendance at school is to be encouraged. This AusAID funded, UNICEF delivered, program can be seen as part of a targeted approach to vulnerable communities and is very much in line with contemporary approaches to achieving EFA. For this it is highly commended.

The UNICEF program has been contracted to run for a 35-month period from 1 Feb 2010 to 31 December 2012. This independent progress review, conducted during March 2011 falls, therefore, just after 12 months of operation – and one third of the way through the full program cycle. On the evidence available so far, it is concluded that progress appears on track for the WASH component, and behind schedule for the disability component. Delay in starting the disability component follows directly from delay in completion of the antecedent disability project.

Whilst this particular program (AidWorks #INJ142) is a 'new' program it builds upon work undertaken in two smaller, earlier projects implemented by UNICEF with AusAID support. The two earlier projects ran from 1 February 2009 till 31 January 2011 and cost approximately AU\$3.2mill (together). One focussed on water, sanitation and hygiene interventions and the other on mainstreaming educational opportunities for disabled children and youths.

The earlier WatSan project focussed on community provision and was completed satisfactorily, however, it was decided to refocus future work on primary schools, rather than on communities. The earlier Disability project focussed on undertaking a household survey of

disability¹ with the objective of gaining greater insights into the prevalence and experience of children with disabilities in Iraq, and was subject to a number of delays. That research project is only now coming to completion. Whilst slower than anticipated, there is no evidence of any particular problems in its design or execution.

In early 2010 agreement was reached between UNICEF and AusAID for a new AU\$11.1mill integrated Water, Sanitation and Disability program to run from beginning of February 2010 to end December 2012. The experiences and research from the earlier projects underpin design and implementation of the 'new' program.

Objectives, components and progress to date

The integrated program has two objectives, expressed as:

Objective 1: Increase access to water and sanitation services in targeted primary schools. This will include sustainable operations and maintenance, training and capacity building, and participatory hygiene education focusing on life skills.

Objective 2: Increase the inclusion of children with disabilities into the education sector, though the development of contemporary and inclusive policies, strategies, programming approaches and initiatives which will also seek to improve the quality of education for children with disabilities.

Each objective is addressed by separate project components are largely independent of each other in terms of planning, implementation, staffing, budgets and first-level reporting. Collaboration between the two projects will occur when necessary, for example, choosing the 200 target schools is being undertaken by project staff from both components – selection being made from amongst the most needy of the 2,877 schools assessed with consideration to levels of water and sanitation and to the prevalence of children with disabilities.

The baseline assessment of 2,877 schools undertaken as part of the WASH component appears to be extremely rigorous and sound in its approach. It provides a body of data that can be revisited in future years for measurement of WASH progress and for other infrastructure projects. It is pleasing that efforts for such a baseline data have been made.

As mentioned in the evaluation findings below, progress to date appears to be on-track for the WASH component but significantly behind schedule with the disability component. Whilst the detailed data that will result from the AusAID funded CARA study will undoubtedly be very useful, it is not clear whether all possible steps have been taken to advance planning and development of the other components. The Disability project is ambitious, but sound in its conception. Iraq does not have a strong foundation on which to build the disability project. A multi-layered, multi-pronged approach is proposed, one which works simultaneously on infrastructure needs for children with disabilities, policies for education for children with disabilities, planning and implementing child-friendly schools able to appropriately support and teach children with disabilities, and attitude shifting of teachers, communities and education officials. Whether such an ambitious approach proves to be too difficult to implement within the time limits of the program remains to be seen.

Evaluation findings

This progress review finds, on the basis of documentation provided, that:

- I. Relevance of the program is highly aligned to needs within Iraq and to Australian development priorities.
- II. The earlier WatSan project appears to have been substantially completed within time and resulted in improved WatSan facilities in underserved areas of Muthana and Erbil Governorates.

¹ Through commissioning CARA, the UK-based Council Assisting Refugee Academics.

- III. The earlier disability project was not completed on time, and delays with that project have impacted upon the start date of the disability component of the new program.
- IV. Progress to date with the new program at the end of its first 12 months of operation reflects the status of the two earlier projects.
- V. The WASH component appears to be on track in terms of progress of activities undertaken and planned. Expenditure to date is low, but this is explained by the first year consisting largely of planning, with (more cost intensive) construction of WASH facilities at target schools set to commence.
- VI. The disability component is clearly behind schedule. Whilst this is largely explained by the delay in the research findings, it may have been possible to have re-oriented the work plan and made a stronger start.
- VII. Knowledge (by AusAID staff) of program history, processes and progress could be stronger with closer contract management throughout.

Evaluation Objectives and Questions

This Program is one of a number of Australian supported programs operating in Iraq. Australia's aid program is delivered in line with Iraq's national development strategy and UN appeals for humanitarian assistance. The strategy's four pillars are:

- Supporting agriculture
- Supporting public service governance
- Improving basic service delivery
- Supporting vulnerable populations.

This *Water in Schools and Education for Children with Disabilities* program is located under pillar three, and is the largest program in that pillar. Clearly there is also a strong link to pillar four.

Australia's total assistance to Iraq since 2003 is AU\$360 million including the current budget measure of AU\$165 million over three years to June 2011. Future funding for Iraq is unknown, though it is expected to scale down over time. The funding for this *Water in Schools and Education for Children with Disabilities* program is committed till end of 2012, when the current Agreement with UNICEF concludes. The results of this review will be one input into longer-term planning for the future of the program.

The purpose of this review is to provide an assessment of progress with the program at an early (one third) point in the program cycle.

The TOR (attached to this report) define the exercise as:

Objectives:

In accordance with AusAID Quality requirements, the Consultant will:

- a) Undertake an Independent Progress Review in respect of the Water in Schools and Education for Children with Disabilities in Iraq (UNICEF) program. This will involve assessment and rating of the progress of UNICEF's program against AusAID's evaluation criteria.
- b) Recommend actions that could be taken to improve future program outcomes, strategies and sustainability.

Evaluation Scope and Methods

This evaluation has been conducted as a desk review on the basis of program documents forwarded to the consultant, augmented by telephone interviews with desk officers and program managers in Canberra and Bagdad.

Key documents took some time to locate, and some desired documents were not available at all – it is presumed they have not been provided by UNICEF to AusAID. The dates and status of some documents provided were uncertain and it took considerable time to clarify the history and linkages of the program under review with the earlier AusAID funded projects. Closer contract management and document control, from AusAID, and closer attention to reporting, from UNICEF, would allow for greater clarity surrounding this program and its antecedents.

Two particularly useful documents used for this review are (i) Contribution Agreement #53998 between Australia and UNICEF and (ii) the first project report, being for period February 2010 – March 2011. It should be noted, however, that the copy of the Agreement provided to this reviewer is the copy provided to UNICEF for consideration rather than the signed copy. It is assumed for purposes of this review that no changes were made by UNICEF and that the agreement was signed as was sent.

The biggest assumption made throughout this review is that the reports provided are accurate in their reportage. Given the turnover of staff involved and the tolerance of corruption within Iraq it may be that not all progress is exactly as reported. However, the contents have been taken at face value since the reviewer has not been able to independently visit any of the program activities or independently validate any results.

This is clearly the greatest limitation of the desk review method, and this reviewer is keenly away of the possible impact upon accuracy of assessments made.

Evaluation Team

As a small desk review, there was only one single reviewer appointed to this task: Ms Karina Veal, independent consultant in education and development. Karina Veal has had no previous involvement in the AusAID funded program in Iraq and has no conflict of interest. Karina Veal is a senior consultant with significant experience in policy and program management within Australia before establishing her international practice in education and development. Karina Veal has worked with a number of countries emerging from conflict and disaster and is mindful of the extremely challenging environment in which this program is delivered and managed.

Evaluation Findings

The earlier WatSan project resulted in improved facilities in underserved areas of Muthana and Erbil Governorates. Results appear to be strong regarding infrastructure development but information is lacking regarding building commitment of government staff and conducting hygiene awareness training in schools. It appears that the project was merged into the new program, although separate final reports, financial and narrative, were not provided.

The earlier disability project was not completed on time, and delays with that project have impacted upon the start date of the disability component of the new program. There is no indication from documentation provided, or discussions held, of any particular problems with design or implementation of the household survey on disability – it has simply been slower than expected.

Progress to date with the new program at the end of its first 12 months of operation reflects the status of the two earlier projects.

The methodological approach taken by UNICEF and its focus on developing serious baseline data for both components, is sound and to be commended.

The WatSan component appears to be on track in terms of progress of activities undertaken and planned. Expenditure to date is low, but this is explained by the first year consisting largely of planning, with (more cost intensive) construction of WatSan facilities at target schools set to commence.

The disability component is clearly behind schedule, and below budget. Whilst this is largely explained by the delay in availability of the research findings a close watch on future progress is recommended.

Relevance

The program is highly relevant. The program is clearly targeted on areas of great need. Water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in many Iraqi schools have been assessed as poor², and this has an impact on school attendance, especially for girls. Disability rates are higher amongst children in Iraq³ than can usually be expected in comparable countries yet policies and strategies are lacking. This program focuses on two issues of importance for increasing (and maintaining) school attendance often ignored by donors. The program has high alignment to EFA goals, MDG targets, Iraq UNDAF and goals within the Iraq National Development Strategy 2007-2010. It is highly relevant to the needs of school children in Iraq and it is also strongly aligned with Australia's directions regarding Iraq, Education for All and rights for people with disabilities.

Effectiveness

At this point of implementation, the program is not fully on track to achieve its stated objectives but according to explanations given by program managers there are no reasons to be concerned that progress will continue to be impeded. The WASH component is on track, but the disability component is slow to commence. It is too early to tell whether that component will be implemented in accordance with expected activities and close monitoring over the coming year is recommended.

Efficiency

It is difficult to make an assessment on the quality of financial and human resource utilisation for the project since there is so little data available. Whilst the contract stipulates six monthly

² From the baseline assessment of 2,877 schools, 704 schools were assessed as having WASH facilities that are very poor and another 1,389 schools as having facilities that are poor.

³ UNICEF's MIC3 survey in 2006 found that 14.8 percent of children aged 2-14 years had at least one disability. The last quarter century of war and conflict and isolation has taken a toll.

narrative and funds utilisation reports it appears that these reports have not been regularly produced to date. The WASH component is underspent but the reasons for this are accepted. The disability component is underspent and it is too early to tell whether that component is likely to fully utilise its allocated funding. In addition, planning for management of risk does not appear to have been undertaken. The required risk management strategy⁴ has not been produced to date, and the challenges listed in the first year report underplay the difficulties that could be expected, in a setting like Iraq, to challenge implementation.

Impact

It is the opinion of this reviewer that, at one-third of the way into the program cycle, and with one half of the program only now gaining momentum, it is too early to judge overall impact on intended school communities. The conceptual underpinnings of the program are sound, but real impact will depend upon strong implementation.

Sustainability

Program sustainability would be achieved by gaining commitment to ongoing funding at the conclusion of the UNICEF/Australia Agreement. Funding could come from Australia, from other donors or from the Government of Iraq itself. Whatever the funding source, real sustainability requires a stronger commitment by Iraqi government than there is evidence of currently. Building support amongst government partners is a necessary step and one that should be promoted during the life of this program. Whilst other donors (or Australia) could continue the whole program (or either part of it), the Government of Iraq has resources of its own available, and building commitment to longer-term national sustainability would be optimal. AusAID could start early discussions with other donors and with the Government of Iraq regarding this point, and identify points of leverage for future interventions.

Gender Equality

Both components of the program have the capacity to improve educational outcomes for girls and hence advance women's equality. WASH is known to be a factor in girls' attendance at school, and girls with disability face double disadvantage. In choosing schools for targeted program activity, it is stated that girls' schools were given priority, although the data behind this assumption is not provided. The Agreement with UNICEF requests gender disaggregated data be provided, and there is no evidence of this. It can be assumed that better WASH in schools and better capacity to educate girls with disabilities will increase access to education and promote women's rights. The extent to which the program involves women in decision-making forums on program matters, and the extent to which women will benefit from planned capacity building exercises, is not known at this stage.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This is an area for improvement. The Agreement with UNICEF states that every six months UNICEF will provide AusAID with a narrative and funds utilisation report. A funds utilisation report was provided for first six months but not since. The Agreement with UNICEF states that reports are to include gender disaggregated data and there is no evidence of this. The Agreement with UNICEF states that the first report is to include a risk management strategy for the overall program and there is no evidence of this.

It is not possible to assess validity of UNICEF's own monitoring and evaluation since this is a desk review and there is no possibility of spot checks or any other method of independent validation of stated results.

⁴ In the Agreement between Australia and UNICEF there is a requirement that first report include a risk management strategy.

Analysis and Learning

The program is based upon sound technical knowledge and continuous learning. The WASH component is based upon a comprehensive assessment of WASH facilities at 2,877 schools, undertaken as part of this program. 200 schools for project implementation will be selected from the most needy of the 2,877 schools with due account for schools which cater to students with disabilities, and to girls' schools. The disability component will use data from a newly commissioned large-scale household survey to underpin future work. The thorough baseline research for both components is commendable. Continuous learning is achieved by engagement of UNICEF program managers and oversight by experienced UNICEF managers. UNICEF's education activities since 2007 have aimed to boost access to primary education and they have had a long involvement in the disability sector in Iraq. Their organisational experience and learning is brought to this program.

Evaluation Criteria Ratings

Evaluation Criteria	Rating (1-6)	Explanation
Relevance	6	The program is clearly targeted on areas of high need. The program has high alignment to EFA goals, MDG targets, Iraq UNDAF and goals within the Iraq National Development Strategy 2007-2010.
Effectiveness	4	At this point of implementation the program is not fully on track to achieve its stated objectives but the reasons for delay are explained and there is no reason at this stage to be unduly concerned.
Efficiency	3	It is difficult to make an assessment on the quality of financial and human resource utilisation for the project since so little data is available. However, the lack of data is itself a concern.
Sustainability	4	There is no indication yet of efforts to secure ongoing funding at the conclusion of the UNICEF/AusAID Agreement. Stronger commitment by Iraqi government and community partners would be a necessary step and there is little evidence so far of advances in this area.
Gender Equality	4.5	Both components of the program have the capacity to improve educational outcomes for girls and hence advance women's equality. For extra points, data on gender impact could be provided.
Monitoring & Evaluation	3	This is an area for improvement. The Agreement between AusAID and UNICEF stipulates various reporting requirements that do not appear to have been met by UNICEF. Nor does there appear to have been follow-up on these matters from AusAID.
Analysis & Learning	6	The program is based upon sound technical knowledge and continuous learning. UNICEF's education activities since 2007 have aimed to boost access to primary education and they have had a long involvement in the disability sector in Iraq. Their organisational experience and learning is brought to this program.

Rating scale:

Satisfactory		Less than satisfactory	
6	Very high quality	3	Less than adequate quality
5	Good quality	2	Poor quality
4	Adequate quality	1	Very poor quality

Conclusion and Recommendations

AusAID is to be commended on commissioning an independent progress report at an early (one-third) point of the program cycle. An early review not only provides the funding body with information on progress to date, it also allows the opportunity for adjustments to program planning or implementation, where deemed necessary.

With regard to the UNICEF implemented *Water in Schools and Education for Children with Disabilities* program, this independent progress review concludes that the need for the program within Iraq is very high, alignment with Australian development priorities is high, and that the planning and baseline research being undertaken to inform program activities is sound.

In terms of implementation, it is too early to determine likely success. The WASH component is further developed than the disability component, and is simpler in its approach.

Implementation for this component should be successful, so long as corruption is minimal, the quality of infrastructure work is assured and school communities are well trained to maintain new facilities. The disability component is more complex and success depends upon close partnership with Iraqi officials; it is not clear to what extent this is being achieved.

This reviewer urges AusAID to step up management and monitoring of this program. Contract management could be tighter to ensure that reports requested/ required in the Agreement arrive on time and include the necessary information. Document control could also be tighter to ensure that a paper trail of key documents for the program is always at hand.

Overall monitoring of progress over the next year will be crucial. The rationale for underspending at the 12-month mark is accepted. However, if there continues to be dramatic underspend when the September 2011 reports are submitted, AusAID should make definite efforts to determine the cause, and the likelihood of the whole program being able to be completed on time.

It is accepted that all AusAID and UNICEF staff working on programs to improve access to education in Iraq operate in continuously challenging and dangerous conditions. Their efforts must be acknowledged and support to their programs, provided.

SCHEDULE 6: SCOPE OF SERVICE/TERMS OF REFERENCE

Iraq Program Unit Consultancy

Background

This document describes AusAID's Iraq Section's requirements of a consultancy to conduct an Independent Progress Review of the Water in Schools and Education for Children with Disabilities in Iraq (UNICEF) program.

Country background

The 2003 invasion of Iraq by the 'Coalition of the Willing' removed Saddam Hussein and the Sunni minority's grip on power and began the complex and often violent process of building a new democratic nation. Iraq has enormous potential. Its immense oil reserves, if well managed, could fund rapid growth. However, Iraq has many of the features of a fragile state. It faces significant challenges in strengthening security, meeting its people's expectations for improved services and infrastructure, tackling corruption, diversifying its economy to create jobs and managing ethnic and sectarian tensions. Iraq has made political and security gains in the last few years but ongoing insurgency, territorial disputes between Arabs and Kurds, tensions between the central government and regions and lingering distrust between Shia and Sunnis have the potential to spark renewed conflict.

The political gains made by Iraq are significant. The Sunni community overwhelmingly rejected terrorism in 2007 and participated in elections in 2009 and 2010 after boycotting previous polls. Iraq has held five elections since 2003, all largely accepted as free and fair. It took eight months of negotiation to form a Government following national elections in March 2010, sparking popular anger and demonstrations. However, a national unity government was announced on 12 November 2010 which includes Shia, Sunni and Kurdish representatives.

Security has improved in the last two years. Violent deaths are at their lowest levels since 2004. But Iraq is still a dangerous place. Terrorist groups continue to target the Iraqi people, the army, police and government employees in an attempt to de-stabilise the country. Capacity has improved in the Iraqi Security Forces, but the police force remains poorly trained. Sectarianism and poor coordination between law and justice institutions undermines the security forces. US forces are drawing down and have ceased combat operations, though around 50,000 will remain until the end of 2011 to provide support to the Iraqi Security Forces.

Poor capacity, due to the mass exodus of the educated middle class and the legacy of economic sanctions and isolationism under Saddam, undermines state legitimacy. Corruption is rampant. Iraq ranked 176 out of 180 on Transparency International's 2009 corruption index. The Iraqi Government has declared a war on corruption but weak institutions are struggling to implement transparent financial management systems and overcome entrenched cultures of corruption.

Australia's programming

The goal of Australia's aid program is to improve the quality of life in Iraq by strengthening governance and building national capacity. This goal acknowledges Australia's strategic and economic interests as well as the humanitarian imperative of the program. A secure and democratic Iraq will enhance stability in the Middle East region and through that create new commercial and investment opportunities.

Australia's aid program is delivered in line with Iraq's national development strategy and UN appeals for humanitarian assistance. The strategy's four key pillars are:

- supporting agriculture
- supporting public sector governance
- improving basic service delivery
- supporting vulnerable populations.

The Iraq Country Strategy, including the strategic framework is at Attachment 1.

In addition to AusAID's work, activities funded by the AFP and DIAC also support the implementation of the Iraq Country Strategy 2008–11. The AFP is training 244 Iraqi officers in forensic methods and management. DIAC is helping Iraqis in the region through its Displaced Persons Program, and other activities which improve migration management and border security.

Australia and Iraq are committed to increasing engagement. In March 2009, the prime ministers of both countries agreed to deliver bilateral cooperation under six MoUs—agriculture; resources and energy; trade cooperation; education, training and research; public health; and security and border control. Led by Iraqi and Australian line agencies and coordinated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the MoUs set the agenda for building relations and broadening bilateral cooperation over the next five years.

Funding to Iraq

Australia's total assistance to Iraq since 2003 is \$360 million including the current budget measure of \$165 million *over three years to June 2011*. Australia has also provided US\$850 million debt relief (see Appendix 2 for budget details). Under the current budget measure AusAID has provided funding for programs to the value of \$40 million in each of 2009-10 and 2010-11 financial years. Australian funding beyond this date is unknown, though the program is expected to scale down over time.

Program transition

A new country strategy is being developed to guide AusAID's support for three years beyond June 2011. As a first step, a country situation analysis has been developed and is at Attachment 2.

Current Program Agriculture The agriculture sector provides a large employment base and has great potential to contribute to stability through private sector development, poverty reduction and enhanced food security. Australia has a comparative advantage in assisting with the development and strengthening of Iraq's agricultural sector, given its similar arid climates and limited arable areas. Australian academics, scientists and farmers are internationally recognised as experts in related areas such as dry land farming and salinity management. This expertise is lacking in Iraq.

Current Australian support for Agriculture includes: agricultural research focussed on improving crop yield and tackling salinity; 115 fully-funded agricultural scholarships in Australia; agricultural training in Australia and Syria for over 300 officials and scientists; supporting 7,000 rural, poor households, particularly women and marginalised groups, through microfinance and home gardens; and contributing to initiatives that are improving health, education, water and sanitation and protection services to over 1.3 million Iraqis, including an estimated half a million refugees, internally displaced people and returnees.

Governance

Years of conflict have eroded the Iraqi public service which under the Saddam Hussein regime had become severely corrupted. As a result of this legacy, Iraq's ability to progress rapidly is constrained by a complex political environment and limited experience in modern public sector management. Strengthening capacity, transparency and accountability in the post-war Iraqi Government, at central and provincial levels, is essential for Iraq's development as a modern nation.

Basic Services

The Government of Iraq still lacks the capacity to deliver effective essential services and has sought continued assistance from the international community. There is a severe shortage of qualified and experienced professionals, particularly among civil servants, as well as a lack of infrastructure and equipment. Whilst building the Iraqi government's capacity is the most important long-term objective, supporting the Government to reduce poverty and deliver basic services for the short to medium term is crucial for Iraq's stability.

Australia is supporting the provision of basic services in partnership with the Government of Iraq and delivered through multilateral partners, international NGOs and coalition partners.

UNICEF's Water in Schools and Education for Children with Disabilities in Iraq is the largest program under the basic services pillar of the program (\$11.1 million over 2010-2012). The program aims to increase access to water and sanitation services in targeted primary schools, and to increase the inclusion of children with disabilities into the education sector. This program is a continuation and combination of two programs that AusAID supported in 2008/09. These were the education for disabled children and the Water Sanitation and Hygiene programs.

Other programs under this pillar include:

- Emergency Medical Care Development Program (2010-12). Strengthen national emergency services through training 1,350, paramedics, police and medical and fire personnel and 4,000 community responders.
- Mine Clearance (2010-11). Strengthen Government capacity to manage, coordinate and deliver mine action programs and provide victim assistance.
- Protecting Women and Girls, Gender Based Violence Program. Strengthen local government and community mechanisms to prevent gender based violence and provide immediate care to survivors.

It is expected that the Iraq Program will scale down after the next three year budget measure. It is therefore probable that the number of programs under the basic services pillar will be reduced over the 2011-14 budget measure.

Vulnerable Populations

Due to the difficult security environment, the associated displacement of people, widespread unemployment and poverty and the limited capacity of national and local governments, a significant proportion of Iraq's population is especially vulnerable and denied access to basic services.

Since 2003, the levels of conflict across Iraq have resulted in many Iraqis becoming refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs). An estimated 1.55 million internally displaced Iraqis and large numbers of refugees live throughout the region. The bulk of Iraqi refugees reside in Syria and Jordan.

Statistics on disability are difficult to access but Handicap International calculates that more than 7 – 10 % of the population has a disability with numbers swelled by injuries from explosive remnants of war. The plight of these people is compounded by Iraq's lack of strategy or legislation protecting the rights of people with disabilities.

Gender barriers to development and gender violence are prevalent and female-headed households remain a 'most vulnerable population'

Australia's support to vulnerable populations is provided through multilateral organisations and international NGOs primarily in response to consolidated humanitarian appeals. This ensures a coordinated international response.

Tasks

The consultant will be required to carry out the following tasks:

Task 1: Independent Progress Report in respect of the Water in Schools and Education for Children with Disabilities in Iraq (UNICEF) program; Objectives In accordance with AusAID Quality requirements, the Consultant will:

- a) Undertake an Independent Progress Review in respect of the Water in Schools and Education for Children with Disabilities in Iraq (UNICEF) program. This will involve assessment and rating of the progress of UNICEF's program against AusAID's evaluation criteria.
- b) Recommend actions that could be taken to improve future program outcomes, strategies and sustainability.

Services

The Consultant shall perform the following Services: ☐ Conduct a desk review of all reports and documents produced in respect of the Water in Schools and Education for Children with Disabilities in Iraq (UNICEF) program with a view to assessing the degree to which the reporting emanating from the program, and the data provided, meets AusAID's quality standards (up to 4 days).

- Conduct consultations on program quality with key stakeholders including the AusAID Desk and Post, AusAID Water and disability units as well as UNICEF officials and other stakeholders as available (1 day).
- Based upon the above, conduct a thorough Independent Progress Review of the UNICEF Program to date, in accordance with the AusAID evaluation criteria (up to 6 days).
- Provide recommendations to improve and enhance the effectiveness of the Program.

Outputs and reporting

The outputs will be:

- Prepare and submit a draft Independent Progress Report using the preferred template of no more than six pages (plus Annexes) to the Iraq Program Unit no later than 7 February 2011.
(Note: The Independent Progress Report must be appropriate for public distribution and dissemination.)
- As a separate attachment, the contractor will provide recommendations as to whether AusAID should support the program into a further phase, over the new program strategy, commencing June 2011 (not for public dissemination).

Key Documents for Task 1.

☐ AusAID - Iraq Country Strategy 2008–2011 ☐ AusAID – Iraq Country Situation Analysis 2010 ☐
AusAID – Independent Iraq Program Review (October 2009) ☐ AusAID – UNICEF design and
implementation summary ☐ AusAID Quality at Entry Report (for phase 1, 2 and 3) & UNICEF
Response (various) ☐ UNICEF, Proposal for Funding (July 2009-2011) ☐ UNICEF-
AusAID, MOU for program (February 2010) ☐ UNICEF, Progress reports (various) ☐
UNICEF, Update for Partners in Iraq (various) ☐ AusAID - Template for the Progress
Report