Building the Capacity of 4-H/Youth Development in Iraq

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Abstract: A team of 4-H/Extension educators were invited to Erbil, Iraq to conduct a week-long intensive training to assist Iraqi youth workers in preparing effective programming as they build their 4-H program. The workshop incorporated the 4-H Essential Elements for Program Success and a Curriculum and Lesson Development Training module. Three-quarters of participants said they were leaving the training with a set of curriculum developed by themselves or others during the workshop. Most (88%) indicated they had tentative plans for implementing the lessons they developed during the training. This project created a solid foundation upon which Iraqi youth workers can build.

Introduction

The United States Department of Agriculture/Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA/FAS) has been working since 2009 through the use of Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) advisors. A relationship with Iraq youth programs began with the efforts of a former U. S. 4-H educator in the Anbar province with the development of the first 4-H youth clubs in 2009. The first clubs focused on teaching youth to tend sheep. Funding was provided by USDoS (United States Department of State). Over the course of two years the 4-H program grew to include 42 4-H clubs with over 1,100 Iraqi children participating (McPeake, 2011). In 2010, the Iraqi National Center for Youth Clubs was formed.

Almost half of the Iraqi population is under the age of 18 (Kyriakou, 2005). This population dynamic provides an opportunity to impact the lives and livelihood of future generations of Iraqis in instruction specifically directed at young people. Similar to the approach used in the United States at the turn of the 20th century (History of 4-H, 2011) there exists an opportunity to positively influence the lives of all Iraqi citizens through focused efforts on improved farming techniques and home economics through instruction focused on youth. 4-H is a positive youth development program. The theory of positive youth development:

> specifies that if young people have mutually beneficial relationships with the people and institutions of their social world, they will be on the way to a hopeful future marked by positive contributions to self, family, community, and civil society. (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005, p. 12).

According to Karoline Scott, FAS Specialist, " in a country that has been devastated by years of violent conflict, the values and skills Iraqi youth are learning in 4-H clubs are helping achieve a more stable and successful future" (Scott, 2011).

USDA was working in Iraq and through the federal agencies, USDA NIFA's 4-H National Headquarters and FAS (Foreign Ag Service). These federal agencies initiated a collaborative opportunity for land-grant partners who had either experience or involvement with the Iraq 4-H program to participate in developing a weeklong training.

Overall Project Vision and Study Objectives

Vision
The overall vision of the Iraqi leadership was to provide sustainable, community-based, positive international youth development programs that
1) Build life skills through agricultural sciences that benefit youth in their careers, improve their economic well-being, and help support their families and communities;
2) Prepare youth for work across the agricultural value chain;
3) Enhance and complement other instruction in language and literacy, computer, math, science, and civic engagement through experiential learning; and,
4) Provide leadership development opportunities that promote interpersonal relations, communication skills, problem solving, teamwork, and character development.

Study Objectives
In order to positively impact Iraqi youth, training was provided to youth extension agents and youth workers in both government and non-government agencies. Volunteers, who are essential to the success of 4-H youth development programs, need training in effective methodology (Enfield, Schmitt-McQuitty, & Smith, 2007; VanWinkle, Busler, Bowman, & Manoogian, 2002). Training in program planning, curriculum development and delivery, and program evaluation are all needed in order to effectively prepare workers for establishing effective youth programs. (Wells, & Arthur-Banning, 2009).

The objectives for this training project were two-fold:

1. To increase the knowledge and understanding of Iraqi youth workers of the essential elements of 4-H youth development programs, and
2. To strengthen Iraqi youth workers' skills in curriculum development and delivery.

Methodology

The Training Process

The USDA/FAS invited a team of 4-H/Extension experts to conduct a training workshop on program planning and curriculum development and delivery. This activity provided a week-long intensive training workshop to assist Iraqi youth workers in preparing effective programming in working with young people. The training was conducted in Erbil, Iraq. The Iraqi leadership did not wish to simply implement 4-H curriculum that already existed. They wanted the skills to develop curriculum that was relevant and appropriate for Iraqi youth. Seventeen Iraqi youth workers participated in the training.

The team consisted of four agricultural and extension professionals from three land-grant universities including the University of Florida, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and the Pennsylvania State University. These professionals brought extensive experiences in rural and urban 4-H programming, agricultural programming in a variety of international settings, training of youth workers and educators, cultural diversity, and program evaluation. Additional trainers from the U.S. consisted of an International Agricultural Development Specialist from the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service and the Director of the National Headquarters for the 4-H Youth Program.

Two in-country college students also assisted the team during the workshop. The purpose of their involvement was to participate in presenting workshop sessions and to further develop the materials presented for future trainings in Iraq. Consultation and materials were also provided by the Penn State 4-H Program Leader. Workshop preparation and planning took place by conference calls, face-to-face meetings, and a conference via Skype with the key Iraqi leader for the project. The groups also met with a local Arabic translator from Iraq who gave the group helpful insight into the culture and assisted with the translation of written material to be used during the in-country workshop and during the web Skype call.

Using the National 4-H Council curriculum entitled *Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development Programs* (National 4-H Council, 2009), the facilitation team focused on youth development and program components using an experiential learning model. The curriculum and lesson development training module was based on teaching methods and curriculum planning courses used in agricultural education teacher education programs. The facilitation team provided a basis for curriculum and lesson development. Table 1 presents the schedule that was implemented, incorporating the two components.

Table 1

Training Implementation Schedule

5 Days	Essential Elements for Program Success	Curriculum & Lesson Development
Day 1:	Session 1: Key Ingredients (Opening Session) Session 2: A Positive Relationship with a Caring Adult (Element 1) Session 3: A Safe Emotional and Physical Environment (Element 3)	Fundamentals of Curriculum Development Units of Study Lesson Planning Objectives Creating Group Lessons
Day 2:	Session 4: An Inclusive Environment (Element 2) Session 5: Engagement in Learning (Element 5)	Modes of Learning Curriculum Development Basics Creating Individual Lessons
Day 3:	Session 6: Opportunity for Mastery (Element 4) Session 7: Opportunity to See Oneself as an Active Participant in the Future (Element 6)	Evaluation of Learners Formatting Lessons into 4-H Model Review of Individual Lessons
Day 4:	Session 8: Opportunity for Self-Determination (Element 7) Session 9: Opportunity to Value and Practice Service to Others (Element 8)	Writing Individual Lessons Lesson Sharing
Day 5:	Session 10: Putting it all Together (Concluding session)	Individual Curriculum Writing

To accommodate the language barriers, two translators held a key role in the training program. The translators served as a bridge between the presenters and the participants, writing participant comments in Arabic on flipcharts as the facilitators did the same in English. They also translated the pre and post evaluation forms and facilitated casual comments during break and meal functions as the presenters mingled among the participants. For parts of the workshop presentations a simultaneous translation system was used.

Data Analysis

A pre-post-evaluation was used to assess the objectives of the training. The evaluation was designed to measure the knowledge, attitudes, and intentions of Iraqi participants related to youth development programming. Session 1 of the training provided awareness of the eight essential elements of positive youth development, as well as participants' role in intentionally planning, implementing and achieving a balanced youth development program. A portion of each day also focused on concepts related to curriculum development. Each item was rated on the extent to which participants agreed with the statement using the following five point Likert-type scale: Strongly Disagree =1, Disagree =2, Neutral =3, Agree =4, and Strongly Agree =5. Participants were asked to rate between five and eight statements related to each of the eight essential elements that were the focus of the training program in Sessions 2 through 9.

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 19. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Inferential statistics including paired t-tests were used to compare mean scores before and after the training. The level of significance was set a priori at $p < .05$.

Findings

Objective 1

The tables below report percentages of respondents who "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with each statement. A comparison of means and percentages to responses *Before the Training* with responses *After the Training* indicate that the training program had a measureable impact on the degree to which the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and intentions changed related to youth development programming.

Competencies related to the essential elements for program success were represented by 60 competency statements. The percentage of participants who "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the competency statements *After the Training* ranged from 76.4% - 100%, with 30 of the 60 competency statements rated as 100%. The mean scores for 58 of the 60 competency statements increased *after* the training when compared to the scores *before* the training. The increase in mean scores was statistically significant for 36 of the 60 statements.

Table 2 presents the percentage of agreement with each competency statement related to understanding the *essential elements of positive youth development* (Session 1) before and after the training. For each competency statement, the increase in mean scores after the training was statistically significant.

Table 2

Percentage of Agreement, Mean Scores, and t-test Results for Competency Statements Before and After the Training: Session 1 Essential Elements

	Before					After			
	N	% A/SA	M	SD		N	% A/SA	M	SD	p
I can identify the key ingredients (Essential Elements) of Positive Youth Development.	17	70.6	3.5	1.12		17	100.0	4.4	.514	.011*
I understand and can explain the essential elements to others.	16	62.6	3.3	1.13		17	100.0	4.4	.514	.008*
I can discuss the essential elements with ease with other volunteers/staff.	17	70.5	3.5	1.09		16	93.8	4.5	.624	.016*
I can lead discussions related to the activities used to teach an overview of the essential elements.	17	70.6	3.5	1.12		17	100.0	4.4	.514	.011*
I can compare the different ingredients that make a youth program work.	17	70.5	3.6	1.11		17	100.0	4.3	.492	.041*
I can distinguish each essential element from the others.	17	58.8	3.2	1.13		17	76.4	3.9	.658	.038*

Note. A/SA = agree or strongly agree; *p*<.05

Table 3 presents the percentage of agreement with each competency statement related to *developing positive relationships with a caring adult* (Session 2) before and after the training. There was a statistically significant difference in scores for four of the eight statements before and after the training.

Table 3

Percentage of Agreement, Mean Scores, and t-test Results for Competency Statements Before and After the Training: Session 2 – A Positive Relationship w/ Caring Adult

	Before					After				
	N	% A/SA	M	SD		N	% A/SA	M	SD	p
I recall the key points in a caring relationship between a youth and an adult volunteer.	17	70.6	3.5	1.12		17	94.1	4.2	.562	.041*
I can repeat the important concepts of a positive relationship with a caring adult to other volunteers/staff.	16	68.8	3.5	1.03		16	94.1	4.2	.447	.009*
I can discuss the essential elements with ease with other volunteers/staff.	17	82.4	4.0	.966		17	94.1	4.3	.606	.289
I understand the importance of a positive relationship with a caring adult.	16	58.8	3.6	1.13		16	81.3	4.1	.718	.234
I am able to explain to others new concepts relating to positive relationships.	16	64.7	3.3	1.36		17	82.3	4.1	.696	.061
I can choose activities to teach the key concepts of positive relationships between youth and adults.	16	68.8	3.5	1.31		17	94.2	4.4	.619	.011*
I know the difference between a positive and a negative relationship.	16	75.1	3.8	.910		17	94.2	4.4	.629	.020*
I can appraise youth development environments to determine if they support positive relationships.	16	68.8	3.4	1.15		17	81.3	4.0	.680	.055

Note. A/SA = agree or strongly agree; *p<.05

Table 4 presents the percentage of agreement with each competency statement related to *creating a safe emotional and physical environment* (Session 3) before and after the training. For each of the six statements, there was a statistically significant increase in scores before and after the training.

Table 4

Percentage of Agreement, Mean Scores, and t-test Results for Competency Statements Before and After the Training: Session 3 - A Safe Emotional and Physical Environment

	Before					After				
	N	% A/SA	M	SD		N	% A/SA	M	SD	p
I can define what safe emotional and physical environments look like.	17	58.5	3.3	1.21		17	88.2	4.1	.635	.009*
I can list various elements that create a safe emotional or physical environment.	16	56.3	3.2	1.04		17	94.1	4.2	.528	.003*
I can explain to other volunteers/staff the importance of understanding safe emotional and physical environments.	16	82.4	3.7	.919		17	100.0	4.3	.492	.029*
I can evaluate safe versus non-safe environments in youth-adult programs.	17	70.6	3.5	1.12		17	94.2	4.4	.618	.026*
I can implement activities to further the understanding of safe emotional and physical environments.	17	64.7	3.5	1.12		17	100.0	4.2	.437	.029*
I can recognize emotional and physical safety issues in a youth development program	16	41.2	3.0	1.11		17	100.0	4.2	.437	.000*

Note. A/SA = agree or strongly agree; *p*<.05

Table 5 presents the percentage of agreement with each competency statement related to *creating an inclusive environment* (Session 4) before and after the training. For seven of the eight statements there was a statistically significant difference in scores before and after the training.

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Table 5

Percentage of Agreement, Mean Scores, and t-test Results for Competency Statements Before and After the Training: Session 4 - An Inclusive Environment

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	Before					After			
	N	**% A/SA**	**M**	**SD**		**N**	**% A/SA**	**M**	**SD**	**p**
I can list behaviors or practices that lead to an inclusive environment.	17	70.6	3.5	.943		17	100.0	4.2	.437	.003*
I can list behaviors or practices that hinder an inclusive environment.	17	70.6	3.3	1.05		17	88.2	4.1	.600	.002*
I can describe the effects of power, status, and peer influence on youth.	16	56.3	3.3	1.01		17	100.0	4.3	.478	.000*
I understand the potential consequences of acceptance or rejection.	17	47.1	3.0	1.36		17	94.1	4.2	.562	.001*
I can demonstrate program practices and behaviors that create an inclusive environment.	17	70.6	3.4	1.17		17	94.1	4.3	.587	.001*
I am likely to use inclusive practices in my programs.	17	70.5	3.6	1.11		17	82.3	4.0	.935	.055
I can distinguish between an inclusive and exclusive environment.	17	70.6	3.2	1.35		17	88.3	4.3	.701	.000*
I can examine my program and incorporate activities that create an inclusive environment.	17	58.8	3.1	1.07		17	94.1	4.1	.485	.002*

Note. A/SA = agree or strongly agree; *p*<.05

Table 6 presents the percentage of agreement with each competency statement related to *engagement in learning* (Session 5) before and after the training. For each of the seven statements, there was a statistically significant difference in scores before and after the training.

Table 6

Percentage of Agreement, Mean Scores, and t-test Results for Competency Statements Before and After the Training: Session 5 – Engagement in learning

	Before					After				
	N	% A/SA	M	SD		N	% A/SA	M	SD	p
I can describe the steps in the experiential learning cycle.	17	57.9	3.2	1.25		17	100.0	4.1	.392	.004*
I can generate discussion questions to guide youth through the experiential learning process.	17	82.3	3.7	1.25		17	100.0	4.4	.507	.029*
I can explain why experiential learning is more enjoyable for youth than lecture style lessons.	17	76.5	3.6	1.45		17	100.0	4.6	.492	.003*
I can develop an activity using an active learning strategy.	17	58.8	3.2	1.25		17	94.1	4.1	.485	.003*
I can process an activity using the experiential learning process.	17	76.4	3.7	1.26		17	100.0	4.5	.514	.004*
I can modify an activity so that it uses experiential learning.	16	56.3	3.1	1.20		17	100.0	4.5	.512	.000*
I can differentiate between active and passive learning strategies.	17	76.5	3.5	1.12		17	100.0	4.4	.507	.002*

Note. A/SA = agree or strongly agree; *p*<.05

Table 7 presents the percentage of agreement with each competency statement related to *providing an opportunity for mastery* (Session 6) before and after the training. For four of the eight statements, there was a statistically significant increase in scores after the training. The difference in before and after scores was not statistically significant for four competency statements.

Table 7

Percentage of Agreement, Mean Scores, and t-test Results for Competency Statements Before and After the Training: Session 6 - Opportunity for Mastery

	Before					After				
	N	% A/SA	M	SD		N	% A/SA	M	SD	p
I know that opportunity for mastery is an essential element of positive youth development.	16	87.6	4.1	1.14		17	82.3	4.0	.658	.580
I understand and recall the importance of opportunity for mastery.	16	68.8	3.7	.77		17	88.3	3.9	.500	.609
I can describe the effects of power, status, and peer influence on youth.	16	75.0	3.9	.95		17	100.0	4.2	.469	.164
I can verbally translate the importance of mastery to volunteers/staff.	16	75.0	3.5	1.20		16	76.5	3.8	.750	.261
I can choose appropriate activities that teach mastery.	16	68.8	3.5	1.12		17	100.0	4.2	.414	.027*
I am likely to use inclusive practices in my programs.	16	50.0	3.3	1.08		17	82.3	4.0	.696	.000*
I can examine and identify effective hands-on projects in my youth development work.	16	75.0	3.6	1.08		17	100.0	4.3	.478	.016*
I can compare mastery opportunities and know good programs from poor ones.	16	62.6	3.5	1.26		17	100.0	4.3	.478	.014*

Note. A/SA = agree or strongly agree; *p<.05

Table 8 presents the percentage of agreement with each competency statement related to *creating an opportunity for youth to see themselves as an active participant in the future* (Session 7) before and after the training. The difference between before and after scores was not statistically significant for any of the six competency statements.

Table 8

Percentage of Agreement, Mean Scores, and t-test Results for Competency Statements Before and After The Training: Session 7 - Opportunity to See Oneself as an Active Participant in the Future

	Before					After				
	N	% A/SA	M	SD		N	% A/SA	M	SD	p
I know that the opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future is an essential element of positive youth development.	16	81.3	4.0	.680		17	100.0	4.2	.403	.544
I know the success in setting and achieving goals gives youth the confidence to aspire to more challenging accomplishments.	16	93.8	4.5	.629		17	100.0	4.4	.512	.432
I can identify valuable aptitudes, skills and interests that will help youth be successful in the future.	16	81.3	3.9	.997		17	100.0	4.3	.478	.188
I can demonstrate the SMART method of goal setting.	16	75.1	3.9	.806		17	88.2	4.2	.655	.289
I can help others write goals and objectives.	16	87.6	3.9	.928		17	100.0	4.5	.516	.070
I can identify effective hands-on projects that promote the concept of seeing oneself as an active participant in the future.	16	81.3	3.7	1.00		17	100.0	4.2	.447	.072

Note. A/SA = agree or strongly agree; **p*<.05

Table 9 presents the percentage of agreement with each competency statement related to *providing youth with an opportunity for self-determination* (Session 8) before and after the training. There was a statistically significant difference in scores for one statement before and after the training. The difference in before and after scores was not statistically significant for four competency statements.

Table 9

Percentage of Agreement, Mean Scores, and t-test Results for Competency Statements Before and After the Training: Session 8 - Opportunity for Self-determination

	Before					After				
	N	% A/SA	M	SD		N	% A/SA	M	SD	p
I know the definition of opportunity for self-determination.	14	78.6	3.9	.615		17	94.2	4.1	.428	.500
I can list examples of self-determination.	14	71.4	3.5	.851		17	94.2	4.1	.428	.068
I can recognize self-determination in a youth development program.	14	64.2	3.5	.937		17	94.1	4.1	.485	.089
I can explain ideas and concepts of self-determination to others.	14	71.4	3.6	.928		17	94.1	4.1	.485	.089
I can choose appropriate activities to promote self-determination.	14	71.4	3.7	.994		17	100.0	4.5	.514	.010*

Note. A/SA = agree or strongly agree; *p<.05

Table 10 presents the percentage of agreement with each competency statement related to *providing an opportunity for youth to value and practice service to others* (Session 9) before and after the training. There was a statistically significant difference in scores for one of the six statements before and after the training. The difference in before and after scores was not statistically significant for five competency statements.

Table 10

Percentage of Agreement, Mean Scores, and t-test Results for Competency Statements Before and After the Training: Session 9 - Opportunity to Value and Practice Service to Others

	Before					After				
	N	% A/SA	M	SD		N	% A/SA	M	SD	p
I know the opportunity to value and practice service to others is one of the essential elements.	14	92.8	4.1	.534		17	100.0	4.5	.518	.136
I can define both community service and service-learning.	14	85.7	4.3	.744		17	100.0	4.4	.514	.752
I can describe the components necessary for a successful service-learning activity to others.	14	85.7	3.8	.949		17	100.0	4.0	.267	.426
I can plan a service-learning project for youth and adults.	14	100.0	4.3	.497		17	100.0	4.3	.469	.500
I can examine community service projects and modify them into service-learning projects.	14	71.4	3.6	.928		17	100.0	4.2	.425	.040*
I can differentiate between community service and service-learning projects.	14	85.7	4.0	.554		17	88.2	4.1	.663	.547

Note. A/SA = agree or strongly agree; *p*<.05

The competencies in which participants had the greatest gains included:

- Understanding the essential elements of positive youth development
- Creating a safe emotional and physical environment
- Creating an inclusive environment, and
- Engaging youth in experiential learning

The competencies in which participants had the least gains included:
- Providing opportunities for youth to see themselves as an active participant in the future
- Providing opportunities for youth self-determination, and
- Providing opportunities for youth to value and practice service to others

Table 11 presents the percentage of agreement to each competency statement related to curriculum development concepts. Participants were only asked to rate this competency after the training.

Table 11
Percentage of Agreement and Mean Scores for Competency Statements After the Training: Session 10 – Curriculum Development Concepts

		N	%A/SA	M	SD
I know the difference between the lecture method of teaching and the experiential method of teaching.		17	94.1	4.5	.624
I can identify the requirements for inquiry-based learning.		17	94.1	4.1	.485
I can explain to others the difference between open questions and closed questions.		17	94.1	4.2	.951
I can compare the advantages of both open and closed questions.		17	94.1	4.0	.866
I can explain the advantage of using Wait Time when questioning youth.		17	94.1	4.3	.606
I can design a lesson using the Backward Design Method.		17	82.4	4.2	.727
I can name and explain the steps in the 5-Step Learning Cycle.		17	76.5	3.9	1.02
I know how to help youth process the learning experience.		17	100.0	4.6	.507
I can name a variety of ways to determine if the learner has achieved the desired results of the lesson.		17	100.0	4.5	.514
I feel confident to create an engaging learning environment for youth in Iraq.		17	94.2	4.4	.618
I feel prepared to create an engaging learning environment for youth in Iraq.		17	100.0	4.6	.492

Note. A/SA = agree or strongly agree

Objective 2
At the end of the training participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they were ready to apply what they had learned. Three-quarters (76.4%) of participants said they were leaving the training with a set of curricula developed by themselves or other participants during the training event. An even greater percentage (88.2%) indicated they have a tentative plan for implementing the lessons they developed during the training event. Table 12 presents the percentage of agreement to statements related to readiness to apply what had been learned during the training.

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Table 12

*Percentage of Participants Who Agree With Being Ready to Apply What They Have Learned
After the Training*

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	N	%A/SA	M	SD
I am leaving the training with a set of curriculum (learning/activity guide templates) developed by myself and/or other participants during this training event.	17	76.4%	3.9	.781
I have a tentative plan for implementing the lessons that have been developed during this training event.	16	88.2	4.2	.577

Note: A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

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Discussion

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Based upon the results from participants it is clear that the Iraqi workshop participants learned about the elements of experiential learning and methods for incorporating experiential learning methodology into their existing curriculum. Based upon pre- and post-test survey results, they also felt they had learned a significant amount about creating a safe emotional and physical environment for the young people that they work with. And, not only were they able to recognize emotional and physical safety issues for young people in their current development programs, they felt confident that they could share that information to instruct other youth leaders helping them to create similar safe environments.

In two of the major competency areas that resulted in the least gain in means scores (opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future, and opportunity to value and practice service to others), the mean scores were rated high *before* the training and therefore had limited opportunity for growth. The interest in developing self-determination in youth is a new and growing movement in Iraq. An example of this movement is the Third Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative Conference which was held in Irbil in October of 2011. At that conference, it was declared that, "While youth in Iraq face many challenges, they can be one of the most important forces for change and social progress and the conference supports civil society and government efforts to develop the youth sector" (Iraqi Civil Society, 2011).

Additional Benefits of the Project

Several additional benefits resulted from this project. Specific benefits include:

- The efforts of the team built upon existing 4-H efforts currently underway in Iraq. Several of the club leaders that came together were able to share ideas across provinces and subject matter. Ideas for recruiting and engaging youth were discussed formally and during breaks and in the evenings and during mealtimes.

- Groups that don't normally interact were able to connect with one another, establish relationships, provide contact information and plan future communications. These groups included government and non-government entities, volunteer organizations, businessmen and women, and those involved in formal education training.

- Youth-based curriculum was developed using curriculum templates that could easily be exchanged across all participants. Although the curriculum developed was in draft form by the end of the workshop, e-mail addresses were collected and efforts were established for the sharing of curricula in final draft form. In addition, the curriculum

development efforts were targeted to teach the participants the skills necessary to continue developing curriculum long after the workshop was concluded.

- There was 100% involvement and engagement by all invited youth workers. This was evident in all lesson presentations, curriculum development exercises, and role-play activities. In addition, Iraqi attendees to the workshop were able to practice their English language skills while interacting with the presenters and the language interpreters.

- Iraqi, Kurdish, and U. S. relationships were established and/or strengthened among the participants. Several instances throughout the five-day workshop allowed for the breakdown of stereotypes and the dispelling of myths. Issues regarding ethnic and gender differences were highlighted throughout the week allowing for opportunities to model effective behaviors that create safe environments for all youth regardless of gender or ethnicity.

- There exists a foundation for starting 4-H clubs in the Kurdistan region. Currently, the majority of 4-H activities are located in the central and southern regions of Iraq. This workshop provided the necessary information, tools, and contacts for Kurdistan regional participants to learn more about initiating 4-H clubs in their provinces.

Conclusion

At best, curriculum development is a lengthy, cognitive process grounded in theory that requires extensive knowledge of the curriculum development writing process combined with knowledge of the technical subject matter built upon essential standards and measured by indicators. Successful curriculum writing efforts are then pilot tested at the age-appropriate developmental level before scaling up and made available to a broader audience. The five days that the facilitation team had with the workshop participants was simply not long enough to provide for adequate time in training to produce a youth development curriculum product for widespread distribution.

However, the efforts involved in this project create a solid foundation upon which to build future youth oriented curriculum development efforts in Iraq. The conference was a first for several of the participants and relationships developed as a result of the week long interactions. It is recommended that future efforts focus on longer term arrangements with Iraqi youth workers that allow for multiple points of contact in-country, to provide oversight for the curriculum writing, testing, and revision and distribution efforts necessary for widespread adoption of the youth development curriculum developed. In addition, providing opportunities for Iraqi youth workers to work along with youth partners in other countries would strengthen their programs. This approach to strengthening 4-H youth development programs may be applicable to other countries.

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