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Measuring Accomplishments

Setting goals and defining accomplishments in an imperfect and ever-more-often chaotic world requires focus on exactly what you're trying to solve.

This is true for personal goals, as well as those of national and international import.

As Violence Abates

A year ago in Iraq, for example, there were more than 250 reported violent incidents a day across the country. As this is written in September 2008, there are now between 20 and 30 reported incidents a day. Things have improved dramatically. Security goals were set in Baghdad and Basra, and in many other cities and provinces. Many of these goals were accomplished by Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces, citizens, and others.

As these significant accomplishments proceed, new goals arise. Never mourn the death of a plan, as they say, because as events transpire, adjustments must occur. For individuals and a secure and civil society, the setting of goals takes place in a never-ending chain of events. Attaining strategic results requires perseverance and perpetual refocus.

Post-Conflict Environment

In Baghdad today, where markets are filling up as the threat of killings and kidnappings abates, people want to celebrate their security gains and their new opportunities in a climate of diminishing fear. They also want basic local government services such as electricity and clean water. In 50°+ days this Summer, many people suffer and some die in the heat—especially the elderly, the infirm, children, and babies.

As these significant accomplishments proceed, new goals arise.

In postconflict environments such as this, where events seem to move faster than in other perhaps more stable places, setting goals and measuring achievement becomes more important.

Local governance in Iraq is no exception. Prior to 2003, Iraq was a command economy ruled by a national dictator. All planning was centralized, with no public participation in decision-making. Resistance, as they say, was futile. For more than 30 years, people literally risked life and limb to voice their opinion.

Since 2003, many goals have been set and accomplishments made

in helping the people of Iraq move to a model conducive to their desires to participate in the running of their communities. Behavioral change of this kind takes time. Changing the corporate culture of a large North American firm can take up to 8 years.

Development Strategies and Plans

This year, for the first time in Iraq, Provincial Development Plans (PDP) depicting development projects and programs are in the process of being implemented nationwide.

These plans, in total, signify a historic collaboration and wide agreement between the Government of Iraq and the provinces that provincial planning within a strong federation can support an institutionalized and integrated community need-driven development planning system.

There have been extensive Local Governance Program (LGP) (*please see sidebar*) activities to implement the PDPs. LGP advisors and members of both the Government of Iraq and the Provincial Governorates have worked hard to move PDP concepts and practices forward in all provinces.

There have been many goals set and a great deal of progress made toward a local government-led planning system. Focus groups, face-to-face discussions, and many workshop activities have been intensified in the

past few months to make sure key players at all levels of government understand the PDP concept and are involved in the formulation and implementation phases of the PDP in each province.

To this end, another Iraqi milestone is being achieved as the PDPs are reviewed, discussed, and approved prior to final submission for the 2009 budget.

Provincial Development Strategies from all 18 provinces were accepted in March 2008 and are being used to develop Iraq's National Development Strategy. The PDPs will also assist Iraq in shaping its National Development Plan.

As well, these activities, both the Provincial Development Strategies and Provincial Development Plans, represent dual accomplishments because they were both processes and documents. Participating in the planning process will, in the long term, outweigh the importance of a single document.

Many other goals are being achieved to support provincial plans. The provincial civil service is being strengthened; national laws are being written and passed to support the governorates; information systems to support planning, accounting, and project-tracking are being implemented—all of which came from setting goals.

In November 2007, the idea of participatory planning at the provincial level was not yet implemented. In March 2008, it became a reality. By the end of the year, Iraq will have experienced for the first time the effects of participatory planning.



In 2008, Iraq's 18 provinces developed Provincial Development Strategies through extensive public participation, considered the way forward toward giving citizens more of a voice in the development of the projects and services closest to their needs.

Monitoring and evaluation, dialogue and debate, the review of strategies and priority-setting, budgeting, and project and program implementation to deliver services are not happening overnight, but there are strategies and plans and a growing will to move forward quickly.

As one provincial councillor said to an international donor, "Iraq doesn't need your money. It needs your help in planning, in capacity-building, and all the systems and training to support the plans."

Next Steps

As security returns to Iraq and plans are implemented to deliver more services, individuals are modifying their behavior from a routine of daily survival to longer, more hopeful individual and family goalsetting. Accomplishments in all these regards, as always, rest on the outcomes of fate and free will, the variables of nature, and the nature of man.

As Iraq moves forward and plans evolve in years to come, 2008 will be noted for the historical achievement of the nation, its region, and provinces for institutionalizing decentralized planning in which the people have much more of a voice in the direction of their own lives.

For more information, Google *Writing the Future: Provincial Development Strategies in Iraq*. www.lgp-iraq.org ▲

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Provincial leaders from across Iraq have participated in meetings to secure political and administrative collaboration to support provincial planning initiatives.

The Local Governance Program in Iraq

The Local Governance Program (LGP) supports Iraq's efforts to establish local government that is transparent, accountable, and responsive to its constituents. LGP, which began in April 2003, operates under a contract from the US Agency for International Development (USAID). LGP was expanded in 2005 to include a new phase of support for local governance programs in Iraq.

Under terms of its contract, LGP

- supports Iraq's efforts to improve the management and administration of local, municipal, and provincial governments;
- provides technical assistance and training to local elected officials concerning the roles and functions of local government officials and agencies;
- assists in establishing a legal framework for a democratic, representative, and participatory form of decentralized government in Iraq.

Since May 2005, LGP has been training and mentoring Provincial Councils elected in January of that year in the roles, responsibility, and authority of the Provincial Council, and also providing similar training to Iraq's network of Local Councils.

LGP supports the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) effort across the country by providing technical advisors in areas related to governance, policy reform, and economic development. From its headquarters in Baghdad, LGP oversees operation of its regional hub offices in Erbil, Hillah, Basra, and Baghdad, serving all 18 Iraqi provinces.

For more information on LGP, visit www.lgp-iraq.org.