



## SNAPSHOT

### *Bringing Public and Private Together to Build the Iraqi Workforce*



*Representatives from the private sector, the government, and USAID convened at Foras' compound in Erbil. (Photo credit Iraq-Foras)*



*Representatives from USAID review a training curriculum with a local corporate training firm. (Photo credit Iraq-Foras)*



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Recently, members of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the U.S. Agency for International Development's Mission to Iraq (USAID/Iraq) met to discuss employment challenges and opportunities with the region's major businesses.

The roundtable, organized by the Iraq Opportunities Project (USAID-Foras) on December 16 in Erbil, brought together training and Corporate-Social Responsibility (CSR) experts from Dana Gas, Crescent Petroleum, Skilliance, Ministry of Natural Resources, Coca Cola, and Afren Energy. The companies briefed USAID on their specific CSR activities and training efforts.

One key challenge identified by all of the companies is a lack of basic skills in the workforce. This is particularly problematic in the rural areas where most of the oil and gas industries are operating. Due to the isolation of these areas, it is not easy to implement skills training or help local business build up enough capacity to sign contracts with the oil and gas companies.

Dana Gas said they are taking a long-term approach to this problem by setting up an internship program, available to students starting in high school. Skilliance, a local corporate training company, hopes to address the lack of employment skills by launching a for-profit training employment skills and job placement program targeting university students.

The Kurdistan Regional Government is keenly aware of the challenges facing their workforce. The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is tackling the issue head-on. A ministry representative said he is leading an initiative to train secondary school and college graduates on basic employability skills, with the ultimate goal of placing them in the region's growing oil and gas sector.

Rather than teaching specific technical skills, the initiative focuses on addressing the cross-cutting soft skills gaps in the Iraqi workforce. The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is planning on funding this initiative. However, the MNR is also looking for additional sources of revenue from corporate sponsors and international donors by forming public private partnerships.