

Officials and citizens celebrate opening of two new schools in Anbar

The schools provide clean modern learning spaces for over 800 school children who have for years had to share overcrowded and unsafe facilities with neighborhood schools in double and sometimes triple sessions because of the acute shortage of schools. The schools were constructed using local contractors under contracts managed by the Ministry of Education with financing provided under the Emergency School Rehabilitation and Construction Project (ESCRP). "It is exciting to see these schools open in Anbar, in an area many warned us it would be impossible to build schools because of security. It demonstrates that the MOE, given support, training and resources, can manage major construction programs in the most challenging environments, using local contractors and labor, and meeting international standards in procurement and project management. That one of the school buildings houses a girls' elementary school and a high school for girls, operating in double sessions, attests to the severity of the school shortage throughout Iraq, and to the Ministry's determination to ensure quality learning opportunities for all girls and boys in Iraq," commented Safaa el-Kogali, WB Task Team Leader responsible for education projects in Iraq. In an e-mail to the World Bank announcing the opening of the schools, the Director of the Project Management Team that is implementing the project noted that the two schools "stand in recognition of the hard work done by us all and the co-operation from all concerned." The ESCRP is a US\$60 million project that finances the major rehabilitation of 134 schools and the construction of 56 new schools distributed across every governorate in Iraq. The rehabilitation program was completed in 2005, and the school construction is well under way, with completion scheduled for 2009.