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## 2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

### -PRT Helps NGO Partner with Kirkuk Government-

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**Kirkuk, Iraq** - Recently, the Kirkuk chapter of Kurdistan Save the Children (KSC), a youth centered, non-governmental organization, working in coordination with the Kirkuk Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and the Kirkuk Province Directorates of Health and Education, successfully completed a free prescription eyewear program for elementary school children. The project involved evaluating over 6,000 Kirkuk children in grades 1-2 in over 80 public schools.



*Chairman of KSC's Kirkuk branch Najmaddin Nori fits schoolchildren with new eyeglasses.*

The project was initiated by KSC who approached the Kirkuk PRT for help. The PRT's PD section worked with the Kirkuk Directorates of Health and Education in order to secure both their approval and support. After several meetings, Sabah Amin the Director General of Health agreed to provide and coordinate free exams to children selected for prescription eyeglasses. Shan Mubarek, Director General of Education agreed to provide lists of schools and the number of children in each grade level to KSC. Using its own funds, KSC began a pilot project of testing every first grade student in the Kirkuk city.

Kirkuk is both the traditional name of this northern Iraq province and the name of its capital city. On the site of ancient civilizations dating back five thousand years, it includes populations of Kurds, Turkomen and Arabs.

Phase I of the project involved visiting each individual school and evaluating the need for eyeglasses. During the Phase II, KSC provided transportation to a Directorate of Health clinic where the children were examined and given a prescription.

After only two weeks, KSC had already tested over 1,550 schoolchildren from 26 different schools. Later, after the completion of both phases, free prescription glasses were delivered to 275 vision impaired children (out of the 6,300 tested). Due to the efforts of Najmaddin Nori, chairman of KSC's Kirkuk branch, and Araz Kareem, Project Director, the project was completed efficiently using only Iraqi resources.

“I am so grateful to participate in this program that was implemented by Kurdistan Save the Children Organization. I felt that I did something, although it was simple, to help children in our primary schools who suffer from refractory eye problems or other ophthalmic diseases,” commented Dr. Jabbar Hasan Chellab from the Kirkuk Health Directorate.

On May 4, 2008, the Kirkuk chapter of Kurdistan Save the Children celebrated the project’s completion at al-Musellah Youth Center. Najmaddin Nori presented the eyeglasses at the impressive event that featured child performers of multi ethnic music and dancing. This successful coordination of Kirkuk governmental and non-governmental organizations, in providing essential health services to the next generation, highlights the growing civic spirit of cooperation that characterizes this community.

“Empowering Iraqi NGOs through project collaboration and government support helps the PRT demonstrate to Iraqis what can be achieved through combined effort. It also demonstrates how civil society organizations can serve the citizens of Kirkuk,” said Martin Miller, PRT Kirkuk Public Diplomacy Advisor.

Established in Iraq in 2005, there are now 29 civilian-military Provincial Reconstruction Teams that work with coalition partners and provincial and local governments in all of the country’s 18 provinces. Their role is to help government institutions better serve their citizenry and to help build stability through economic, infrastructure, rule of law and public diplomacy programs.