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World Bank Iraq Trust Fund Provides \$6.6 million for Household Survey and Poverty Reduction Strategy

Washington, D.C., September 25, 2006: The World Bank and Iraq's Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation have signed two grant agreements to finance a nationwide socioeconomic household survey and to formulate a poverty reduction strategy. The first survey of this type to be conducted in Iraq since 1993, it will examine income, expenditures, and living standards, yielding valuable data on poverty and complementing other surveys financed by the United Nations.

The Emergency Household Survey and Policies for Poverty Reduction Project includes a \$5.1 million grant to be implemented by Iraq to finance the survey and data analysis, and a \$1.5 million companion grant to be implemented by the World Bank to provide technical assistance on the latest data collection and analysis techniques. The combined project, which totals \$6.6 million, is financed by a multidonor Iraq Trust Fund administered by the World Bank.

"This project builds on more than a year of close dialogue with Iraq's statistical agencies," noted Susan Razzaz, the project's Task Team Leader. *"Under the Second Capacity Building Project of the Iraq Trust Fund, we have already conducted over ten workshops to assess and develop their capacity."*

A generation ago, Iraq's income and education and health indicators were high compared to regional averages. In recent years, living standards have declined to among the lowest in the region.

"Modern systems for data collection and dissemination are essential for providing Iraqi's policymakers with reliable information on which to base their decisions," remarked Joseph Saba, Country Director, Middle East Department. *"This project will enable Iraq's government to establish a poverty line, develop policies to reduce poverty and increase employment, and target social assistance to the neediest. It will also help the government determine how to best sequence reforms to minimize any negative effect on poverty and employment."*

The World Bank Iraq Trust Fund, within the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, has financed thirteen projects amounting to nearly \$400 million to improve education, health, irrigation and drainage, social protection, telecommunications, urban infrastructure, and water supply and sanitation. The World Bank has also approved \$235 million in International Development Association credits for education and road rehabilitation.

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