Iraq Virtual Science Library Program

CASE STUDY FACT SHEET

Photo: Iraq Virtual Science Library

Since the second Gulf War, Iraq has needed technical knowledge to rebuild national infrastructure and revive its fledgling economy. However, Iraq's engineering and scientific experts have lacked access to up-to-date technical information and relevant new research in their fields. The **Iraq Virtual Science Library (IVSL) Program** *was instituted to solicit, incubate, and scale-up scientific research online while building a community of volunteers to support the web portal housing it.*

BACKGROUND

To rebuild Iraq's systems in power, irrigation, telecommunications, higher education, transportation, public health, sanitation, and water supply, the country's scientific and engineering community needed an accessible place to find high-quality, full-text academic journals and books. **CRDF Global**'s IVSL Program accomplished this need by building an innovative web portal and training trainers in the use and management of the site. The success of the IVSL Program allowed it to be handed off to Iraq's Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Since this transition in 2010, the Ministry has continued to expand usage and content.

IMPACT

The IVSL program has made a significant, sustained impact in the scientific research community of Iraq. The key results from this project include:

- Access provided to up-to-date, full text technical and research articles, books, and standards for 25 Iraqi universities, nine ministries, the Iraqi Academy of Sciences, and three non-ministerial governmental institutions;
- More than 65,000 users are registered for access (as of Summer 2013);

FAST FACTS

Program Name: Iraq Virtual Science Library Program (IVSL)

IVSL Goal: To support access and development of a web portal for scientific research while building a sustainable volunteer network to maintain it beyond the life of the program.

VEGA Lead Member: CRDF Global

Years Implemented: 2006 - 2010 CRDF Global and 2011 - Present Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Country: Iraq

- More than 17,500,000 full-text articles, 34,000 e-books, 18,600 journals, 2,100,000 conference abstracts, and 3,800 technical standards are available through the IVSL (as of November 2013);

- More than 700,000 full-text articles are downloaded annually (projected from usage Jan-Oct 2013);

- The publication rate of Iraqi researchers in ranked, peer-reviewed international journals has increased by more than six-fold since the launch of the IVSL (after being stagnant for the five years prior to launch);

- The use of online journals is now institutionalized through integration into the graduate curricula for Iraqi universities;

- In 2013, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research passed operational responsibility to a government organized non-governmental organization, using the IVSL to expand public-private partnership in Iraq.
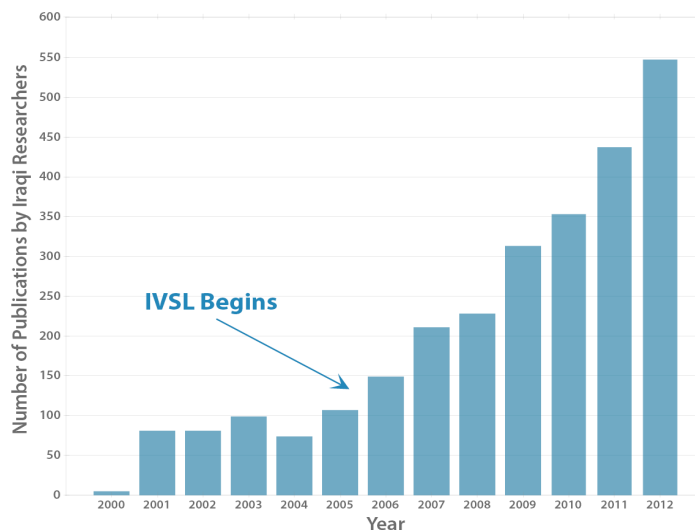

Table: Increase in Number of Publications by Iraqi Researchers over time.

LOCAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Local capacity development (LCD) was integral to the design of the program from the beginning and key to its success. Designing LCD and accomplishing program goals in the context of post-conflict Iraq presented unique challenges, and CRDF Global's strategy of designing a program around national conditions allowed CRDF Global to adapt its experience to a program that succeeded for Iraq.

LESSONS LEARNED

Through administering the IVSL Program, many valuable lessons learned were captured. The primary insights were: the importance of a long-term time commitment; the need for a nationally adapted, flexible plan suited to conditions in Iraq; the value of monitoring metrics for measuring success; and the importance of evaluating the level of effort needed to sustain a volunteer network in Iraq versus in other countries.

THE VEGA ALLIANCE

The Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) is the world's largest member-directed consortium of nonprofit economic growth organizations that designs and delivers high impact programs, incorporating skilled volunteer professionals into its work with donors, philanthropic institutions, private enterprise, and developing country organizations. VEGA was established as a 501(c)3 organization in 2004 through a United States Agency for International Development's Leader with Associate Award. When it began a decade ago, VEGA was established as a rapid and efficient mechanism that utilized a competitive process to award USAID funding to its member organizations. Now, VEGA continues to champion its model and its alliance members' breadth of expertise to other partners. VEGA supported the research and publication of this case study as part of its commitment to knowledge management and sharing lessons learned among its member organizations and the international development community.

🖥 **VEGAALLIANCE.ORG**　　🐦 **TWITTER.COM/VEGAALLIANCE**　　f **FACEBOOK.COM/VEGAALLIANCE**

CRDF GLOBAL