

World Bank Iraq Trust Fund

Update to IRFFI Donor Committee
Naples, Italy – February 18, 2009

Education Reform Technical Assistance Project

I. BACKGROUND/KEY DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

1. Until 1980, Iraq's educational system was regarded as one of the best in the region. Iraq had achieved universal access to education over a fourteen-year period, beginning in 1976 when primary education became free and compulsory. However, the Iraqi education system endured a major financial crisis in the 1990s; severely low financial allocations to the education sector led to a rapid deterioration in all aspects of the system.
2. Despite more than a decade of degradation and neglect, the education system in Iraq has continued to operate and expand access since 2003, although recovery has been hampered by limited capacity and security constraints.
3. Iraq's current education framework needs to be further developed to adequately reflect a strategic vision of education that is national in scope, and to identify clear priority areas that are linked to the budget to ensure program financing and sustainability. Iraqi officials clearly identified insufficient capacity at all levels in the Ministry of Education (MOE) to assemble and interpret data, and to tackle the challenges of the transition to a modern and efficient education system. Iraq's educational system lacks a culture of effective administration on multiple levels: system, ministry, directorates, and teachers/staff. The educational administration system remains highly centralized and inefficient in nature; the directorates are weak and unable to make decisions that would improve local conditions. Finally, institutional and teacher capacity have been severely affected by staff turnover, resulting in the need for the system to be rebuilt.

II. RATIONALE FOR WORLD BANK INVOLVEMENT

4. In 2005, the MOE requested the World Bank support for systems development in education. The World Bank responded by conducting several workshops during 2006 and 2007 with the technical staff of MOE, Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation (MOPDC), and the Ministry of Finance (MOF) to discuss Iraq's education strategy and the experience of its neighbors in reforming their education systems.
5. In February 2008, a workshop on the development of a National Education Strategy was jointly organized by UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank. The workshop brought together 22 senior officials from the four Ministries of Education in Iraq (Federal and KRG Ministries of Education, and Higher Education and Scientific Research) to develop a framework for a National Education Strategy. Government officials from the four ministries worked together for the first time to identify their needs, develop a vision and mission statement for the education sector, a framework for the strategy, and formed a core group to ensure follow-up work continues. The workshop underscored the importance of Iraq developing a national education strategy that is fully owned by all stakeholders to guide future investments in the sector. The MOE requested the World Bank to provide follow up technical assistance to help the authorities develop a comprehensive national education strategy for Iraq.
6. The Bank's international experience in education reform and reconstruction in conflict affected

societies stresses the importance of quick and visible high impact activities to address urgent needs, accompanied by capacity-building activities for the education authorities. This is necessary for laying the groundwork for the development of a comprehensive education strategy that is aligned with an overall national development vision.

III. DONOR COORDINATION

7. The World Bank will continue to work closely with UNICEF, UNESCO and other partners in the education sector in Iraq, as evidenced by the on-going cooperation and dialogue on the development of a national education vision for Iraq.

IV. PROPOSED PROJECT DEVELOPMENT OUTCOME

8. The proposed project aims to build the institutional and technical capacity of all stakeholders, to further support the development of the education system and the development of a National Education Strategy for Iraq. To promote an effective national system, the project targets the four education ministries: both Federal and KRG ministries of education, and higher education and scientific research.

V. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

9. This technical assistance project, which will amount to US\$3 million, builds on the experience of two Iraq Trust Fund (ITF) financed projects. The project would finance: institutional assessments of the education systems; surveys; workshops; executive training; and field visits to countries with relevant experiences to draw on lessons and success stories. The project components are outlined below:

- i) Support the development of a unified National Education Strategy, which would include Technical and Vocational Education;
- ii) Strengthen institutions and systems at the Ministries of Education (Iraq and KRG) and Ministries of Higher Education and Scientific Research (Iraq & KRG); and
- iii) Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the four education ministries to identify the needs, weaknesses, and strengths of the system.

VI. Status of Project and Timeline for Approval

10. In December 2008, the second Iraq Education National Strategy Workshop (jointly organized with UNESCO and UNICEF) took place, and the World Bank worked with Iraqi authorities to prepare the Education Reform Technical Assistance Project. Workshop participation was high, with staffs from the Federal and KRG Ministries of Education (including Technical and Vocational Education) and of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Parliament, the Prime Minister's office, USAID, the British Council, and other UN agencies. While the workshop provided a learning event, it also offered an opportunity for the government officials to work together and produce a joint statement of the shared vision of a national education strategy. The officials agreed to ask the Prime Minister to establish a high commission to oversee the preparation of the strategy. The participants also agreed to set up a structure to widen consultation, and to establish a timeline that would lead to the adoption of the strategy by the end of 2009.

11. The workshop also provided a venue for representatives from both the Federal and KRG Ministries of Education and Higher Education and Scientific Research to discuss the design and implementation of the Education Reform Technical Assistance Project (US\$3 million). The World Bank task team is preparing the Project Concept Note for internal review by World Bank management. The

MOE will need to seek approval of the project by the Iraqi Strategic Review Board. World Bank project approval is expected by May 2008.