



WFP EVALUATION



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Evaluation of Iraq WFP Transitional Interim and Country Strategic Plans 2018–2024

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Executive summary

Introduction

Evaluation features

1. Country strategic plan (CSP) evaluations are a key instrument for accountability and learning in accordance with the expectations of the WFP Executive Board and management. They provide evidence on WFP's strategic positioning, the relevance of its activities to needs, its effectiveness in contributing to strategic outcomes, its efficiency and the factors explaining its performance so as to inform the design of the next generation of CSPs and, potentially, the design of United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks.
2. The evaluation of WFP's transitional interim CSP (T-ICSP) and CSP for Iraq covers WFP's interventions in the country from 2017 to October 2023. It analyses shifts in WFP programming since 2017, particularly WFP's transition from emergency response to a focus on resilience and country capacity strengthening interventions.
3. The evaluation was conducted between April 2023 and May 2024. Its main users are WFP – the Iraq country office, the Regional Bureau for the Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe and headquarters – the WFP Board, the Government of Iraq, donors, members of the United Nations country team, cooperating partners and the beneficiaries of WFP programmes in Iraq.
4. The evaluation adopted a theory-based and mixed-methods approach, drawing on monitoring data, document reviews, field observations, interviews and focus group discussions. In-country data collection was conducted from 5 to 26 October 2023. In March 2024, the evaluation results were discussed in Baghdad with country office staff and WFP's partners. A virtual workshop was also organized with WFP partners in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.
5. Consideration of equality between men and women, disability inclusion, protection, accountability to affected populations, nutrition, climate change and environmental issues was integrated into the evaluation. Ethical standards were applied to safeguard the dignity of the people involved and the confidentiality of the information shared.

Context

6. With a population of 44.5 million,¹ Iraq is culturally, ethnically and religiously diverse. Between 75 and 80 percent of the population are Arab, Kurds represent 15 to 20 percent and the majority of Iraqis identify as Muslim.² The political landscape is complex and governance is divided between the Federal Government and the Kurdish Regional Authority, with the latter having a significant degree of autonomy, including through a regional government and a parliament based in Erbil.
7. Oil dominates Iraq's economy, contributing 42 percent of gross domestic product, followed by agriculture, which accounts for 5 percent. Poverty rates increased to nearly 30 percent owing to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and unemployment stands at 16.5 percent – 28.2 percent among women.³ Poverty rates are highest in Iraq's southern governorates.
8. Following the end of the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, the number of people in need in Iraq decreased from 11 million in 2017 to 2.5 million in 2022. Overall food insecurity is relatively low, with more than 95 percent of the population showing acceptable levels of food









¹ World Bank. 2022. [Population, total - Iraq](#)

² European Union Agency for Asylum. 2021. Religious and ethnic minorities, and stateless persons.

³ World Bank. 2022. [Iraq Economic Monitor: A New Opportunity to Reform](#); Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). 2022. Multidimensional Poverty Analysis – Iraq 2022; and World Bank. 2022. [Unemployment \(% of total labor force\) – Iraq](#).

consumption.⁴ Progress on addressing malnutrition is mixed:⁵ 12.6 percent of children under 5 are stunted and 6.1 percent are overweight – below the regional averages.⁶ However, 40.1 percent of adult women and 26.5 percent of men are obese.⁷

9. Significant risks related to climate change affect the livelihoods of vulnerable communities across the country.⁸ Water resources are rapidly dwindling and reliance on transboundary water flows compromises Iraq's water security. Droughts, compounded by excessive salt in rivers, pose challenges for agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing.⁹
10. Since 1990, the country has maintained a universal public distribution system, which is one of the world's largest food distribution programmes. However, the system and the national social safety net suffer from a lack of prioritization strategies and rising costs. Despite the progress made over the last few years, Iraq's population still faces numerous challenges, including limited access to basic services, unstable governance, conflict, youth unemployment, and protracted displacement. Women and girls face significant risks of violence, exacerbated by socioeconomic vulnerability and traditional social norms.

TABLE 1: IRAQ SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	Value	Year
	Total population (million) (1)	44.5 million	2022
	Human development index (rank and score) (2)	128th of 193 countries 0.673	2022
	Population below the poverty line (3)	30%	2021
	Prevalence of stunting (% of children under 5) (4)	12.6%	2018
	Agriculture, forestry and fishing value added as share of gross domestic product (%) (5)	5%	2021
	Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) (modelled International Labour Organization estimate) (5)	20%	2019
	Refugees (6)	279,240	2023
	Global Gender Gap Index (rank and score) (7)	154th of 156 countries 0.535	2021

Sources: (1) World Bank; (2) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); (3) SIDA; (4) Global Nutrition Report; (5) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); (6) Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); (7) World Economic Forum.

⁴ WFP. 2024. [Iraq annual country report 2023](#).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Global Nutrition Report. 2022. Country [Nutrition Profiles – Iraq](#).

⁷ *Ibid.*

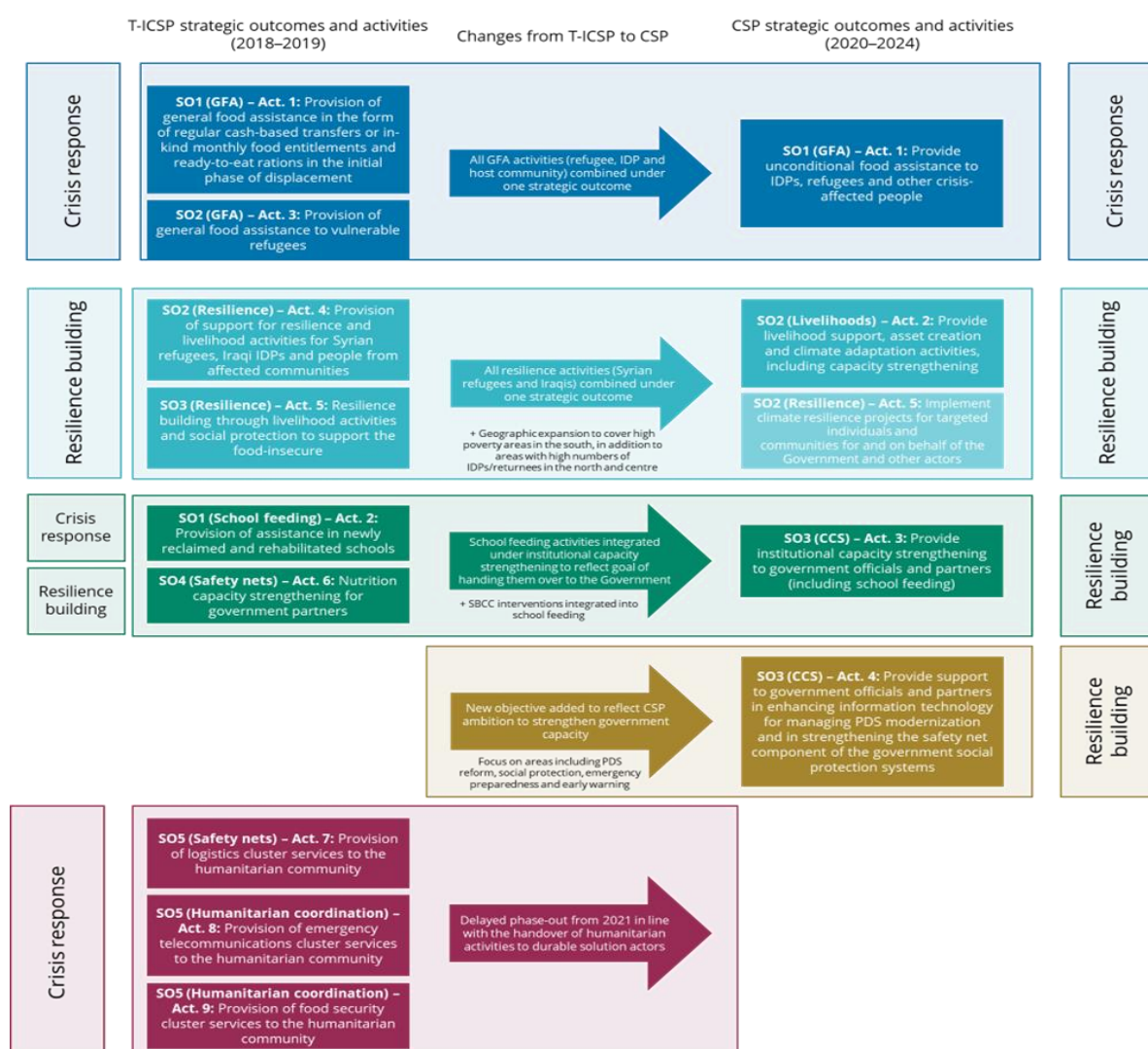
⁸ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). 2019. [Global Environment Outlook 6](#).

⁹ World Bank. 2022. [Iraq Country Climate and Development Report](#).

WFP country strategic plans

11. In 2018, the WFP country office in Iraq launched the T-ICSP for 2018–2019 aimed at providing continuous emergency assistance for internally displaced persons, refugees and returnees while scaling up long-term recovery and livelihood-based activities, a trend that was continued and accelerated under the CSP for 2020–2024. With the approval of the CSP in 2020, WFP intended to shift its role to that of an enabler of national programmes and envisioned handing over several interventions to the Government of Iraq.¹⁰
12. The CSP incorporated crisis response interventions for internally displaced persons and Syrian refugees under strategic outcome 1. Support for resilience and livelihoods was consolidated under strategic outcome 2, and all country capacity strengthening activities – including in school feeding, emergency preparedness and early warning, and social and behaviour change communications – along with WFP’s support for the reform of social protection and the public distribution system were gathered under strategic outcome 3.¹¹

Figure 1: Activity mapping: Iraq transitional interim country strategic plan and country strategic plan, 2018–2023



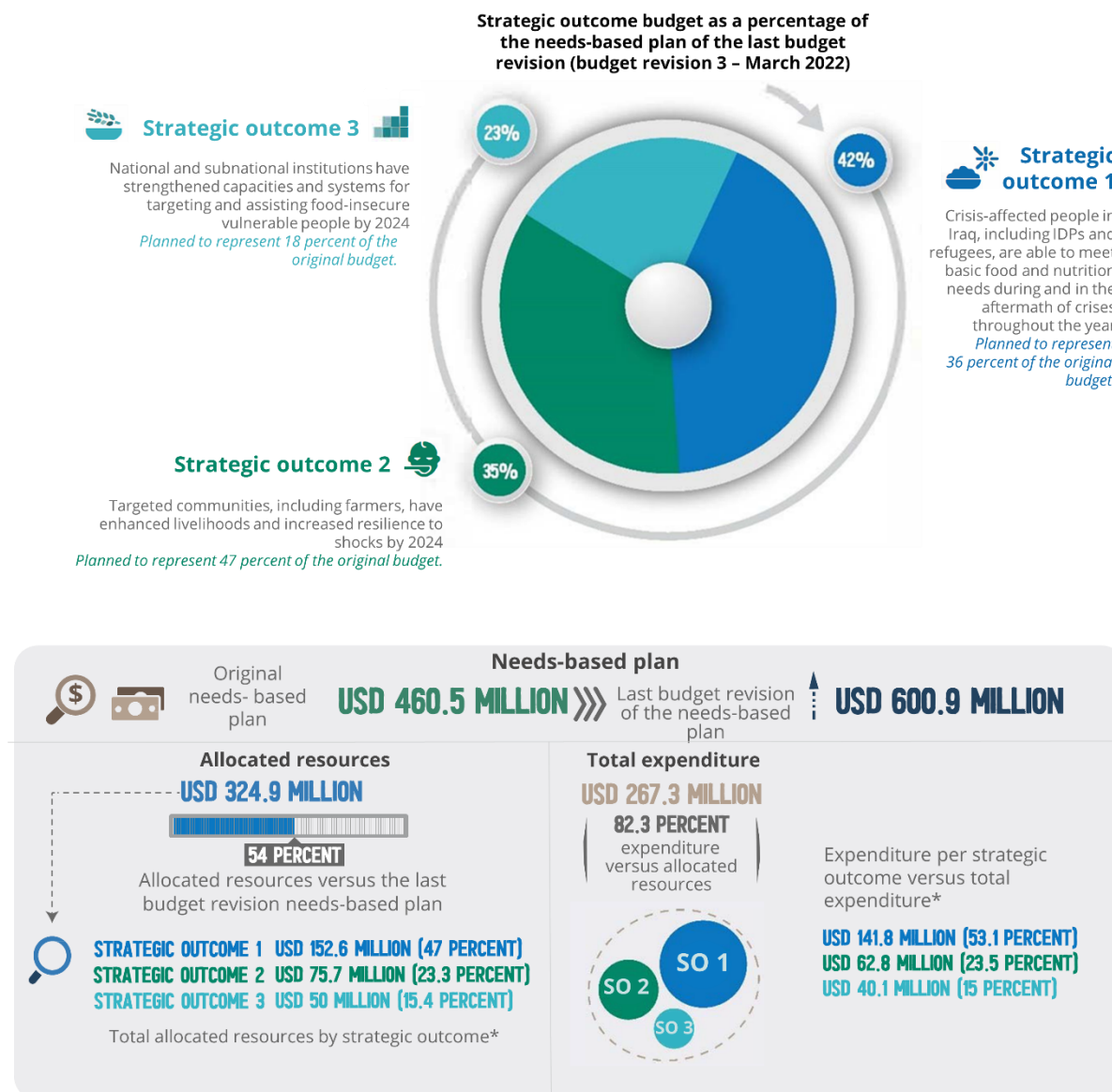
Source: Evaluation team, based on T-ICSP and CSP documentation.

¹⁰ WFP. 2023. Iraq country strategic plan (2020–2024): mid-term review. Internal document.

¹¹ WFP. 2019. [Iraq country strategic plan \(2020–2024\). Annual country+ reports 2018, 2020 and 2022.](#)

13. The CSP underwent four budget revisions, with the needs-based plan increasing from USD 460,514,522 for 1 million beneficiaries in November 2019 to USD 701,035,047 for 2.3 million beneficiaries. As of October 2023, 54 percent of the needs-based plan was funded. Germany was the largest funding source, followed by the United States of America, flexible funding, the Government of Iraq, and Japan.

Figure 2: Iraq country strategic plan (2020–2024) strategic outcomes, budget, funding and expenditures*



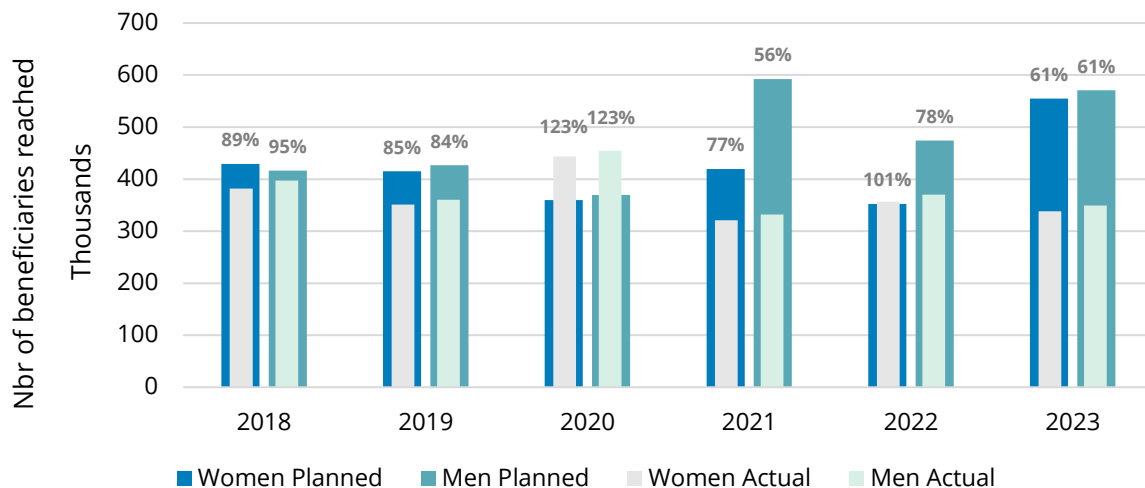
* Percentages of allocated resources and expenditures by strategic outcome were calculated at the grand total level and therefore do not add up to 100, given that they also include funding or expenses relative to non-strategic outcome, direct support costs, and indirect support costs.

* The inception report states that the period covered by the evaluation was 2017 to October 2023. As a fourth budget revision was approved in September 2023, after the finalization of the inception report, the planned and actual figures for financial and beneficiary data presented in the evaluation report are in line with the figures in the third budget revision.

Sources: [Country portfolio budget](#), [CSP budget revision 3](#), [integrated road map analytics and annual country reports](#).

14. On average, WFP reached 80 percent of planned beneficiaries between 2018 and 2023, with variations over the years. While WFP exceeded its beneficiary targets for 2020 and reached more than 85 percent of planned beneficiaries in 2019 and 2022, it achieved only 64 percent of its targets in 2021, mainly owing to challenges with resource mobilization.

Figure 3: Men and women beneficiaries, planned and actual, 2018–2023



Source: WFP COMET. Data for 2018–2019 from the T-ICSP and for 2020–2023 from CSP reporting.

Evaluation findings

To what extent is the country strategic plan evidence-based and strategically oriented to meet the needs of the most vulnerable?

Relevance and alignment

15. The design of the T-ICSP and CSP was informed by appropriate assessments and evidence that highlighted the need for WFP to continue focusing on the emergency needs of the most vulnerable people while shifting its focus from the provision of humanitarian assistance towards long-term approaches, increasingly addressing the drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition.
16. As set out in the T-ICSP and CSP, WFP’s objectives were closely aligned with national and regional priorities,¹² with a focus on Iraq’s transition to a post-recovery stage and the building of effective state institutions to reduce unemployment, restore productive sectors and establish social safety nets.

Comparative advantage and strategic positioning

17. WFP leveraged its comparative advantages in emergency response, food security and digitalization and its operational presence at the community level to build strategic partnerships with a broad range of other United Nations entities in the areas of social protection, climate resilience and disaster management.
18. WFP’s work in rural development and livelihoods – encompassing job skills development and vocational training – supported sustainable returns and contributed to the COVID-19 pandemic response, but other actors in Iraq have a stronger comparative advantage in these areas under an agenda focused on development.

Coherence and adaptiveness

19. Overall, WFP’s shift in focus towards disaster risk management, resilience building and capacity strengthening activities was consistent with the strategy of the United Nations country team, in

¹² Including Iraq’s national development plans for 2018 and 2022, Vision 2030, reconstruction framework for 2018–2027, private sector development plan for 2014–2030 and strategy for poverty reduction for 2018–2022, and the Kurdistan Region’s “2020: A Vision for the Future”.

which humanitarian actions under the humanitarian response plan were complemented by a recovery and resilience programme as part of a commitment to multidimensional reconstruction.

20. WFP's interventions were based on a flexible framework, which was crucial in enabling the organization to navigate changing conditions and adapt the focus of its approach from the implementation to the enabling of interventions. WFP successfully adapted its programming in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest and the return of Iraqi refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic, adjusting transfer values, adding new urban livelihood approaches and providing take-home rations and ready-to-eat meals. Country capacity strengthening plans were responsive to the Government's requests but overestimated the absorptive capacity of government institutions.
21. While the broad scope of some strategic outcomes provided important flexibility in a fluid environment, it also made it challenging to coherently articulate WFP's approach in key development areas such as capacity strengthening.

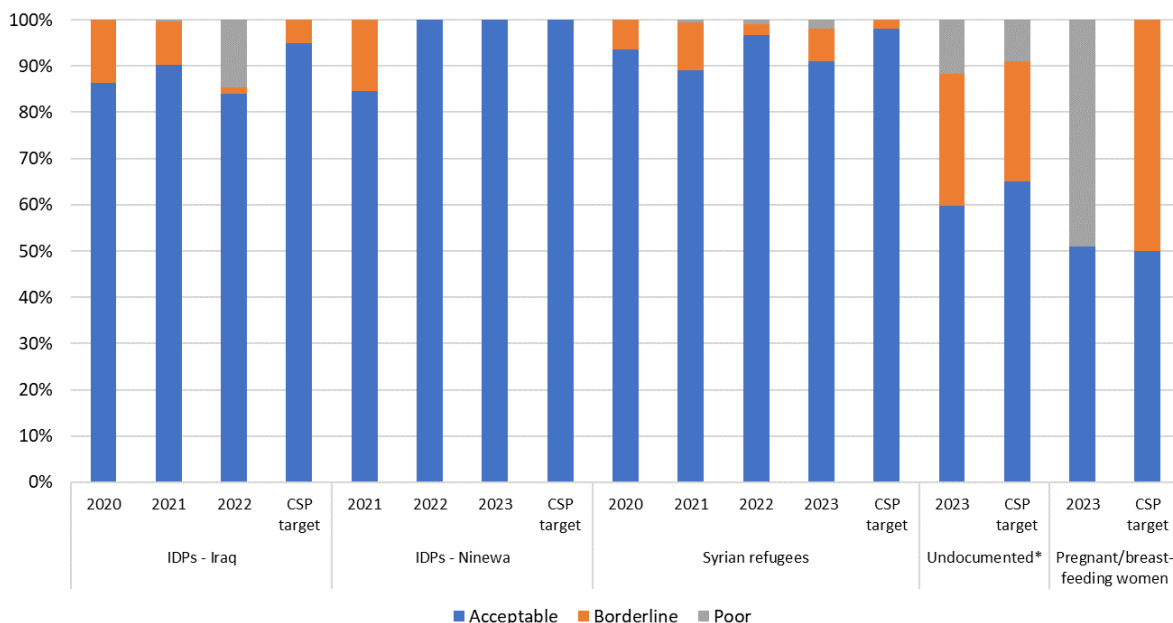
What are the extent and quality of WFP's specific contributions to country strategic plan strategic outcomes in Iraq?

22. This section discusses achievements and challenges related to the strategic outcomes included in the T-ICSP and the CSP. The logistics and emergency telecommunications clusters under T-ICSP strategic outcome 5 were deactivated in 2019 soon after the start of the T-ICSP, so no evidence is provided for that component.

Strategic outcome 1 – general food assistance

23. WFP's unconditional food assistance provided an important buffer against shocks for vulnerable internally displaced persons and refugees. However, reduced funding for emergency response, limitations in government capacity and shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and soaring food prices meant that during the CSP period WFP's assistance fell short of some of its outcome targets for food consumption scores and coping strategies, in particular for internally displaced persons outside the Ninewa region and for pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls.

Figure 4: Strategic outcome 1 – food consumption score, 2020–2023



* Since 2023, WFP has also supported crisis-affected households residing in formal and informal sites and lacking essential civil documentation; and pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls. Outcomes in the region of Ninewa for 2018–2020 are not reported.

Source: WFP COMET.

24. The mobilization of funding for work under strategic outcome 1 has been a challenge since 2018. To cope with funding shortages while striving to ensure adequate coverage, WFP had to reduce the value of cash transfers in some areas for several months in 2018, 2021 and 2022.

Strategic outcome 2 – livelihoods and climate adaptation

25. WFP's livelihood and climate adaptation interventions supported the sustainable return of internally displaced persons and improved social cohesion through the re-establishment of agricultural activities and the provision of income generation and skills development opportunities.
26. The main obstacles and challenges to the success of the livelihood interventions were related to the poor quality of the materials provided to participants and the timing of their delivery, the short duration of the training provided, weak linkages to employers or credit schemes, and restrictive social norms and travel constraints for women.
27. Over the second half of the CSP period WFP initiated several pilot projects supporting young people and smallholder farmers which will require continued support over several years in order to become sustainable.

Strategic outcome 3 – institutional capacity strengthening in school feeding, emergency preparedness, social and behaviour change communication and the digitalization of the public distribution system

28. WFP successfully established a school feeding programme in 2018, expanding it to 13 governorates over the years and handing it over to the Government at the start of the 2023/24 school year. Teachers, school officials and students appreciated the programme, despite the small number of feeding days provided owing to reduced funding, instability, COVID-19 and onerous administrative and bureaucratic hurdles.
29. Given Iraq's precarious situation with regard to climate change, the building and maintenance of government capacities in emergency preparedness is crucial. However, the evaluation found that the training delivered from 2020 to 2022 focused more on water management than early warning and preparedness. Moreover, the activities did not progress as expected because of limited funding and the turnover of personnel in WFP and national ministries.
30. Social and behaviour change communication was not widely integrated into school feeding activities and overall lost focus as CSP implementation progressed.
31. WFP has been able to work with the Government of Iraq to address issues related to the public distribution system and social safety net reform, including the absence of prioritization strategies and the high cost. WFP's shift from the provision of digital assets to the implementation of capacity-strengthening activities is overall positive. However, corporate guidance requesting that the social protection digitalization project be implemented through an international company meant that digital assets deployed by WFP were not always suitable for local conditions, and to some extent this affected the quality and sustainability of digital products.

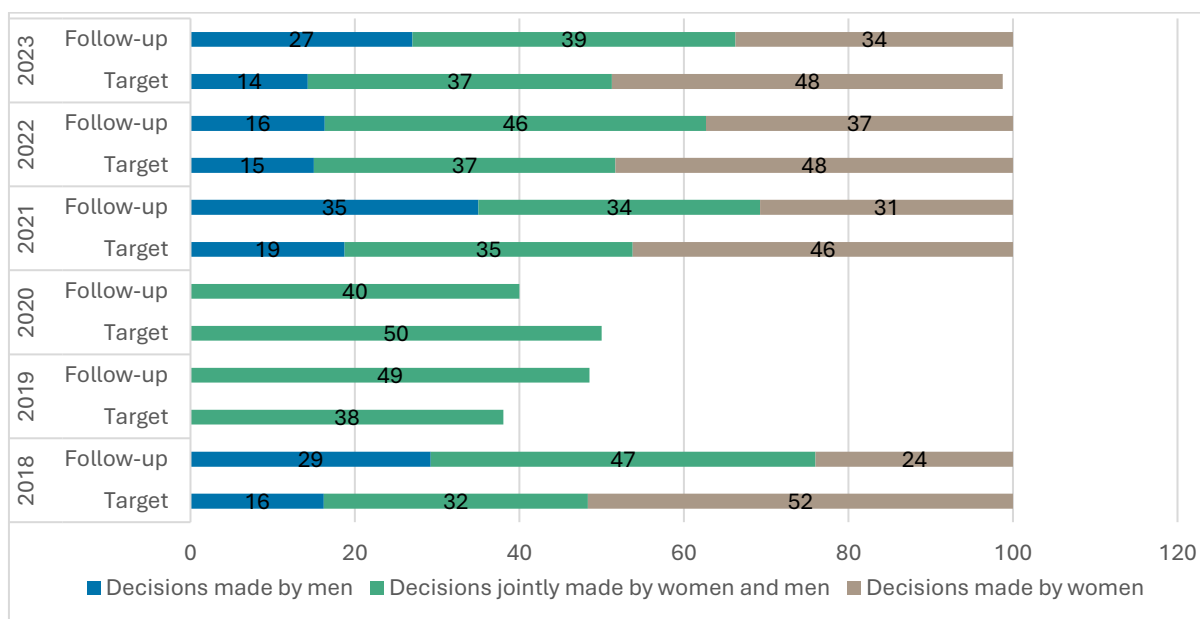
Strategic outcome 5 – humanitarian coordination

32. Under the T-ICSP, WFP contributed to the effective coordination of humanitarian support in Iraq, drawing on its extensive logistics and technical capacity. The handover of humanitarian coordination activities to the Government and development partners was not well managed, although the weaknesses related largely to gaps in government and United Nations leadership that were beyond WFP's control.

Cross-cutting areas

33. WFP made good progress in mainstreaming equality between men and women throughout its programmes and systems, achieving equality between men and women in its programming and introducing a number of interventions tailored to the needs of women and girls. However, progress in achieving the CSP's more ambitious transformation agenda has been mixed owing to limited investment and challenges in engaging with government stakeholders.

Figure 5: Country strategic plan cross-cutting outcome indicator: proportions of households where women, men or women and men make decisions, 2018–2023



Note: In 2019 and 2020, only values for joint decisions were recorded.

Source: WFP COMET.

34. WFP made a concerted effort to promote disability inclusion in its programmes, reaching 97,900 persons with disabilities in 2021 and 108,000 in 2022. Although some adjustments were made to distribution sites and training venues, the evaluation did not find clear evidence of specific adjustments being made to programme activities in order to meet the different needs of persons with disabilities.
35. The country office has implemented various procedures for handling complaints related to fraud, corruption and sexual exploitation and abuse but must urgently publicize its new feedback mechanism so as to fill a gap in accountability, as many of the beneficiaries consulted did not know about the mechanism's existence.
36. WFP has integrated climate adaptive practices widely in its food assistance for assets activities by introducing, for example, reforestation and mangrove rehabilitation initiatives in the marshes in 2023. While these are positive and potentially scalable initiatives, their late start meant that it was too early in their implementation for the evaluation team to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of these approaches.
37. WFP maintained adherence to humanitarian principles in its crisis response programming and throughout its transition to development work, although its prioritization of beneficiaries living in camps at times weighed on its ability to reach people in need outside the camps.

Sustainability and handover

38. Over the CSP period, WFP pivoted towards more sustainable approaches, including by working directly with the Government and academic institutions to build community assets and invest in job skills development. The handover of the school feeding programme serves as a model for future capacity strengthening approaches, with national funding secured and government stakeholders expressing confidence in their ability to scale up the programme.
39. The evaluation team found little evidence on the sustainability of resilience and livelihood interventions. The weak focus on markets and value chains meant that some farmers were not confident that they could maintain the assets after the end of WFP assistance. Similarly, many

beneficiaries who engaged in vocational training and job skills programmes needed longer and more tailored support to graduate sustainably from vulnerability to resilience.

40. WFP's intentions regarding the handover of projects to the Government were overly ambitious at all levels. Constant government turnover, limited budget allocations and challenges in sourcing appropriate technical capacity meant that counterparts were not always confident that they could maintain the projects without ongoing support from WFP.
41. The digitalization of the public distribution system was promising, but short-term funding, a reliance on international rather than local information technology solutions and insufficient capacity in the Government undermined the overall sustainability of social protection reform.

Humanitarian–development–peace nexus

42. WFP facilitated strategic linkages between humanitarian action and development cooperation by designing the framework for the transition from emergency to resilience work and drawing on its core strengths in food security to support broader peace and stability objectives.
43. WFP's resilience and capacity strengthening work, underpinned by conflict-sensitive approaches and the effective inclusion of different population groups, is contributing to sustainable returns of displaced people and community-level social cohesion between returnees and the communities to which they return.

To what extent has WFP used its resources efficiently in contributing to country strategic plan outputs and strategic outcomes?

Timeliness

44. Overall, WFP delivered assistance in a timely manner, implementing appropriate mitigation measures to address restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, delays from school feeding suppliers and access challenges.
45. Outputs related to capacity strengthening and climate change were delivered with some delays, with several interventions in these areas starting only in 2022.

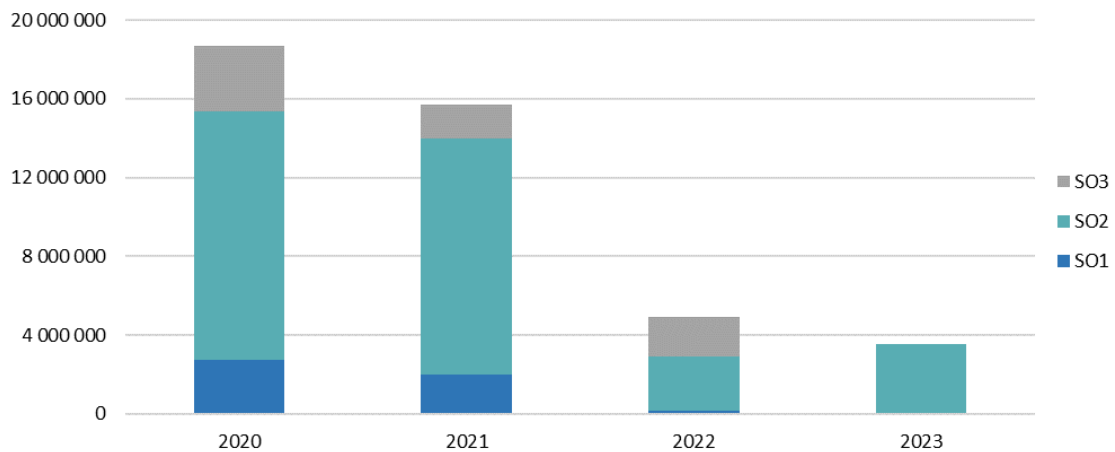
Appropriateness of coverage and prioritization

46. Coverage was appropriate in reaching the most vulnerable internally displaced persons, returnees and host community members. WFP's unconditional food assistance was aligned with the presence of internally displaced persons in Iraq, and resilience and livelihood interventions were concentrated in areas with high levels of food insecurity and displacement, reflecting the dual strategy of supporting sustainable returns while shifting to long-term approaches to tackle food insecurity and climate risks.
47. WFP adapted its prioritization strategies appropriately in response to changing needs, declining funding and the transition to development-focused activities. The criteria used to prioritize beneficiaries in livelihood activities ensured the engagement of vulnerable groups and promoted social cohesion, but it unintentionally led to inclusion errors by allowing the participation of citizens with little interest in active employment.

Cost-efficiency in the delivery of activities and outputs

48. The evaluation found a positive evolution in the cost-efficiency of the country office's activities as CSP implementation progressed, with large cost savings in 2022 in cash-based transfer activities under strategic outcomes 1 and 2 due to the switch in implementation approach from the use of cooperating partners to direct implementation by WFP. Other actions such as asset sales and savings on logistics expenses contributed to cost-efficiency and enabled the country office to continue to reach beneficiaries despite reduced funding.

Figure 6: WFP funding channelled to cooperating partners per year, 2019–2023 (USD)



Source: Country office data on monthly payments to cooperating partners, 2020–2023.

1.1 What factors explain WFP’s performance and the extent to which it has achieved the strategic shift envisioned under the country strategic plan?

1.1.1 Financial resources

49. The country office’s ability to raise sufficient resources varied significantly over the years and among the areas of intervention. While the Iraq CSP has benefited from higher than average levels of multiyear funding compared with other CSPs,¹³ the predictability and flexibility of funding began to decline in 2022, making WFP’s transition to development work more difficult. Resilience and livelihoods (CSP activity 2) and institutional capacity strengthening (CSP activity 3) programmes were particularly affected by funding shortfalls. WFP made significant efforts to diversify funding, including by exploring innovative climate finance, multi-year development funding and private sector partnerships. However, the evaluation observed a lack of corporate guidance and support on how to engage with the Green Climate Fund and other funding sources at the country level, which made it challenging for the country office to approach such funding mechanisms.
50. Donors view WFP as a credible development partner but are unwilling to fund activities beyond those designed to build government capacity. The Government of Iraq values its partnership with WFP but has not yet funded WFP’s direct costs. Heavy reliance on two main donors (Germany and the United States of America), an overall decline in donor funding for Iraq and a steep decline in WFP’s global funding represent significant risks for WFP’s financial stability.

1.1.2 Monitoring and reporting

51. The ability to generate and disseminate evidence, often in partnership with other key actors, was a key factor in ensuring the relevance and adaptiveness of WFP’s strategy throughout a period of major transition and changing circumstances.
52. From 2021 onwards the country office engaged in several capacity building initiatives with the national and Kurdistan authorities to support food security monitoring and climate interventions. However, the decision to start several pilot projects in a broad range of new geographic and thematic areas in 2022 made it challenging for the country office to articulate, measure and demonstrate its achievements.
53. The country office’s monitoring and reporting system is aligned with WFP’s corporate results framework which, however, did not suit the specific needs of a country office undergoing the transition from humanitarian programming towards more development-oriented interventions.

¹³ WFP. 2022. [Evaluation of WFP’s Policy on Country Strategic Plans](#).

1.1.3 Partnerships

54. WFP's move to direct implementation allowed it to build a diverse network of partnerships across government – at both the national and subnational levels – the United Nations, universities, the private sector and local communities.
55. There are opportunities for stronger engagement with private sector actors and for enhancing communication flows between central and district ministries on the relevance and sustainability of WFP's activities, which is critical to the scale-up of pilot programmes.
56. Beyond their country-level memorandum of understanding signed in 2019, WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations could have done more to leverage their other core strengths.

1.1.4 Human resources

57. WFP has managed the transition from humanitarian to development work, and from working through cooperating partners to direct implementation, without a major increase in staff numbers owing largely to the strong commitment of its highly motivated employees.
58. WFP made important steps in building new skills for development programming, with many employees gaining new skills through working and covering a diverse portfolio of projects in a large geographic area.

Conclusions

59. ***The structure and adaptability of the transitional interim country strategic plan and the country strategic plan.*** The T-ICSP provided a coherent but flexible framework for WFP's response to the changing environment and the evolving priorities of the Government while shifting to more development-focused interventions. However, at the CSP design stage WFP overestimated the availability of funding for the scale-up of resilience activities while underestimating the potential delays in the implementation and handover of capacity strengthening activities, and the consequences for WFP personnel of the transition to direct implementation.
60. ***Achievements and comparative advantages.*** Following the end of the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, WFP's shift in emphasis from providing food assistance to supporting the Government in promoting youth employment and climate-resilient agriculture and improving national social safety nets laid the foundation for a long-term, sustainable approach to addressing food insecurity in the country. WFP leveraged its comparative advantages in emergency response, food security and digitalization, underpinned by its strong presence at the community level across the country.
61. ***Equality between men and women, and protection.*** WFP achieved gender parity in its programmes in a country with very low levels of women's participation in formal job markets and prioritized support for persons with disabilities. However, it did not invest enough in transformative programmatic approaches. While WFP had appropriate systems and training in place to manage protection risks and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, many beneficiaries were not aware of how to make a complaint through WFP's feedback mechanism, thereby revealing an accountability gap.
62. ***The sustainability and scalability of achievements.*** In line with its transition from being an implementer to becoming an enabler of interventions, WFP piloted several new programmes and capacity-strengthening initiatives, including a national school feeding initiative, new digital platforms for registration in the public distribution system and innovative approaches to climate-resilient agriculture through mangrove rehabilitation and reforestation. The lack of a collective vision among government and United Nations partners of the type of social protection system Iraq is building somewhat undermined the sustainability of social protection reform.
63. ***Partnerships and funding.*** WFP's activities benefited from the strong partnerships it established with the Government, universities, communities and other United Nations entities. WFP was largely unsuccessful in securing funding to cover its own costs from the Government of Iraq, despite the

Government's growing interest in partnering with WFP. Heavy reliance on two donors proved to be a weakness in a challenging transition period. Donors see WFP as a credible development partner but are increasingly willing to fund only activities that have a realistic pathway to the capacity strengthening activities to the Government.

64. ***Demonstrating results.*** WFP's office structure and corporate monitoring systems were not conducive to the demonstration of long-term results, with gaps in monitoring and reporting capacities posing a risk to donor support. Overall, WFP's achievements were due mostly to the strong efforts of its staff, who delivered results along the humanitarian–development spectrum during the transition period.
65. ***Navigating the shift.*** Despite funding and capacity challenges, the country office successfully managed major transitions, including a shift in its work from a humanitarian to a development context, and an operational shift that made the most of limited funding through direct implementation of programmes. Further work is needed to clarify WFP's comparative advantages and its contributions to Iraq's emergency preparedness and social protection systems as the country continues to progress towards middle-income status and a development context, while WFP continues to assist highly vulnerable people who may fall outside the Government's established safety net systems.

Recommendations

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1. Focus WFP's efforts on supporting Iraq's capacity for climate resilience, emergency preparedness and response and social safety nets, with clear milestones in WFP's transition and exit strategy as Iraq progresses towards upper-middle-income and post-crisis status. Advocate the maintenance of specialist international support for particularly vulnerable people during the transition.		Strategic				
1.1.	In the CSP for 2025–2029 and related strategic documents, clearly articulate and focus efforts on key areas of WFP's comparative advantage, including social safety nets, emergency preparedness and climate resilience. Clearly define success and set measurable milestones for the responsible handover of capacity strengthening activities to the Government and WFP's exit from Iraq as the country continues its progress towards post-conflict, upper-middle-income status supported by significant national revenue sources.		Country office	Regional bureau	High	First quarter of 2025
1.2	Develop a theory of change that sets out plausible pathways for the building, testing and hand-over of capacities, with realistic timelines, clear vectors of change and the identification of relevant assumptions. Ensure that all capacity-building plans are clearly aligned with government priorities and needs.		Country office		High	First quarter of 2025
1.3	Advocate targeted continuous international support for vulnerable people who are likely to fall outside social safety nets – such as undocumented people, refugees,		Country office	Regional bureau Headquarters (Partnerships and	High	Third quarter of 2027

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	Iraqis returning from the Syrian Arab Republic and marginalized groups (for example, Yazidis) – while national systems are strengthened or other durable solutions found.			Innovation Department)		
2. Focus country capacity strengthening on strategic approaches for integrating cash-based transfer, resilience, social protection and emergency preparedness initiatives into government systems. Develop a model that can be scaled up in response to a future crisis and that is tailored to Iraq’s transition to upper-middle-income status.		Strategic				
2.1.	Develop a clearly articulated vision of the type of social protection system that the Government is building with WFP’s support, which will inform collaboration with government and other partners – including United Nations partners – on generating a broadly shared vision for social protection in Iraq.		Country office	Headquarters and regional bureaux (social protection unit) [High	Fourth quarter of 2029
2.2.	Examine WFP’s comparative advantage in relation to the reform of the social protection system (including the public distribution system), strengthening and investing in the appropriate capabilities for the organization in Iraq in areas such as social protection, monitoring, communication for development (C4D) and other communications, and capacity strengthening.		Country office	Headquarters (Programme Policy and Guidance Division) and regional bureau (programme unit)	Medium	Fourth quarter of 2029
2.3.	Ensure that digital transformation is integrated into the broader reform agenda. Prioritize local solutions so as to develop digital assets that partners have the capacity to maintain. Build sustainability and handover plans into all digital asset programmes from the start.		Country office	Headquarters (Technology Division) regional bureau (Technology Division)	High	Fourth quarter of 2029

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
				headquarters (Partnerships and Innovation Department) regional bureau (partnership unit)		
2.4.	Develop a model for maintaining contingency emergency response capacity tailored to Iraq's transition to upper-middle-income status. The model should include consideration of the ways in which WFP can link its emergency response capacity to its ongoing work on social protection and emergency preparedness so as to facilitate a rapid and appropriate response in the event of a future crisis in Iraq.		Country office	Headquarters (Partnerships and Innovation Department, Emergencies Coordination Division, Programme Policy and Guidance Division)	Medium	First quarter of 2029
3. Resize and reconceptualize WFP's operations in Iraq to reflect a constrained funding environment and a development-focused future, and develop contingency plans for cases when funding falls below a minimum viable level.		Strategic				
3.1	Focus on fewer interventions in the areas of WFP's core added value – social protection, emergency preparedness and climate change – to allow staff to specialize and to demonstrate sustainable impact. Use pilot projects to test and innovate new approaches in line with, and within the framework of, identified strategies linked to a rigorous plan for taking successful approaches to scale.		Country office		High	First quarter of 2029
3.2	Where possible, maintain WFP's presence in the governorates, prioritizing the recruitment and retention of staff with solid development, climate and capacity		Country office		Medium	First quarter of 2029

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	strengthening expertise. Support WFP staff working in the governorates through a core support team based in Baghdad and Erbil. Implement a comprehensive engagement strategy to ensure that governorate-level pilot projects are understood at the central level and can be funded and scaled up through central ministries.					
3.3	Move away from humanitarian-focused, “one-size-fits-all” interventions and prioritization strategies. Tailor assistance to beneficiaries’ needs and priorities based on an assessment of the size and length of investment needed to move people out of vulnerability, which is likely to take years. Increase investments per person and per intervention to promote sustainable change.		Country office		High	Second quarter of 2025
3.4	Strengthen the capacity of monitoring and evaluation staff in order to increase learning and accountability to donors and partners. Revise corporate monitoring indicators and guidelines with a view to developing approaches to outcome monitoring that are suitable for demonstrating the achievement of long-term development outcomes and are tailored to country offices working in transitional settings.		Country office headquarters (Analysis Planning and Performance Division)	Regional bureau (research, assessment and monitoring unit)	High	Second quarter of 2025
3.5	Identify the minimum viable funding level needed to maintain a country office in Iraq. Develop alternative delivery models in case funding falls below this level, such as the maintenance of programme teams supported remotely by the regional bureau and headquarters or the use of cost sharing for support services.		Regional bureau	Country office headquarters (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)	High	Second quarter of 2025

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
4. Diversify funding and ensure multi-year funding for sustainable change.		Operational				
4.1.	Continue to diversify funding, exploring innovative climate finance, multi-year development funding and partnerships with regional donors and the private sector. Advocate funding from the Government of Iraq.		Country office	Regional bureau headquarters (Partnership and Innovation Department)	High	Third quarter of 2025
4.2.	Ensure that long-term climate resilience and capacity strengthening work is underpinned by long-term funding and avoid commencing any new work unless resources are reasonably secure.		Country office	Regional bureau headquarters (Partnership and Innovation Department)	High	Third quarter of 2025
5. Leverage partnerships to ensure the coherent roll-out of development interventions over the long term, and to obtain access to specialist expertise.		Operational				
5.1.	Continue to build and strengthen partnerships with development actors such as other United Nations entities and international financial institutions so as to leverage development expertise that is not traditionally found in WFP, especially expertise related to the responsible handover of livelihood and rural development activities.		Country office	Regional bureau (partnership unit)	Medium	Second quarter of 2025
5.2.	Develop a partnership engagement strategy based on stakeholder and process mapping to ensure that all partners at the national, Kurdish Regional Authority and governorate levels are aware of, and engage in, WFP interventions in the country.		Country office	Regional bureau (partnership unit)	Medium	Fourth quarter of 2025

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
5.3.	Explore and strengthen partnerships with universities, civil society and communities with a view to building sustainable approaches to emergency preparedness and response, climate resilience and social protection thereby ensuring ongoing reach into vulnerable communities.		Country office	Regional bureau (partnership unit)	Medium	Third quarter of 2025
6. Embed a gender-transformative and disability-inclusive approach into all interventions going forward, particularly those related to emergency preparedness and social protection.		Strategic				
6.1.	Ensure that transformative change strategies are informed by appropriate gender, inclusion and protection analysis tailored to the cultural and religious environment so as to avoid doing harm.		Country office	Regional bureau (gender, disability inclusion and protection unit) Headquarters (gender, disability inclusion and protection unit)	High	Second quarter of 2025
6.2	Train staff and key partners at the national, Kurdish Regional Authority and governorate levels on gender, inclusion and protection matters to promote transformative approaches to programme implementation.		Country Office	Regional bureau (gender, disability inclusion and protection, and climate units)	Medium	Fourth quarter of 2025
6.3	Develop indicators that measure transformative change and are tailored to the Iraqi context.		Country office	Headquarters (Analysis Planning and Performance Division)	Medium	Third quarter of 2025

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
6.4	Publicize the new accountability and feedback mechanisms to facilitate effective feedback loops that inform the management of risks related to complex change in existing social norms.		Country office	Regional bureau (gender, disability inclusion and protection, and climate units)	High	Fourth quarter of 2025

1 Introduction

1.2 Evaluation features

1. In line with World Food Programme (WFP) policy on country strategic plans¹⁴ (CSPs) and WFP evaluation policy,¹⁵ the Office of Evaluation (OEV) has commissioned a country strategic plan evaluation (CSPE) of the WFP CSP in Iraq. As per the Terms of Reference (Annex 1), the objective of the evaluation is twofold: to provide evaluation evidence and learning on WFP performance for country-level strategic decisions, specifically for developing the future engagement of WFP in Iraq; and to provide accountability for results to WFP stakeholders.
2. This CSPE is structured around OEV's four standard evaluation questions. It explores relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, coverage and sustainability, addressing cross-cutting issues, such as gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), humanitarian principles, accountability to affected populations (AAP), protection and capacity strengthening.
3. The evaluation's scope covers WFP CSP interventions in Iraq from 2017 to October 2023, including those under the Transitional-Interim CSP (T-ICSP) for 2018 which continued under the CSP.¹⁶ It assesses the strategic relationship between the T-ICSP and CSP, analysing shifts since 2017, particularly WFP's transition from emergency response to country capacity strengthening. The timing enables the country office to use CSPE evidence to inform the design of the new CSP for Iraq.
4. The evaluation took place between April 2023 and May 2024. For a detailed timeline of the process, refer to Annex 2 – Evaluation timeline.
5. Principal users of the evaluation include the WFP country office, Regional Bureau in Cairo, Headquarters technical divisions, WFP senior management, the WFP Executive Board, the Government of Iraq (GOI), donors, members of the United Nations country team (UNCT), cooperating partners and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Stakeholders from the expected users of the evaluation have engaged with the team during the inception and data collection phases, and beyond, to ensure a more extensive recognition of the outcomes and ownership of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

1.3 Context

1.3.1 General overview

6. Iraq, located in the Middle East and North Africa Region, encompasses 435,050 km².¹⁷ Iraq's population of 44.5 million¹⁸ has a high level of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. Iraq is predominantly Arab (75–80 percent), with Kurds making up 15–20 percent of the population, and smaller ethnic communities contributing to a multicultural landscape.¹⁹ The majority of Iraqis identify as Muslim, split between Shia (64–69 percent) and Sunni (29–34 percent).²⁰ Some 49.9 percent of Iraqis are female and 71

¹⁴ "Policy on country strategic plans" (WFP/EB.2/2016/4-C/1/Rev.1*)

¹⁵ "WFP evaluation policy 2022" (WFP/EB.1/2022/4-C)

¹⁶ Except for Act. 5, which was introduced through Budget Revision 04 on 15 September 2023. Several initiatives have been undertaken by the country office in December 2023 in the climate area on the margins of COP 28 in Dubai. Although they do not fall within the temporal scope of the evaluation, the Evaluation Report mentions them briefly in attempting to give a comprehensive overview of the activities carried over by the country office within an evolving context

¹⁷ WB2021. Surface area (sq. km) – Iraq <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.SRF.TOTL.K2?locations=IQ>

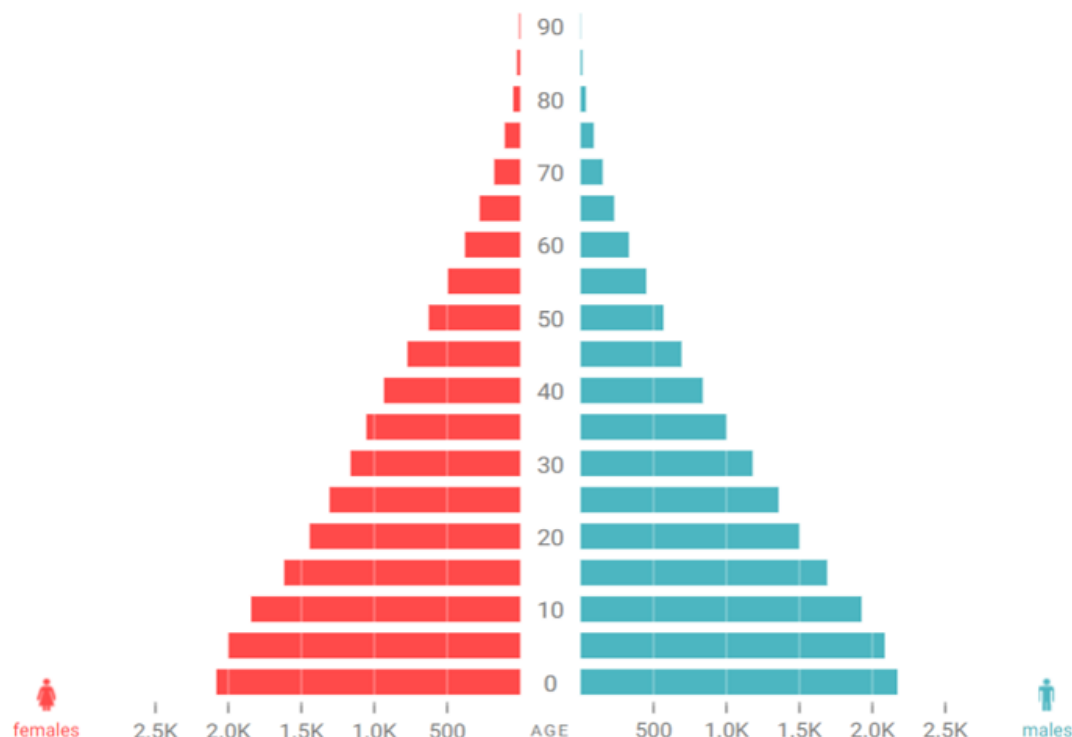
¹⁸ WB 2022. Population, total – Iraq <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=IQ>

¹⁹ European Union Agency for Asylum. 2021. *Religious and ethnic minorities, and stateless persons*

²⁰ Ibid.

percent live in urban areas.²¹ Life expectancy is 70 years (72 years for women, 68 for men);²² 37.4 percent of Iraqis are under 14 and only 3 percent are aged over 65 (see Figure 1).²³

Figure 1 – Iraqi population pyramid (2023)



Source: UNFPA. 2023. *Demographic Dividend Iraq*. 2023 data are projected. Database consulted on 9 August 2023.

7. Iraq faces overlapping challenges including poverty, inequality, limited access to basic services, water shortages, underemployment, gender inequality, displacement and a refugee crisis. Iraq ranked 128 of 193 on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2022, classified as “Medium human development”.²⁴

8. Iraq’s development has been affected by two decades of conflict, including the United States’ invasion in 2003, sectarian conflict between 2006 and 2009, and conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from 2014 to 2017.²⁵

9. Gross national income (GNI) per capita was USD 5,270 in 2022.²⁶ According to the last national household survey (2012), 18.9 percent of the population lived below the national poverty line in 2012, down from 22.4 percent in 2007.²⁷ Poverty is highest in Iraq’s southern governorates. A 2022 poverty analysis found that poverty had increased to nearly 30 percent due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Vulnerability is highest among internally displaced people (IDPs), refugees and single-head households.²⁸

10. Iraq’s economy is heavily reliant on oil. Oil revenues constitute over 99 percent of exports, 85 percent of budget allocations and 42 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).²⁹ As a result, the country is

²¹ WB, 2023. Population, female (percent of total population) – Iraq. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=IQ> WB. 2022. Data: Urban population (percent of total population) Iraq <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=IQ>

²² WB Data. 2023. Life expectancy at birth, total (years) – Iraq <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=IQ>

²³ UNFPA. World Population Dashboard. <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard> (Accessed on 9 September 2023)

²⁴ UNDP. 2023. *Human Development Insights*

²⁵ United States Institute of Peace. 29 May 2020. *Iraq timeline since the 2003 war*

²⁶ WB. 2023. GNI per capita, Atlas Method (current USD) – Iraq. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD?locations=IQ>

²⁷ WB. 2020. *Poverty & Equity Brief - Middle East & North Africa – Iraq*

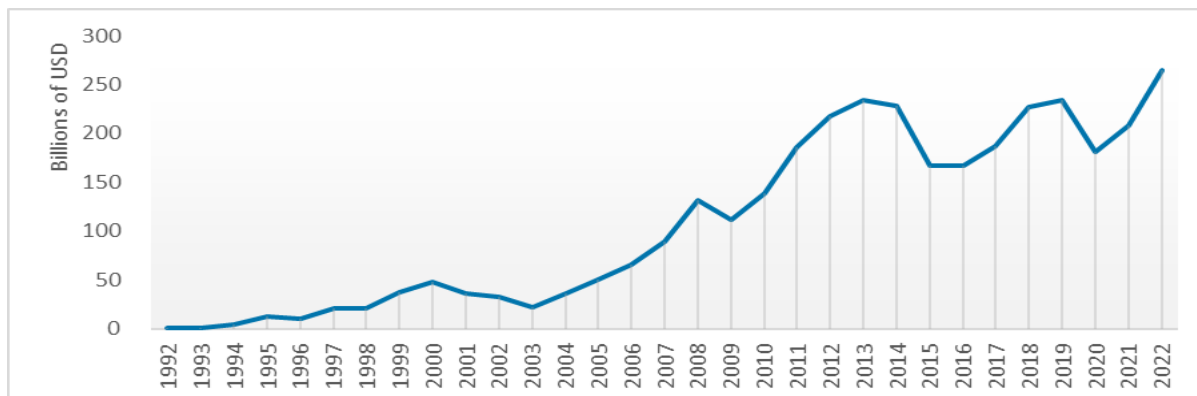
²⁸ SIDA. 2022. *Multi Dimensional Poverty Analysis – Iraq*

²⁹ WB. 2022. *Iraq Economic Monitor: A New Opportunity to Reform*

highly exposed to global economic shocks.³⁰ Agriculture is the second largest contributor to GDP, accounting for 5 percent of the country's real GDP.³¹

11. In recent years, Iraq's economy has rebounded due to an uptick in oil production and a revival in post-pandemic economic activity. Real GDP growth surged to 10.5 percent in the first half of 2022, bringing Iraq closer to upper-middle-income country status.³²

Figure 2 – GDP of Iraq in current USD, 1992–2022



Source: World Bank and OECD national accounts data. Retrieved on 4 August 2023.

12. Unemployment stands at 16.5 percent, and at 28.2 percent for women. The oil sector employs less than 1 percent of the labour force.³³ The public sector, historically the employer of first resort, employs 37.9 percent. However, the public sector can no longer absorb the large numbers of young Iraqis entering the workforce and many young Iraqis lack the skills needed by the private sector.³⁴

13. Governance is divided between the Federal Government (Government of Iraq – GOI) in central and southern Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in the north. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has a significant level of autonomy within the federal structure of Iraq, including a regional government and a parliament based in Erbil. The KRG exercises authority over various aspects of governance, including legislation, security and natural resource management. An overview of how different areas of the humanitarian response are being handed over to the Federal Government and the KRG is shown in Figure 8. The Iraqi constitution, adopted in 2005, recognizes the Kurdistan Region's autonomy and outlines the distribution of powers between the federal government in Baghdad and the KRG.³⁵

1.3.2 Food and nutrition security and agriculture

14. Overall food insecurity is comparatively low in Iraq, with the WFP HungerMap reporting a “Very Low” prevalence of insufficient food consumption (except for Anbar governorate which scored “Low”).³⁶ The 2022 Multi Cluster Needs Assessment (MCNA) found that 95 percent of households had an “acceptable” Food Consumption Score (FCS) (see Figure 3). However, households headed by women were more likely (66 percent) to identify food as an unmet priority need, compared with households headed by men (53 percent), and 30 percent of all households reduced their food intake during the COVID-19 crisis, rising to 42 percent in rural areas.³⁷

³⁰ United States Institute of Peace. 29 May 2020. *Iraq timeline since the 2003 war*

³¹ FAO. 2021. *Agricultural value chain study in Iraq – Dates, grapes, tomatoes and wheat*

³² WB. 2022. *Iraq Economic Monitor: A New Opportunity to Reform*

³³ Ibid.

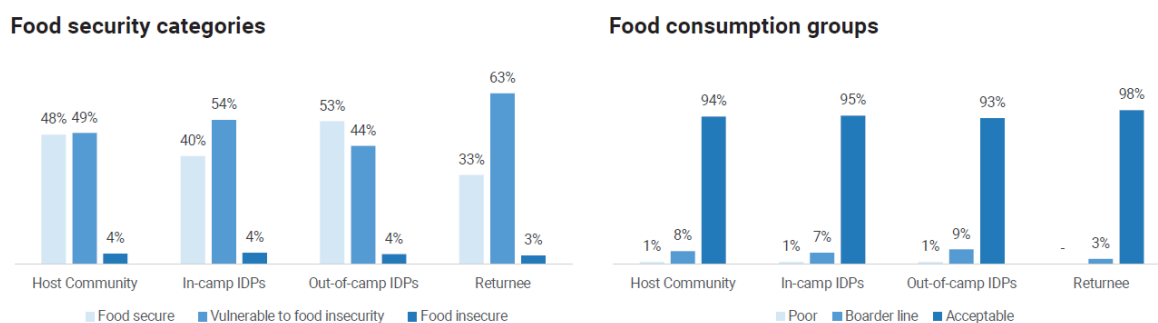
³⁴ ILO. 2021. *Iraq Labour Force Survey*

³⁵ International Crisis Group. 6 April 2023. *Iraqi Kurdistan Twenty Years After*

³⁶ WFP. HungerMap live. <https://hungermap.wfp.org/> (Accessed on 25 January 2024)

³⁷ REACH. 2022. *Iraq Multi Cluster Needs Assessment*

Figure 3 – Food security in Iraq

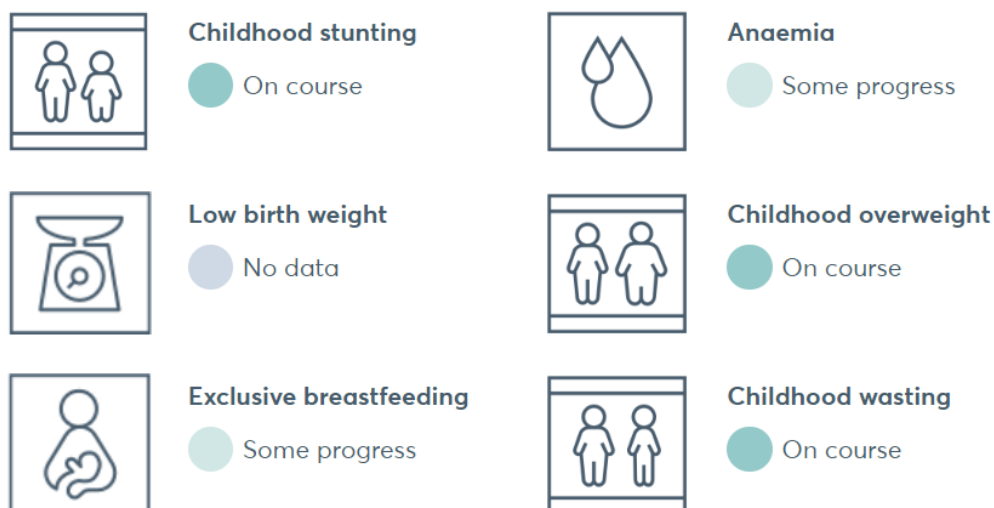


Source: OCHA. 2023. *Humanitarian Transition Overview – Iraq*

15. The 2022 *Global Nutrition Report* found improvements in stunting (down to 12.6 percent) and wasting (3 percent) for children aged 0 to 5. Prevalence of anaemia among women of reproductive age has decreased from 40 to 29 percent.³⁸

16. Some 40.1 percent of adult women and 26.5 percent of men are obese, far above the regional average of 10.3 and 7.5 percent, respectively. Over 20 percent of adults have diabetes. Nearly 19 percent of children aged 5 and older were overweight in 2018, with 6 percent obese. Iraq has made limited progress in tackling obesity.³⁹

Figure 4 – Progress in Iraq toward nutrition targets



Source: *Global Nutrition Report. 2022. Nutrition Profile Iraq.*

17. Poverty is the main driver of food insecurity and malnutrition in Iraq, with about 22.5 percent of Iraqis living below the national poverty line, and another 30 percent facing a high risk of falling into poverty.⁴⁰ Poverty rates are up to 40 percent in some regions, and generally higher in the south of Iraq and rural areas.⁴¹

18. Overall food supplies are adequate – both in terms of calories and protein – with average dietary energy supply standing at 110 percent of adequacy levels for the period 2014 to 2016, and an average protein supply of around 65 g per capita/day.⁴²

19. Agriculture employs 20 percent of Iraq’s workforce and accounts for 5 percent of GDP, second only to oil. There is 22 percent of land suitable for agriculture, but only half is used due to conflict, land

³⁸ Global Nutrition Report. 2022. *Nutrition Profile Iraq*

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ WFP/ICARDA. 2018. *Zero Hunger Strategic Review*

⁴¹ SIDA. 2022. *Multi Dimensional Poverty Analysis – Iraq*

⁴² WFP/ICARDA. 2018. *Zero Hunger Strategic Review*

degradation and stagnant yields (due to poor farming methods and inefficient government subsidies). The ISIL conflict in 2014 displaced farmers, restricted access to inputs and markets, and destroyed agricultural infrastructure, causing a 40 percent loss in agricultural production.⁴³

20. Of farmers, 75 percent rely on crop production, with the remainder dependent on livestock or mixed farming systems.⁴⁴ Wheat and barley account for almost half of Iraq’s cultivated land.⁴⁵ Small-scale farming practices predominate, often characterized by traditional methods and minimal capital investments that lead to low productivity.⁴⁶

21. In the 2021/22 season, agricultural yields were hampered by low rainfall and failure of crops. The decreasing availability of rainwater continues to put a strain on production.⁴⁷

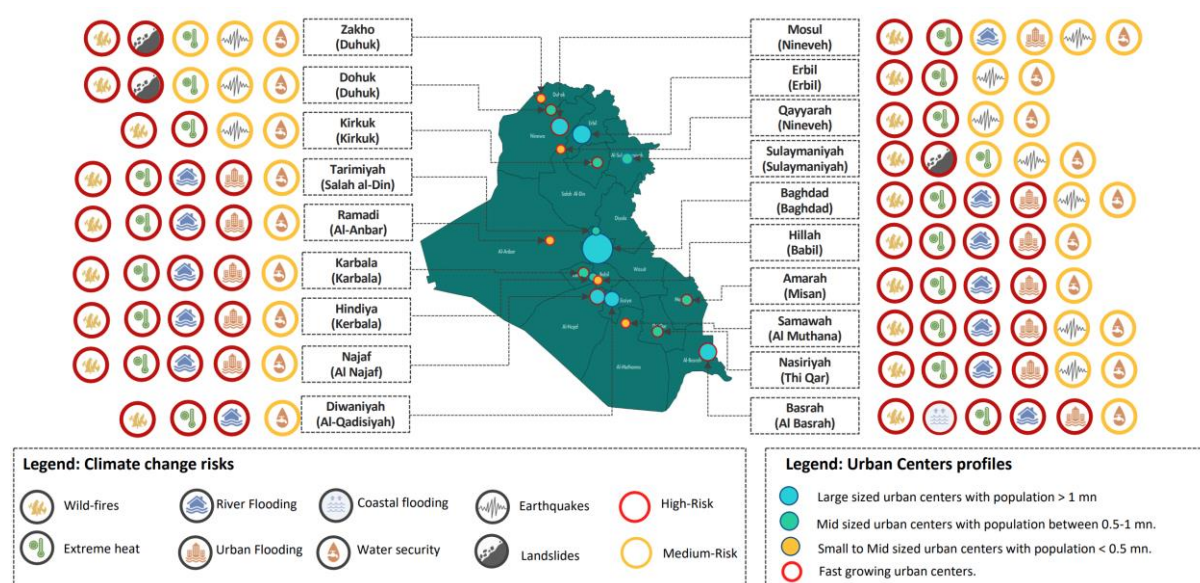
1.3.3 Climate change and vulnerability

22. Iraq is the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change.⁴⁸ Climate variability and extreme weather events, compounded by inadequate water and electricity infrastructure, are destabilizing the country. Iraq entered its third year of drought in 2022.⁴⁹ Drought, land damage and excessive salt in rivers and tributaries pose challenges for agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing.⁵⁰

23. Water resources are rapidly dwindling, with an anticipated gap between supply and demand of approximately 10.9 billion m³ by 2035, exacerbated by population growth, economic development, climate change and increasing water extraction by Iraq’s upstream neighbours.⁵¹ Iraq’s water security is further compromised by its reliance on transboundary water flow from neighbouring countries Turkey and Syria. Around 60 percent of Iraq’s total renewable water resources originate outside its borders, primarily from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.⁵²

24. Figure 5 gives an overview of potential climate and natural hazards across urban areas of Iraq, with most major population centres facing high risks of extreme heat, wildfires and flooding.

Figure 5 - Potential climate and natural hazards in cities of Iraq



Source: World Bank. 2022. Iraq Country Climate and Development Report

⁴³ FAO. 2021. Agricultural value chain study in Iraq – Dates, grapes, tomatoes and wheat

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ WFP/ICARDA. 2018. Zero Hunger Strategic Review

⁴⁶ FAO. 2021. Agricultural value chain study in Iraq – Dates, grapes, tomatoes and wheat

⁴⁷ WFP. 2022. Iraq Market Monitor Report Issue 31

⁴⁸ UNEP. 2019. Global Environment Outlook 6

⁴⁹ WFP. 2022. Iraq Market Monitor Report Issue 33

⁵⁰ WB. 2022. Iraq Country Climate and Development Report

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

1.3.4 Education

25. Public state education is free in Iraq for all grades, including university. Schools are gender segregated as of grade 7. Literacy rates stand at 91 percent for men and 80 percent for women.⁵³ Secondary school enrolment is 54 percent (61 percent for boys and 46 percent for girls).⁵⁴ While boys complete primary education at higher rates (78 percent for boys versus 73 percent for girls), girls lead in upper secondary completion (29 percent for boys versus 35 percent for girls).⁵⁵ Of all Iraqis, 46 percent (and 47 percent of girls) have completed at least lower secondary.⁵⁶

1.3.5 Gender and inclusion

26. Iraq ranks 154 out of 156 countries on the *Global Gender Gap Report 2021* and 146 out of 162 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (GII).⁵⁷ Maternal mortality remains a concern, with 79 deaths per 100,000 live births.⁵⁸ The adolescent birth rate is moderately high at 62.2 births per 1,000 women aged 15–19, compared with the world average (41.3).⁵⁹ Women occupy only 28.9 percent of seats in Parliament.⁶⁰ Unemployment stands at 62.1 percent of young women aged 15–24, compared with 32.1 percent of young men.⁶¹

27. A Constitutional Reform Committee was established in 2019, aimed at mainstreaming gender in Iraqi legislation with the support of UN Women. Constitutional amendments proposed by UN Women were based on the recommendations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Committees, the Beijing Declaration and other international instruments adopted or ratified by the Republic of Iraq.⁶² In 2021, Iraq established a higher committee to oversee women's empowerment in the political process, but progress was hampered by the long delay in forming a government after the 2021 elections.⁶³

28. Women and girls, especially those in households headed by women, and women with disabilities face elevated risks of gender-based violence (GBV).⁶⁴ Socioeconomic vulnerability means that women and girls face higher food insecurity and reliance on harmful coping strategies, including child marriage and transactional sex, affecting mental and reproductive health. These challenges are exacerbated by traditional norms, a lack of awareness of women's rights, and structural and legal obstacles perpetuating the marginalization of women.⁶⁵

29. Iraq has one of the largest populations of people with disabilities in the world. A recent International Organization for Migration (IOM) report states that the rate of people with disabilities is higher due to Iraq's legacy of conflict. People with disabilities face stigma, limited access to income, challenges accessing education, transport and health services, and a lack of funding and support from government.⁶⁶

⁵³ WB. 2017. Literacy rate, adult male (percent of males aged 15 and above) – Iraq.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.MA.ZS?locations=IQ>; WB. 2017. Literacy rate, adult female (percent of females aged 15 and above) – Iraq. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.FE.ZS?locations=IQ>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ UNICEF. 2020. *Iraq Education Factsheets 2020*

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ WEF. 2021. *Global Gender Gap Report*

⁵⁸ WB. 2020. Maternal mortality ratio (modelled estimate, per 100,000 live births) – Iraq.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.MMRT?locations=IQ>

⁵⁹ WB. 2021. Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15–19) – Iraq.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT?locations=IQ>

⁶⁰ UNDP. 2022. *GII Dataset*

⁶¹ UNICEF. 2022. *Country Office Annual Report 2022*

⁶² UN Women Iraq. Normative and policy frameworks <https://iraq.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/normative-and-policy-frameworks-0>

⁶³ Republic of Iraq. 2021. *The Second National Voluntary Review Report on the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals*

⁶⁴ WHO. February 2022. *First Gender-Based Violence Strategic Plan launched in Iraq*

⁶⁵ OCHA. 2023. *Humanitarian Transition Overview – Iraq*

⁶⁶ IOM. 2021. *Persons with Disabilities and their Representative Organizations in Iraq*.

1.3.6 Humanitarian context

30. In 2014, the international humanitarian community launched humanitarian operations in Iraq, bolstering government efforts to address the displacement crisis caused by conflict with ISIL. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance rose from 5.2 million in 2014 to 11 million in 2017, before falling steadily to 2.5 million in 2022.⁶⁷ The humanitarian response primarily targeted IDPs in camps, out-of-camp IDPs and returnees in Nineveh Governorate, the KRI and surrounding governorates.

31. Since the end of the conflict with ISIL in 2017, the humanitarian situation has evolved from an acute to a protracted crisis. Durable solutions have only been found for about 40 percent of the 6 million Iraqis who were displaced during 2014 to 2017.⁶⁸ Key remaining protection needs include the loss or destruction of civil documentation,⁶⁹ legal and psychosocial assistance for minors in camps and detention centres, and specialized care and services for survivors of violence, including sexual violence and explosive ordnance.⁷⁰

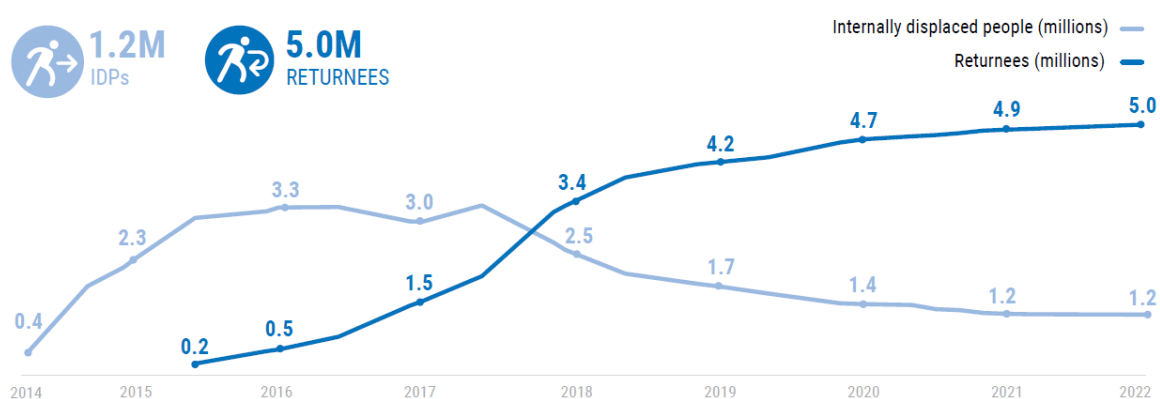
32. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns impacted heavily on vulnerable populations in Iraq, particularly IDP and refugee households and female and young Iraqis.⁷¹

1.3.7 Displacement and returns

33. Iraq's displacement crisis improved following the end of conflict with ISIL in 2017 (see Figure 6).⁷² In October 2020, the GOI announced the closure of 13 camps affecting more than 34,000 residents.⁷³ However, the needs of IDPs and returnees persisted, with 26 camps in the KRI and Nineveh Governorate accommodating around 180,000 IDPs. Returnees and IDPs face issues such as inadequate housing and limited access to jobs and services due to destruction from the conflict, while families with perceived links to ISIL have struggled to gain acceptance in host or return communities.⁷⁴

34. Iraq continued to host over 280,000 refugees and asylum seekers, the majority of whom are Kurds from neighbouring Syria.⁷⁵ Syrian refugees in Iraq reported higher levels of marginal food security and higher rates of borderline or poor food security than host communities, with refugees living in camps recording the poorest outcomes.⁷⁶

Figure 6 – Population movements 2014-2022



Source: OCHA, 2023. Humanitarian Transition Overview – Iraq. Based on IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix.

⁶⁷ OCHA. 2022. Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq

⁶⁸ ECHO. Iraq Fact Sheet. (Last updated: 19/06/2023)

⁶⁹ UNHCR. 2023. Iraq Situation

⁷⁰ OCHA. 2022. Humanitarian Needs Overview

⁷¹ WFP. 6 July 2020. Food Security in Iraq: Impact of COVID-19

⁷² OCHA. 2023. Humanitarian Transition Overview – Iraq

⁷³ UNHCR. 27 May 2021. Returning Iraqis face dire conditions following camp closures

⁷⁴ UNHCR. 2023. Iraq Situation

⁷⁵ UNHCR. Operational data portal: Iraq. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/irq> (Accessed 7 August 2023)

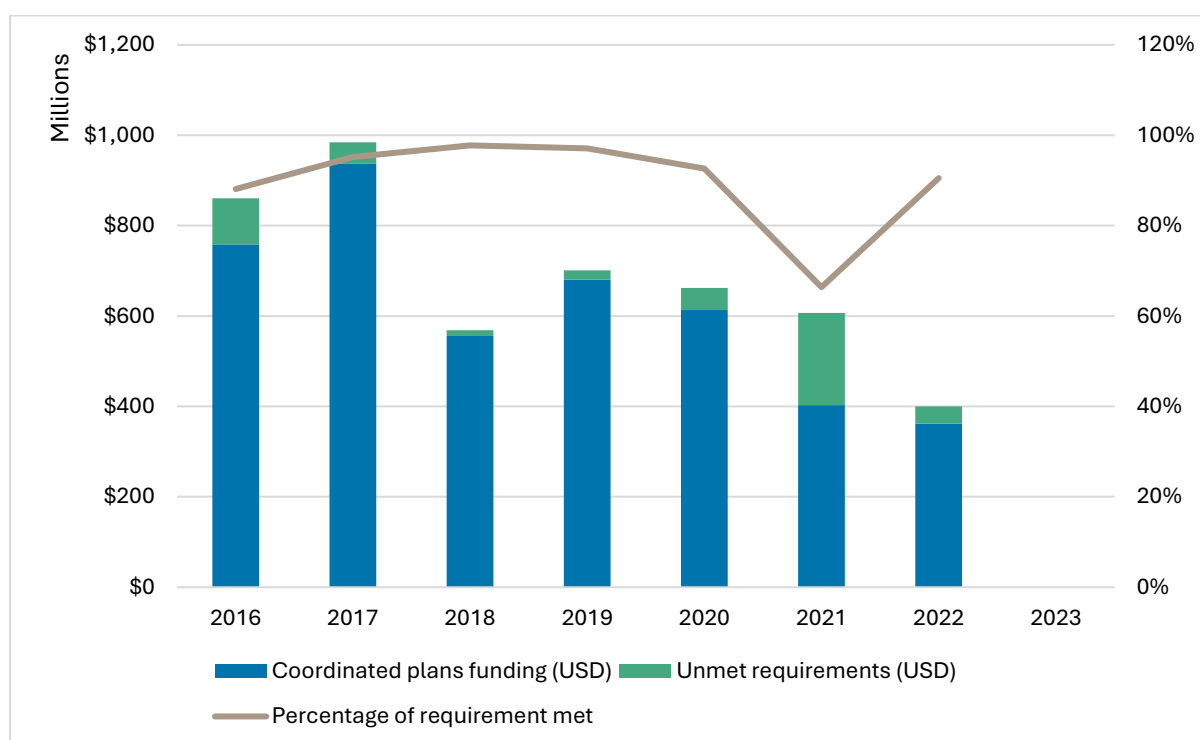
⁷⁶ UNHCR. 2022. Multi Sector Needs Assessment

1.3.8 International assistance

35. Iraq received USD 1.9 billion in official development assistance (ODA) in 2021, down from USD 2.5 billion in 2020. ODA accounted for less than 1 percent of GNI in 2021. Key sectors supported were social infrastructure (47 percent of ODA), humanitarian aid (25 percent) and production (10 percent) (see Annex 9, table 2).⁷⁷ The top five donors of gross ODA in 2021 were the United States and Japan, each providing 23 percent of total ODA, followed by Germany (18 percent), the European Union (10 percent) and Canada (4 percent).⁷⁸ See Annex 9 for details.

36. Iraq received USD 8 billion in humanitarian funding from international donors between 2014 and 2021, with the United States (58 percent), Germany, the European Commission, Canada and Japan the top five donors in 2022.⁷⁹ United Nations inter-agency coordinated plans for Iraq were well funded, receiving well over 90 percent of annual funding needs from 2018 to 2020, 66 percent in 2021 and 89 percent in 2022.⁸⁰ Figure 7 shows the evolution of funding for Iraq’s Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) over the period 2016 to 2023, and Annex 9 provides more information on funding to WFP in Iraq, including donors, earmarking and duration.

Figure 7 – Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan funding (2016–2023)



Source: OCHA. Financial Tracking Service database, extracted on 28 March 2024. Note: due to the transition from humanitarian to development assistance, no HRP was launched for 2023.

37. At the end of 2022, the clusters coordinating the humanitarian response in Iraq were deactivated in line with the UNCT’s decision to phase out the humanitarian response and focus on durable solutions under the United Nations Sustainable Development and Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).⁸¹ An overview of the proposed handover of responsibilities to the GOI (Fed Iraq) and KRI is shown in Figure 8.

⁷⁷ OECD DAC. Dashboard: Aid at a glance – Iraq.

https://public.tableau.com/views/AidAtAGlance/DACmembers?:embed=y&:display_count=no&:showVizHome=no#1

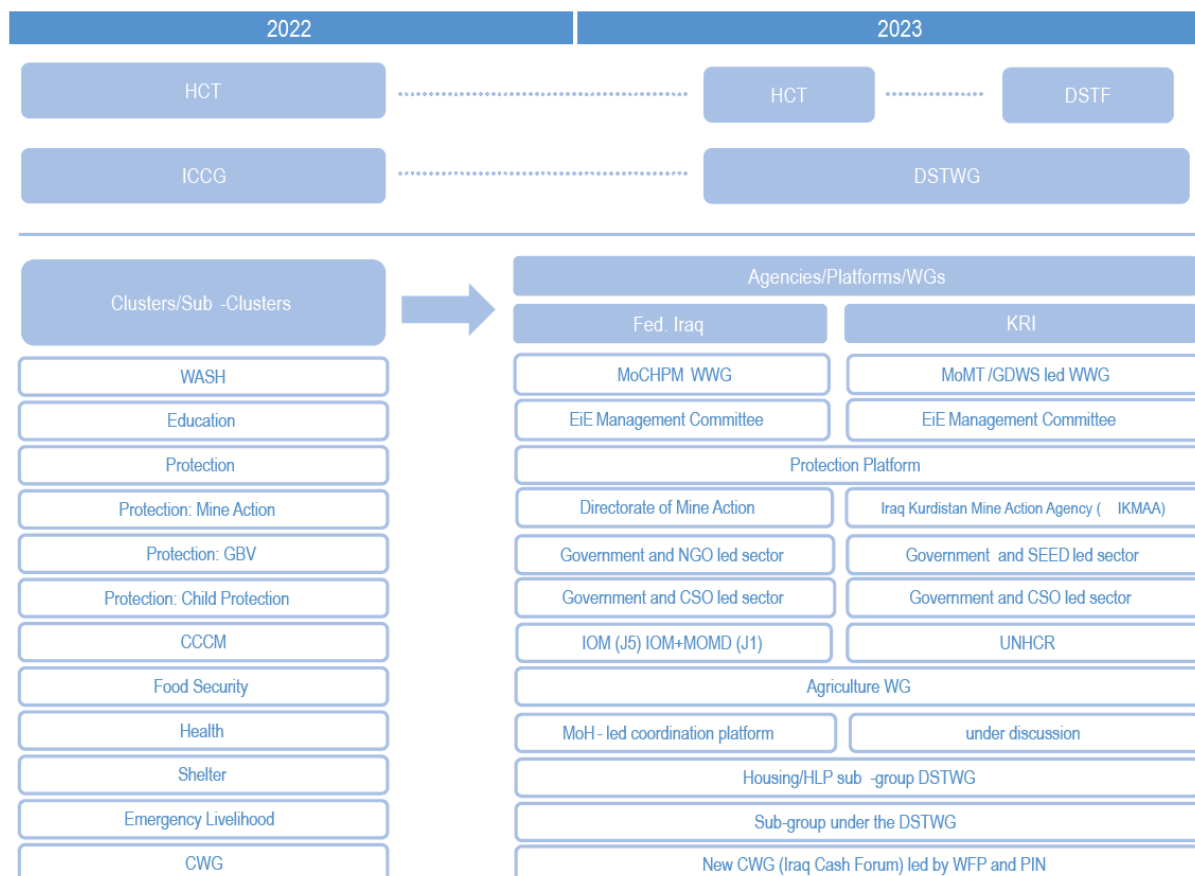
⁷⁸ OECD Stat. <https://stats.oecd.org/> (Accessed on 28 July 2023)

⁷⁹ OCHA. 2023. *Humanitarian Transition Overview – Iraq*

⁸⁰ OCHA. Financial Tracking Service database. <https://fts.unocha.org/home/2024/donors/view> (Accessed on 20 October 2023)

⁸¹ OCHA. 2023. *Humanitarian Transition Overview – Iraq*

Figure 8 – Coordination transition structure 2022/23⁸²



Source: OCHA. 2023. *Humanitarian Transition Overview – Iraq*.

1.3.9 National policies and the Sustainable Development Goals

38. The UNCT in Iraq, consisting of 24 United Nations agencies, funds and specialized programmes, works in accordance with the UNSDCF 2020–2024. The framework is built upon five pillars: Social Cohesion and Inclusion; Diversified and Resilient Economy; Good Governance and Institutional Reforms; Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience; and Sustainable Solutions for Displacement.

39. The GOI has pledged commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, with a specific focus on SDG 2 (zero hunger).⁸³ Iraq’s achievement across the SDGs has varied, with progress impeded due to high unemployment, social concerns and political unrest.⁸⁴ Key initiatives include the Iraq Vision 2030, the National Development Plan for 2018–2022, the Reconstruction Framework for 2018–2027, the Private Sector Development Plan 2014–2030, the Strategy for the Reduction of Poverty in Iraq 2018–2022, and the KRI Iraq 2020: A Vision for the Future. The GOI is currently in the process of preparing a third poverty alleviation strategy for 2023–2027.⁸⁵

40. Since 1990, Iraq has maintained a universal public distribution system (PDS), one of the world’s largest food distribution programmes. Originally established in response to food shortages due to UN-imposed sanctions, from 1996 the PDS was supported by the Oil for Food Programme. The PDS has historically provided an important source of calories, including for the wealthiest quintile of Iraqi society.⁸⁶

⁸² Acronyms: Humanitarian Country Team (HCT); Durable Solutions Task Force (DSTF); Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG); Durable Solutions Technical Working Group (DSTWG). The Co-chair of the Iraq Cash forum has changed from PIN to World Vision in 2023

⁸³ WFP. 2018. *National Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition in Iraq*

⁸⁴ Republic of Iraq. 2021. *The Second National Voluntary Review Report on the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals*

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Krishnan, N., Olivieri, S. & Ramada, R./UNICEF. July 2018. *Estimating the Welfare Cost of Reforming the Iraq Public Distribution System*

However, given the high cost and untargeted nature of the programme, the GOI has expressed an interest in reforming the PDS as part of broader efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of Iraq's social safety nets.⁸⁷

1.4 Subject being evaluated

41. WFP has been present in Iraq since 1964. The assistance provided by WFP has focused on saving lives, resilience-building and supporting the Iraqi Government towards zero hunger (SDG 2). Major phases in the evolution of the portfolio and context are shown at Figure 9.

1.4.1 Iraq Transitional-Interim Country Strategic Plan 2018–2019

42. In 2018, WFP launched the T-ICSP, building upon the previous Regional Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation for Syrian Refugees (PRO 200987) and an Emergency Operation (EMOP 20067) providing food assistance to conflict-affected Iraqis. According to the results of the 2016 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis, the T-ICSP aimed to continue providing emergency assistance to IDPs (SO1), refugees (SO2), in particular those in the nine refugee camps in the KRI and returnees (SO3), albeit in a more targeted manner, while scaling up resilience-focused interventions, including livelihoods, and working with the Government to improve social safety nets focused on nutrition. It also aimed at improving nutrition through raising awareness with a variety of vulnerable groups and capacity strengthening activities with the GOI (SO4),⁸⁸ and contributing to an effective humanitarian response (SO5). The T-ICSP aimed to integrate gender analysis into its programmes to redress inequalities and discriminatory norms.⁸⁹

43. The T-ICSP marked a turning point for WFP's engagement in Iraq, with a distinct shift from emergency humanitarian response to longer-term recovery and livelihood-based activities, a trend which the CSP continued and accelerated.

1.4.2 Iraq Country Strategic Plan 2020–2024

44. The CSP aims to support the GOI in accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development while shifting WFP's role from the direct implementation of activities to the enabling of national programmes. This shift took place in a context of transition from immediate crisis response to building resilience and long-term peace and development.⁹⁰ This is reflected in the strategic outcomes of the CSP, with two of the three strategic outcomes dedicated to resilience building. The design of the CSP was informed by assessments, including Iraq's 2018 *Zero Hunger Strategic Review*, the World Bank 2018 Iraq Economic Monitor, a Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment in 2017 and the *Iraq Country Portfolio Evaluation* in 2016.⁹¹

45. The CSP assumed a progressive phasing out of the direct provision of assistance while building the resilience of individuals and institutions to meet their own needs in the future. The CSP covers not only areas to which IDPs are returning but also areas in southern Iraq where vulnerability and food insecurity indicators are high. The CSP envisioned handing a number of interventions over to the GOI: school feeding (SO3) by the start of the 2020/21 school year and unconditional food transfers to IDPs (SO1) by 2022.⁹²

46. The CSP also included a more ambitious approach to gender than the T-ICSP, seeking to mainstream gender-transformative programming while ensuring that gender and age analyses are used to inform programming and targeted action plans, including through gender-sensitive livelihoods and social safety nets.⁹³ The CSP acknowledges differences in employment and access to adequate food in terms of gender, age and ability, as well as disproportional impacts on women's access to education, health services, jobs and other public spaces. However, delivering gender-transformative approaches is challenging in the

⁸⁷ WB. 2020. *Iraq's Universal Public Distribution System*

⁸⁸ T-ICSP SO4 makes specific reference to both gender- and age-targeted initiatives, as well as intersections of vulnerabilities

⁸⁹ WFP. 2017. *Iraq Transitional-Interim Country Strategic Plan (2018)*

⁹⁰ WFP. 2019. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*

⁹¹ WFP. 2016. *Iraq Country Portfolio Evaluation*. WFP. 2017. *Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment Iraq 2016*

⁹² WFP. 2023. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan 2020–2024: Mid Term Review*

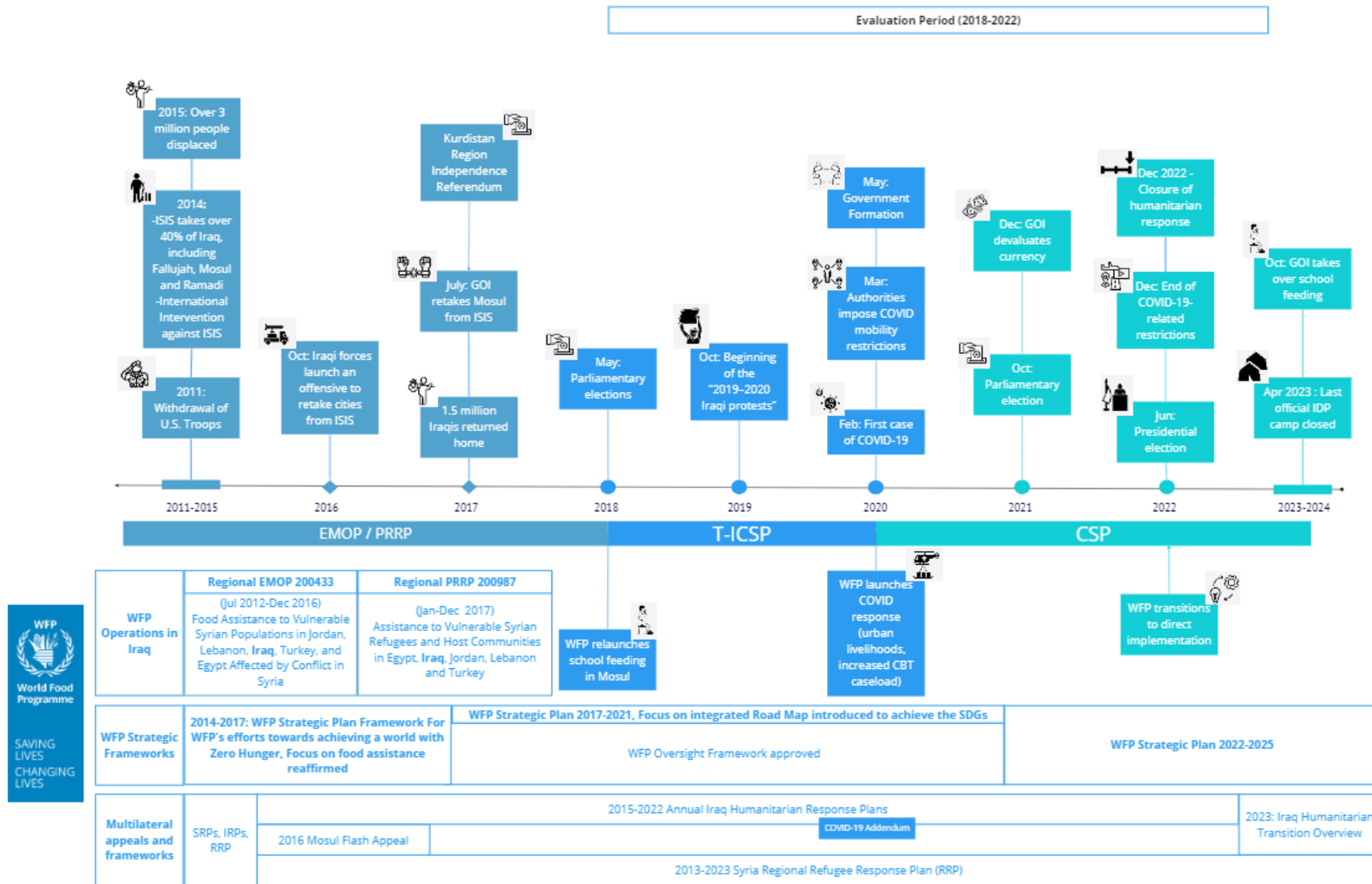
⁹³ WFP. 2019. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*. Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, 2020

Iraq context due to a lack of normative instruments or policies to promote gender equality, despite some steps to promote a greater role for UN Women in drafting a revised Constitution, and a lack of data on the intersectionality between gender and vulnerabilities. In 2023, Iraq banned the term “gender”, which added complexity to efforts to build a deeper understanding of specific gender issues in the Iraq context.⁹⁴

47. The activities included under the CSP, and the pathways through which they are expected to achieve WFP’s strategic outcomes, are represented in the reconstructed Theory of Change (ToC) (Figure 10). An in-depth discussion of the ToC and its assumptions is presented in Annex 4.

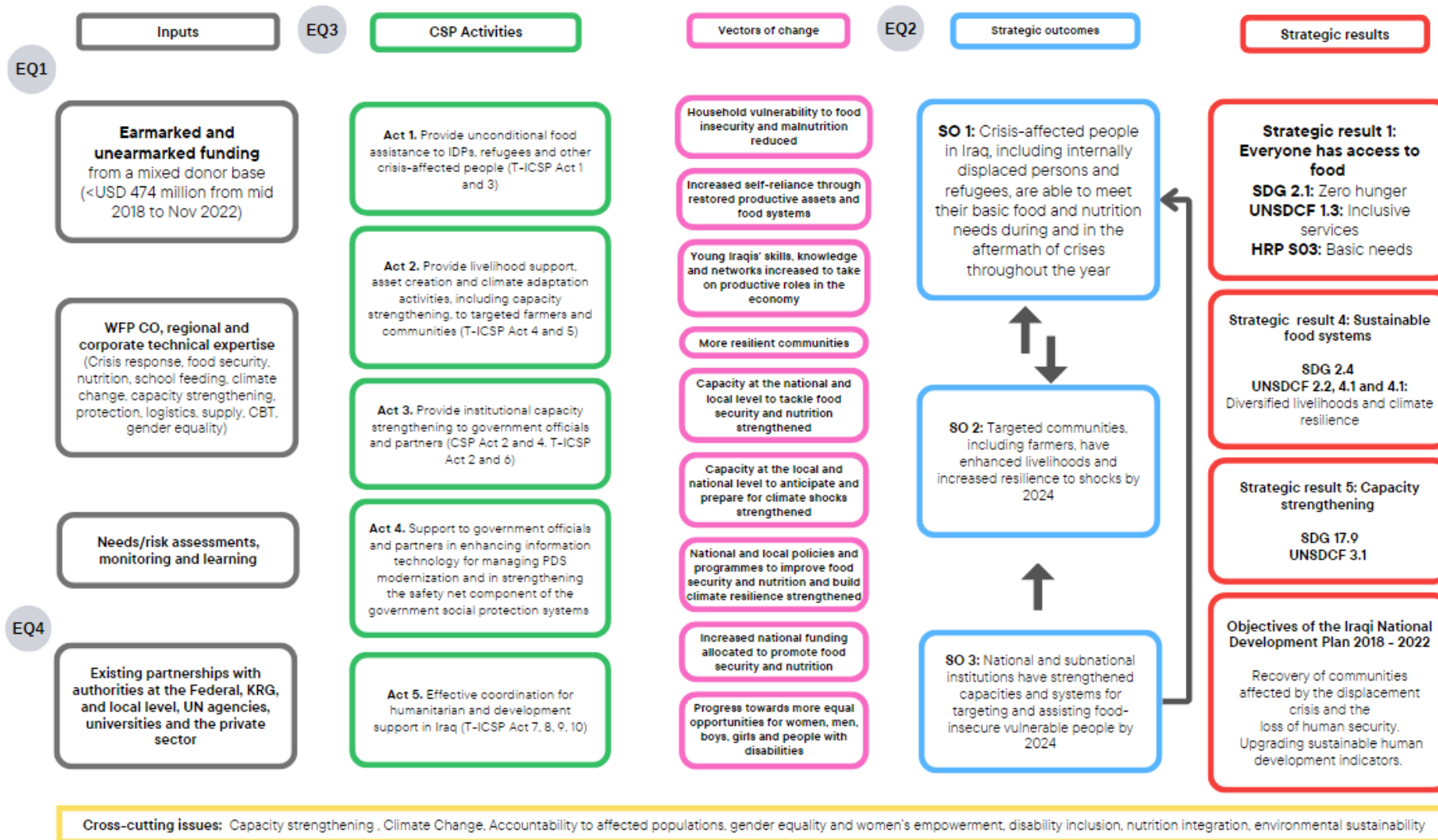
⁹⁴ UN Women Iraq. Normative and policy frameworks. Accessed 11 April 2024, <https://iraq.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/normative-and-policy-frameworks-0>. UN Women. Gender Sensitive Resilience Capacity Index. May 2020, <https://iraq.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/10/UN%20Women%20Gender%20Sensitive%20RIMA%20Report%20on%20the%20Madad%20Programme%20in%20Iraq%20May%202020%2006102020.pdf>. Killings with WFP staff and UN stakeholders. CNN. 10 August 2023. Amnesty International urges Iraq to rescind the decision to prevent the media from using the terms “homosexuality” and “gender”. Available at: <https://arabic.cnn.com/middle-east/article/2023/08/10/amnesty-urges-iraq-overturn-decision-homosexuality>. Accessed 24 December 2023

Figure 9 – Iraq context and WFP response



Source: Evaluation team.

Figure 10 – Reconstructed Theory of Change

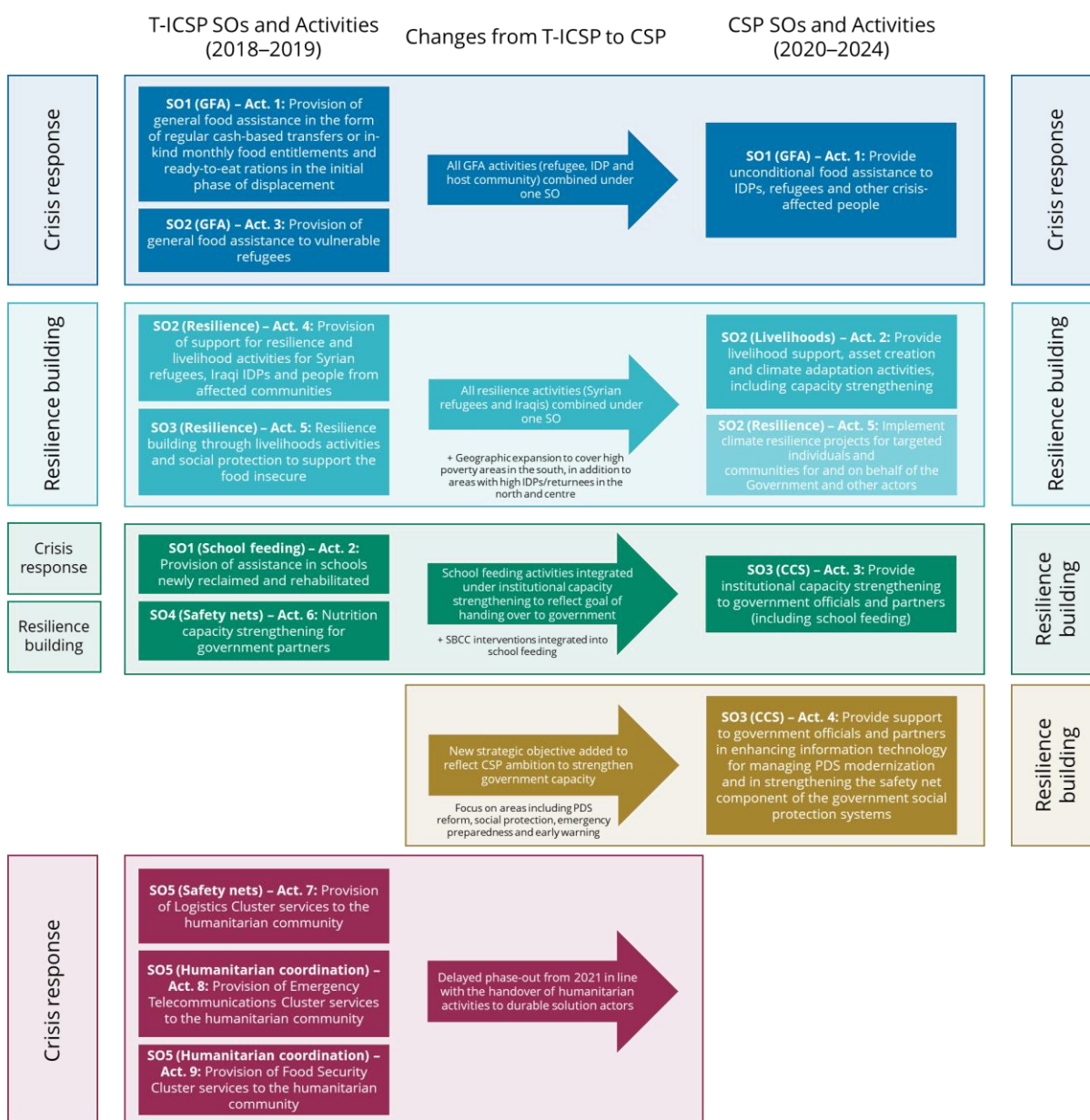


Source: Evaluation team

1.4.3 Changes between the T-ICSP and CSP

48. The changes introduced from the T-ICSP to the CSP reflect a continuation of WFP's transition from implementer to enabler. A mapping of activities across both plans is given at Figure 11.

Figure 11 – Activity mapping: Iraq T-ICSP and CSP



Source: Evaluation team, based on WFP Iraq T-ICSP and CSP documentation. Note: CSP Act. 5 was added in Budget Review 4 in September 2023 and is therefore not included in the scope of this evaluation.

49. The CSP incorporated all **crisis response** interventions, including those focused on IDPs (T-ICSP SO1) and those focused on Syrian refugees (T-ICSP SO2), under one strategic outcome (**SO1**) and one activity (**Act. 1**).⁹⁵ Support for **resilience and livelihoods** were consolidated under SO2 into one activity (**Act. 2**) (previously T-ICSP Act. 4 and Act. 5).⁹⁶ Resilience and livelihoods work was also geographically expanded beyond areas of return for IDPs (north and central Iraq) to include areas of high food insecurity,

⁹⁵ WFP. 2019. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*

⁹⁶ WFP. 2017. *Iraq Transitional-Interim Country Strategic Plan (2018)*

poverty and inequality due to climate change and historical marginalization in the south of Iraq.⁹⁷ In response to rising food insecurity due to COVID-19, WFP introduced an urban livelihoods component, including youth job skills through vocational training centres and the Josour (previously EMPACT) programme.⁹⁸

50. The CSP consolidated all **country capacity strengthening** activities under one strategic outcome (SO3). Act. 3 incorporated **school feeding** (previously a crisis response activity under the T-ICSP), **emergency preparedness and early warning** and **social and behaviour change communication (SBCC)**, reflecting WFP’s strategic intent of building GOI capacity and progressively handing over these programmes.⁹⁹ **Social protection and PDS reform** were given a specific activity (Act. 4), reflecting their central role in providing a sustainable pathway to support vulnerable, food-insecure people beyond international assistance.¹⁰⁰

1.4.4 T-ICSP and CSP resources, beneficiaries and transfers

51. The country portfolio budget of the CSP was originally approved at USD 460,514,522, but increased to USD 701 035 047 through four budget revisions.¹⁰¹

52. Table 1 provides a summary of funding by strategic plan.

Table 1 – WFP Iraq portfolio overview (2018–2024)

Type	Timeframe	USD requested	USD received	Percentage funded
T-ICSP	Jan 2018 to Dec 2019	341 089 486	190 849 132	56%
CSP	Jan 2020 to Dec 2024	600 878 218 ¹⁰²	324 884 583	54%

Source: WFP Resource Management Analytics Platform

53. On average, WFP reached 80 percent of planned beneficiaries from 2018 to 2023. This varied by year. WFP overachieved on its beneficiary targets for 2020.¹⁰³ In both 2022 and 2019, WFP reached more than 85 percent of planned beneficiaries, but achieved only 64 percent in 2021. WFP was able to achieve a good level of gender parity in its beneficiary reach, though it fell short of achieving its planned scale-up of men beneficiaries in response to the COVID-19 crisis in 2021 (see Figure 12).¹⁰⁴

⁸² WFP. 2019. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*

⁸³ Ibid. WFP. 2020. *Iraq Annual Country Report*

⁹⁹ WFP. 2019. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*. WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Report – 2018, 2020, 2022*. Logistics Cluster. 2020. *Preparedness Roadmap for Emergency Logistics*

¹⁰⁰ WFP. 2019. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*. EU/UN. 2023. *Social Protection Program Design Document*

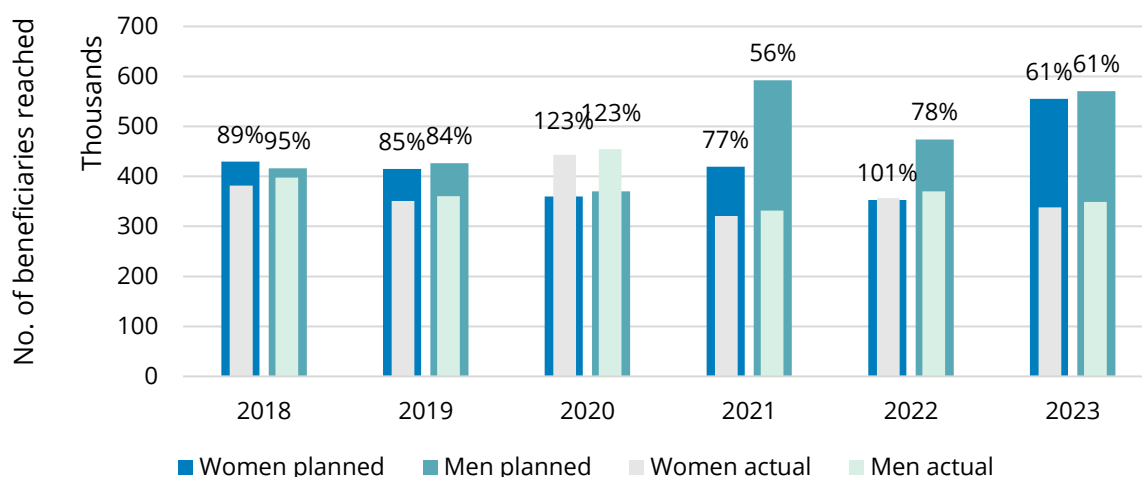
¹⁰¹ BR01, February 2020: Increase of USD 12,034,655 and addition of in-kind modality (Act. 1). Planned beneficiaries increased by 30,000. BR02, March 2021: Increase of USD 49,311,162 and extended school feeding (Act. 3) until May 2022. Planned beneficiaries increased by 611,804. BR03, March 2022: Increase of USD 79,017,880 and extended school feeding (Act. 3) until May 2023. Planned beneficiaries increased by 277,546. BR04, September 2023: Increase of USD 100,156,829 and introduced a new Act. 5: Implement climate resilience projects for targeted individuals and communities for and on behalf of the GOI and other actors under SO2. Planned beneficiaries increased by 415,718

¹⁰² As set out in BR03. Given that BR04 was approved just before the data collection mission and considering that financial data were gathered by the team until October 2023 (as per the temporal scope outlined in the Inception Report), the Evaluation Report will present planned figures for financial and beneficiary data in line with BR03

¹⁰³ Largely due to an expansion of the school feeding programme, in the shape of take-home meals during the COVID-19 pandemic (see section 2.2.1 Act. 3)

¹⁰⁴ The increase in beneficiaries who were men planned for 2021 was due to the emergency cash for work programme in response to COVID-19 (see section 2.2.1 Act. 2)

Figure 12 - Beneficiaries (planned and actual) by gender (2018-2023)

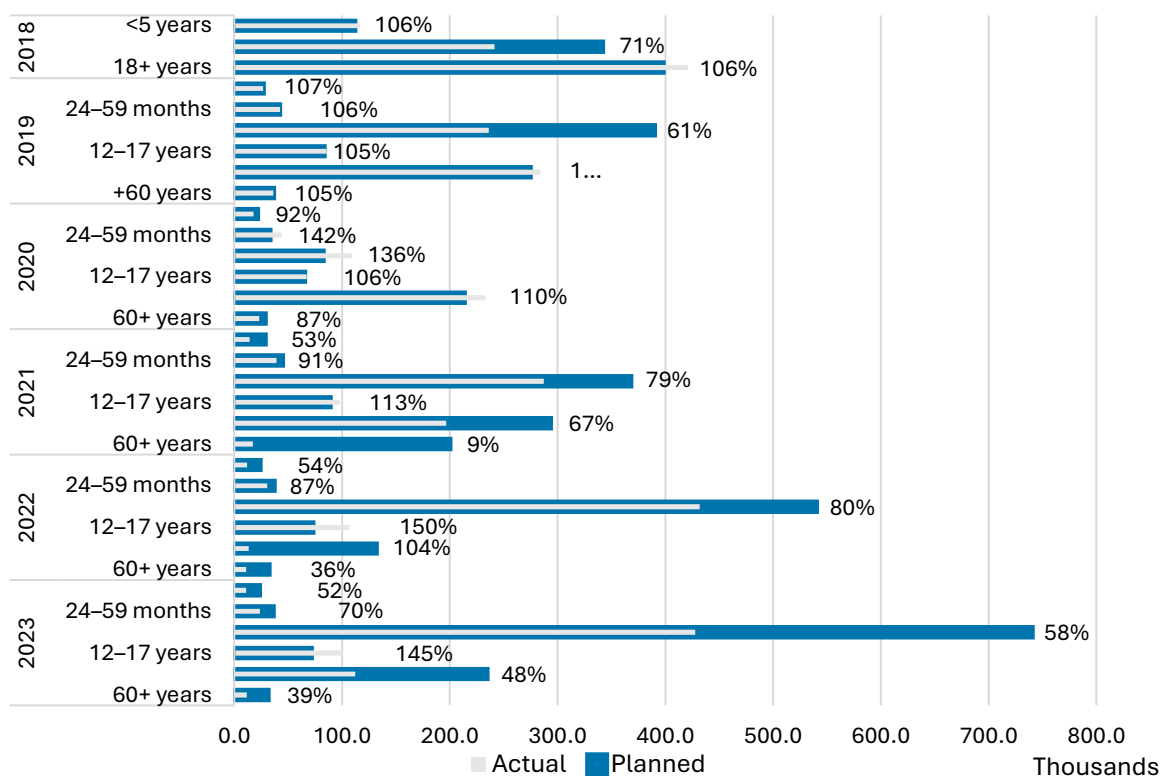


Source: WFP COMET. Data for 2018-2019 from T-ICSP, 2020-2023 from CSP reporting.

54. The largest beneficiary age group was 5 to 11-year-olds (49 percent of the total). Beneficiaries over 60 and under 5 years old together represented only 11 percent of actual beneficiaries reached from 2019 to 2022. In 2021 and 2022, WFP fell particularly short of its targets for reaching children aged 0-23 months (53 and 54 percent of planned) and adults aged over 60 years (9 and 36 percent) (see Figure 13).

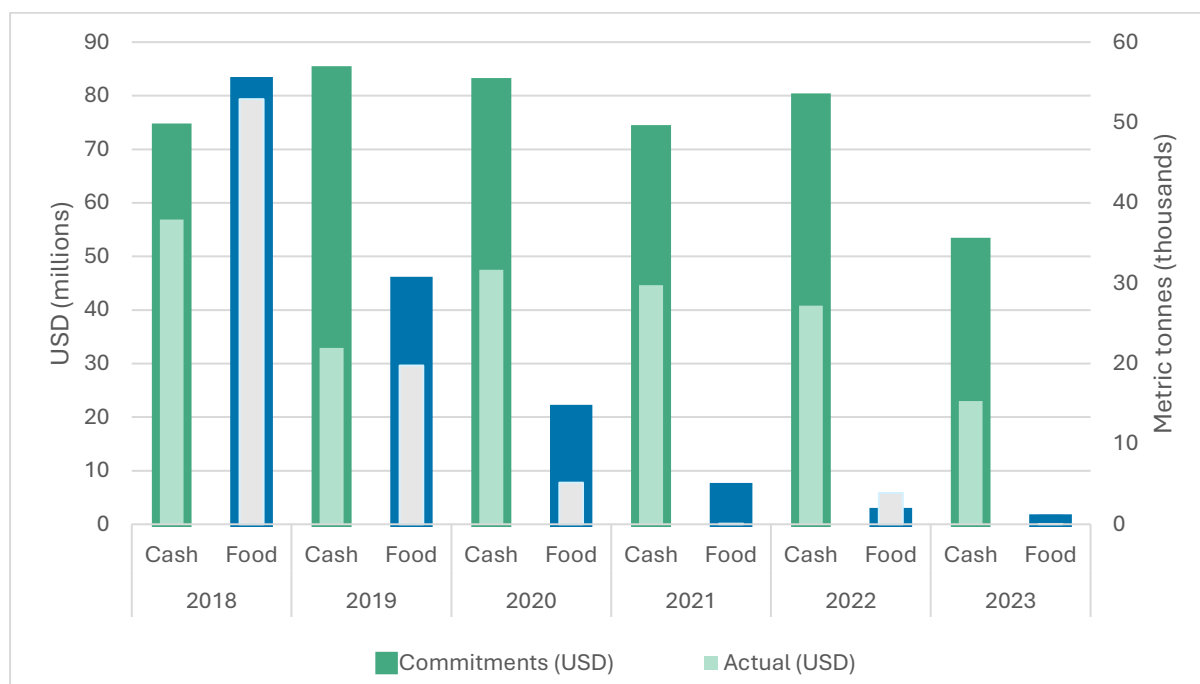
55. A summary of the total transfers realized during the period under evaluation is presented in Figure 14. Most notably, there is a clear phase-out of in-kind assistance between 2019 and 2023.

Figure 13 - Beneficiaries (planned and actual) by age group (2018-2023)



Source: WFP COMET.

Figure 14 – Overview of transfers made under T-ICSP and CSP (2018–2023)



Source: WFP COMET.

1.4.5 Methodology

56. The evaluation team followed a theory-based approach, by reconstructing a ToC during the inception phase (see Annex 4). The evaluation adopted standard Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Development Assistance Committee (OECD – DAC) evaluation criteria, namely: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability. Coverage was also assessed.

57. The team adapted the standardized list of evaluation questions and mapped them onto the ToC. Framing the evaluation questions in the programme theory allowed the ToC to be used to assess programme performance, influencing factors and unintended or unforeseen effects in the analysis phase (see Annex 5 – Evaluation matrix).

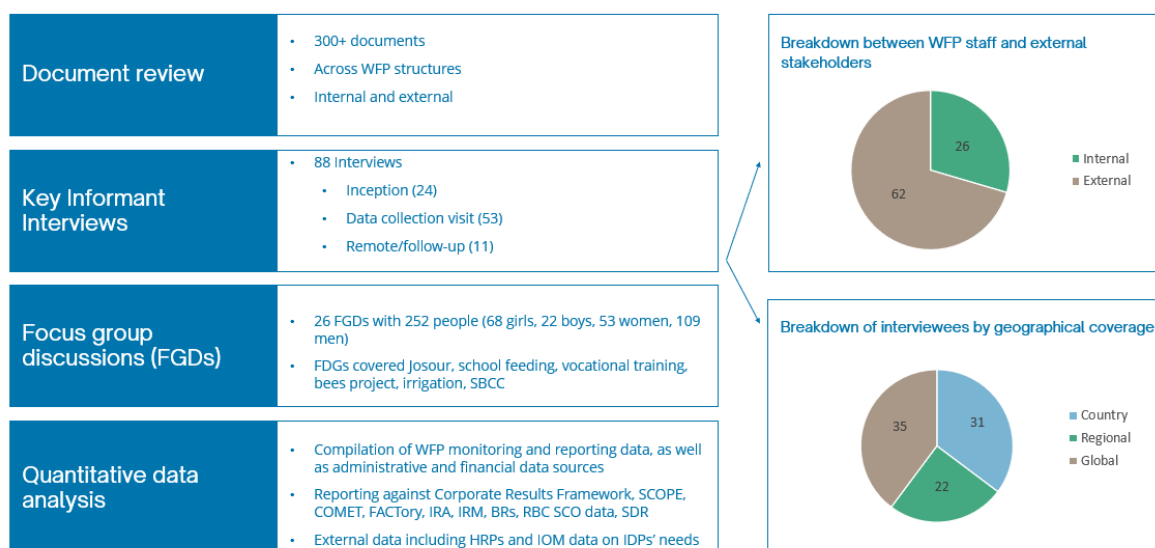
58. The evaluation methods included a desk review of key internal WFP and external documents at country, regional and global levels (Annex 13); detailed analysis of WFP programme data (Annex 9); 26 focus group discussions (FGDs) with 252 beneficiaries (68 girls, 22 boys, 53 women, 109 men); and 53 key informant interviews (KIIs) with GOI, UN, partner and WFP stakeholders (see Annex 7 – List of people interviewed). In-country data collection was conducted across 7 of Iraq's 18 governorates¹⁰⁵ from 5 to 26 October 2023 (see Annex 8 – Fieldwork agenda).

59. The evaluation team triangulated data across different sources to ensure that findings reflected the views and experiences of different groups. MaxQDA, a secondary data analysis tool, was used to support data analysis and triangulation.

60. Significant changes in strategic outcomes, activities and indicators between the T-ICSP and the CSP, and inconsistencies in the way the country office collected data throughout the CSP process, made it challenging to conduct trends analysis (see section 2.4.2). More details on limitations and approaches undertaken for the indicator analysis are provided in Annex 3.

¹⁰⁵ Baghdad, Anbar, Basra, Dhi Qar, Nineveh, Erbil, Dohuk

Figure 15 – Summary of data sources



Source: Evaluation team.

61. The evaluation team integrated gender and disability throughout the evaluation process to assess the extent to which WFP has identified opportunities for transformative gender and inclusive approaches, responded appropriately programmatically to these opportunities and the results generated accordingly (both intended and unintended). A gender and inclusion lens was applied to each stage of the analysis, from recruiting a gender expert for the team, collecting sex and age disaggregated data, obtaining the views of women and people with disabilities, and evaluating WFP Iraq's effects on women, men, girls, boys and people with disabilities.¹⁰⁶

62. The evaluation team applied a modified contribution analysis approach¹⁰⁷ to assess the extent to which WFP's actions could plausibly have contributed to the strategic outcomes in the reconstructed ToC (Annex 4), and to identify other factors (internal or external) that could have impacted on the observed results (either positively or negatively).¹⁰⁸

63. The evaluation conformed to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) 2020 ethical guidelines. ADE safeguarded WFP's, as well as its own, ethical standards at all stages of the evaluation cycle, applying a "do no harm" approach, engaging respectfully with beneficiaries and stakeholders, transparently briefing interviewees on the purpose of the evaluation and informing them they could stop the interview at any time, and carefully anonymizing feedback to respect the confidentiality of informants. The evaluation team started off with a gender-balanced team composed of a mix of local and international consultants. However, due to unforeseen, required changes to the team composition, the gender balance was lost and three out of four evaluators conducting the field visits were men. To minimize the effect on the evidence collected, the team ensured that a woman was always present during the FGDs. The gender, cultural and linguistic diversity within the team facilitated communication with both men and women during data collection (see Annex 3 – Detailed methodology).

1.4.6 Risks and limitations and mitigation measures

64. There were no serious risks to the evaluation that affected the reliability of the findings. A summary of the main evaluation risks and mitigation measures is given at Table 4 of Annex 3. Only validated findings are presented in the report.

¹⁰⁶ WFP gender and evaluation guidance

¹⁰⁷ Classic contribution analysis relies on a Theory of Change developed during the intervention design. More detail about the contribution analysis framework is provided in Annex 3, Box 1.

¹⁰⁸ See section 3.4 of WFP. 23 October 2023. *Evaluation of Iraq WFP Country Strategic Plan 2020-2024 Inception Report*

2 Evaluation findings

2.1 EQ1: To what extent is the country strategic plan evidence based and strategically focused to address the needs of the most vulnerable?

2.1.1 *To what extent was the country strategic plan informed by existing evidence on hunger challenges, country capacity gaps, food security and nutrition issues prevailing in the country to ensure its relevance at the design stage?*

Finding 1. WFP's assistance and areas of intervention are a direct response to the priority needs of vulnerable people in Iraq. Appropriate assessments and contextual and climate data were used to inform the design of the T-ICSP and its focus on the emergency needs of displaced, refugee and returnee populations as well as on community resilience and government capacity to address long-term climate and food security risks.

65. The designs of both the T-ICSP and CSP were informed by appropriate assessments and evidence to respond to priority needs. This included the *Iraq Country Portfolio Evaluation* (2016), the *Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment Iraq 2016* (2017), the first since 2007, and the *Zero Hunger Strategic Review* (2018).¹⁰⁹ The T-ICSP, CSP and subsequent programming choices closely aligned with priority issues identified in these studies, including a focus on improving national capacity around social safety nets and emergency preparedness, and supporting livelihood diversification and community resilience to address poverty, gender inequality, unemployment, climate change and land degradation, in addition to promoting sustainable returns and social cohesion.¹¹⁰

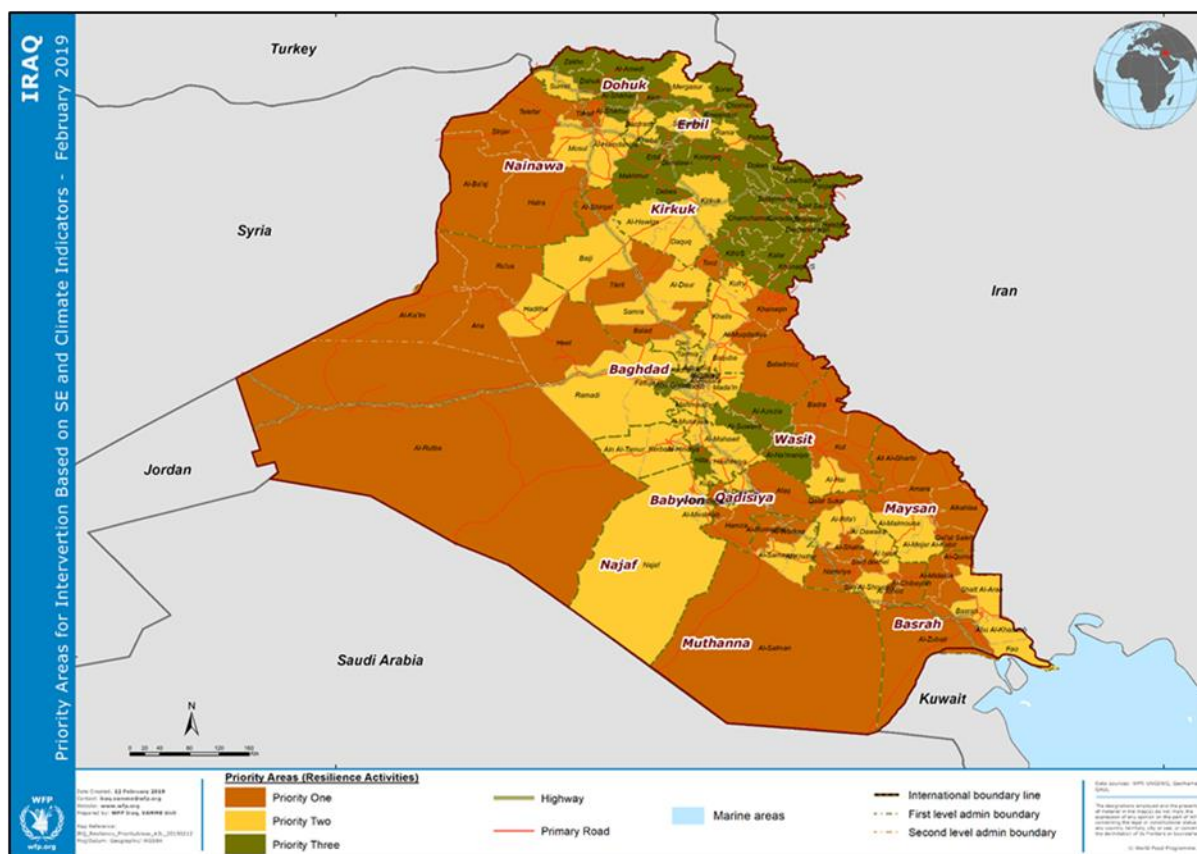
66. WFP leveraged appropriate evidence to enhance the responsiveness of the CSP to support the transition from humanitarian assistance towards long-term approaches that addressed the drivers of food security and malnutrition. WFP drew on evidence and needs assessments to inform a dual track approach, scaling up interventions to support sustainable employment and climate resilience activities and build government capacity to implement social safety nets, while continuing to alleviate the emergency needs of displaced, refugee and returnee populations. This transition was underpinned by quality analysis, including mapping of food security zones, incorporating climactic, agricultural production and food security, poverty and malnutrition data in 2018, a conflict analysis of climate-affected communities in the south in 2022 and ongoing needs assessments, including in partnership with UNHCR (see EQ 4.2).¹¹¹ WFP's Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) team summarized this data into accessible maps to guide the prioritization of interventions (see Figure 16).

¹⁰⁹ WFP. 2020. *CSPE Narrative*. WFP/Dhehibi, B., Frija, A., Bonaiuti, E. & Chandrashekhar, B. 23 January 2019. *National Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition in Iraq Towards Zero Hunger: Summary report*. WFP. *Iraq Country Portfolio Evaluation 2010 to 2015*. UNSDCF. Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020 to 2024. Iraq's National Development Plan 2018 to 2022. Iraq's Poverty Reduction Strategy 2018 to 2022

¹¹⁰ WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*.

¹¹¹ WFP. March 2018. *Food Security Zones of Iraq*. WFP and Social Inquiry. 2022. *Prospects for resilience amid fragility: Conflict Analysis of Al-Qurna and Al Dair Districts in Basra Governorate*. Evaluation Team review of Country Briefs and Sitreps provided by WFP in the evaluation document library. KIs with donors and UN stakeholders. October 2023. WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2019 and 2022*. UNHCR/WFP. January 2019. *Mitigating risks of abuse of power in cash assistance in Iraq*

Figure 16 – Resilience prioritization exercise (2019)



Source: WFP Iraq VAM team.

67. **The design of country capacity strengthening interventions was informed by appropriate capacity assessments.** This included an assessment, with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), of the possibility of handing over the rapid response mechanism emergency cash programme to government in 2019, assessments of the Ministry of Education’s logistics capacity in 2021, and an assessment of the GOI’s capacity to maintain and deploy the planned new electronic PDS. The assessments were used to design capacity support and training for the GOI.¹¹² While WFP staff and partners found that the assessments were useful in guiding engagement with the GOI, constant turnover within the GOI made the plans difficult to implement and WFP consistently underestimated the time needed to build GOI capacity (see section 2.1.4).

2.1.2 To what extent is the country strategic plan aligned with national priorities and the SDGs?

Finding 2. WFP’s approach is well aligned with Iraq’s national priorities under the National Development Plan and Kurdistan Region of Iraq’s Vision 2030, in particular the focus on transitioning Iraq to a post-recovery stage and building effective state institutions to reduce unemployment, restore productive sectors and establish social safety nets. WFP’s support aligns closely with SDGs 2 and 17, though support for livelihoods and climate resilience also contributes to SDGs on decent work (SDG 8) and climate action (SDG 13).

68. WFP’s approach strongly aligned with the GOI’s efforts to improve food security and nutrition and overcome high unemployment and poverty under Iraq’s National Development Plan for 2018 to 2022 (NDP), Vision 2030, the Reconstruction Framework for 2018–2027, the Private Sector Development Plan 2014 to 2030, and the Strategy for the Reduction of Poverty in Iraq 2018–2022 (currently being updated). Overall, there was strong strategic alignment with the CSP objective of moving from an implementer to an

¹¹² WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2019 and 2021*. Kils with WFP staff and government stakeholders, October 2023. Evaluation team analysis of capacity assessments provided by WFP Iraq

enabler, transitioning from crisis to resilience activities and strengthening national capacity and the strategic intent of the NDP, which sought to transition Iraq to a post-recovery stage by “establishing the foundations of an effective development state with social responsibility”.¹¹³ WFP’s approach also aligns with the Kurdistan Region of Iraq 2020: A Vision for the Future, which aims to “put people first, build infrastructure, create an economically prosperous region and put government to work for the people”.¹¹⁴

69. WFP’s unconditional food assistance (**Act. 1**), focused on IDPs and Syrian refugees, contributed to NDP objective 3 which sought to promote “recovery of communities affected by the displacement crisis and loss of food security”.

70. Support for resilience and livelihoods (**Act. 2**) contributed to several priority national objectives. Support for youth skills and rural livelihoods aligned with NDP and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) objectives to reduce unemployment, especially for young Iraqis, and contribute to higher incomes, while support to rehabilitate land and irrigation systems in communities affected by conflict or experiencing high levels of returns aligned with the economic development goals of Iraq’s Reconstruction and Development Framework. The new government, formed in October 2022, named youth employment as a key priority area, which aligns closely with WFP’s work on vocational training and job skills.¹¹⁵

71. Country capacity strengthening activities, including school feeding (**Act. 3**) and social safety net reform (**Act. 4**) directly contributed to national priorities to strengthen social protection for families, women and vulnerable groups (see Table 2).

Table 2 – Alignment between the country strategic plan, national priorities and Sustainable Development Goals

CSP strategic outcome	Iraqi national plan	SDG
SO1 – unconditional resource transfers	Unconditional food assistance contributes to NDP SO3: Recovery of communities affected by the displacement crises and the loss of human security	SDG 2 – zero hunger
SO2 – resilience and livelihoods	Youth skills (Josour, vocational training) and rural livelihoods support contribute to NDP SO7: Reducing unemployment and underemployment; the PRS Outcome 1: Higher and sustainable incomes; and the Private Sector Development Plan 2014 to 2030 Rural livelihoods and climate resilience projects such as irrigation and land restoration contribute to Iraq’s Reconstruction and Development Framework – Pillar 5: Economic development	SDG 8 – decent work and economic growth SDG 13 – climate action
SO3 – country capacity strengthening	School feeding (Act. 3) aligns with the Iraq National Nutrition Strategy 2012–2021 Social safety net reform (Act. 4) contributes to Iraq’s Vision 2030 – Goal 4.2: Appropriate development of families, women, and vulnerable group; and PRS – Pillar 5: Effective social protection	SDG 16 – peace, justice, strong institutions SDG 17 – partnerships for development

Source: Evaluation team.

72. Government stakeholders at the national, Kurdistan Region and governorate level reported that WFP’s objectives in Iraq were closely aligned with national priorities. WFP proactively worked with government counterparts to design capacity strengthening initiatives based on a common understanding of needs and gaps.¹¹⁶ However, constant government turnover, challenges accessing budgets and staff

¹¹³ Ministry of Planning, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. 2020. *A Vision for the Future*

¹¹⁴ The Republic of Iraq Ministry of Planning. *National Development Plan 2018–2022*. Ministry of Planning, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. 2020. *A Vision for the Future*. KIIs with government and United Nations stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023. WFP. 2017. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)* (Annex 4: Reconstructed Theory of Change for the Iraq Country Strategic Plan Evaluation).

¹¹⁵ KIIs with government and United Nations stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023

¹¹⁶ KIIs with GOI stakeholders, October 2023

capacity gaps meant that government partners were not always in a position to take over projects within the planned timeline (see sections 2.1.5 and 2.2.3).

73. WFP **primarily supported the GOI to achieve SDG 2 – zero hunger**. However, livelihoods and resilience work (**Act. 2**) also contributed to decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) and climate action (SDG 13). **Capacity building initiatives** to strengthen school feeding (Act. 3) and social safety nets (Act. 4) **also contributed to global partnerships (SDG 17)** and strong institutions (SDG 16) (see Table 2).

2.1.3 To what extent is the CSP coherent and aligned with the UNSDCF 2020–2024 and includes appropriate strategic partnerships based on the comparative advantage of WFP in Iraq?

Finding 3. WFP’s approach is coherent and aligned with UNCT priorities around disaster risk management, resilience and capacity building. WFP has leveraged its comparative advantage in emergency response, food security and digitalization, as well as its presence at the community level, to build strategic partnerships with a broad range of United Nations agencies. However, there is potential to strengthen partnerships with other Rome-based agencies. WFP’s work in rural development and job skills supported sustainable returns and contributed to the COVID-19 response, but other actors in Iraq have a stronger comparative advantage in these areas under a development-focused future.

74. WFP’s approach of moving people from crisis to resilience, in close cooperation with the Government, was coherent with the UNCT’s strategy where humanitarian actions under the HRP were complemented by the recovery and resilience programme of the UNCT under a commitment to multidimensional reconstruction.¹¹⁷ **WFP’s emergency response work directly contributed to the HRP, while resilience and capacity building contributed to the UNSDCF 2020–2024.**¹¹⁸

75. **WFP’s resilience work directly aligns with UNSDCF goals** of promoting inclusive economic growth (UNSDCF Strategic Priority 2.2) and building resilience to climate change (UNSDCF Strategic Priority 4.1) (see Table 3). WFP’s focus on youth livelihoods addresses a priority area for both UNSDCF and the GOI (see section 2.1.2). Capacity strengthening activities contribute to UNSDCF Strategic Priority 1.2, strengthening institutions and systems in Iraq, including sustainable access to quality gender- and age-responsive protection and social protection systems and services. WFP emergency response activities largely contributed to the HRPs, but also supported UNSDCF Strategic Priority 5: Achieving dignified, safe and voluntary durable solutions to displacement in Iraq.¹¹⁹

Table 3 – Alignment between the CSP and the UNSDCF/HRP

CSP strategic outcome	UNSDCF Strategic Priority/HRP
SO1 – unconditional food assistance	HRPs and UNSDCF Strategic Priority (UNSDCF SP) 5: Durable solutions to displacement in Iraq
SO2 – resilience, livelihoods and climate change	UNSDCF SP 2.2: Inclusive access to and engagement in economic activities UNSDCF SP 4.1: Promoting natural resource and disaster risk management, and climate resilience
SO3 – country capacity strengthening	UNSDCF SP 1.2 Strengthened and effective national institutions (including for social protection)

Source: Evaluation team

76. The humanitarian response largely phased out in Iraq halfway through CSP implementation, with the last HRP published in 2022 and humanitarian coordination architecture transitioning to government and development actors in December 2022 (see section 1.2.8).¹²⁰ In line with this transition, WFP’s emergency programming for IDPs and for refugees in Federal Iraq ended respectively in May and August

¹¹⁷ WFP. 2017. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ United Nations Iraq. *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020 to 2024*

¹²⁰ OCHA. 2023. *Humanitarian Transition Overview – Iraq*

2023.¹²¹ However, WFP continues to provide ongoing niche emergency support for particularly vulnerable groups, such as highly vulnerable Syrian refugees in camps in the KRI, and undocumented Iraqis, Yazidis and Iraqis newly arrived from Al Hol camp in Syria (see section 2.2.1, Act. 1).

77. WFP has leveraged its comparative advantage in emergency response, food security and digitalization, and its operational presence at the community level, to build strategic partnerships covering social protection, climate resilience and disaster management.¹²² WFP also drew on its expertise in digital transformation, food security strategy development and graduation pathways to support a joint programme with UNICEF and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2023 to reform Iraq's social protection system, complementing UNICEF's expertise in social safety nets and child benefits and ILO's experience in disability and old age pensions (see sections 2.2.1, Act. 4 and 2.4.3).¹²³ From the beginning of the CSP, WFP drew on its long-standing food distribution relationship with the Ministry of Trade, dating back to the start of the PDS in 1990,¹²⁴ to help bring partners together to begin creating the foundations for an integrated government safety net system.¹²⁵

78. WFP is seen as an active contributor to United Nations-wide coordination and has built a broad range of partnerships based on its comparative advantage under the UNSDCF. This includes co-chairing Priority Working Group (PWG) 4 on environment and climate change, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and co-chairing the UNSDCF PWG on social protection with UNICEF and ILO.¹²⁶ WFP signed a strategic partnership with UN Women in 2022 to collaborate on the design of gender-sensitive rural development activities, leveraging UN Women's policy expertise with WFP's reach at the community level.¹²⁷ WFP also maintained strong partnerships with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), including common vulnerability targeting and assessments to strengthen protection outcomes for vulnerable cash beneficiaries, combining UNHCR's protection expertise with WFP's leadership of food assistance for camp-based populations (see section 2.2.1, Act. 1).¹²⁸

79. WFP began to strengthen its partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) from 2023 onwards, including joint work on smallholder agriculture revitalization under an agreement negotiated with Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture. There is potential to strengthen partnerships between WFP and FAO, combining FAO's technical expertise with WFP's operational presence. Given the important role that agriculture plays in employment and resilience, there is currently overlap between FAO's country framework and WFP's work to promote sustainable returns in rural communities.¹²⁹ In 2019, WFP signed a country-level memorandum of understanding with FAO aimed at ensuring closer collaboration. However, WFP and FAO have struggled to build strong operational partnerships and joint programming. As a result, WFP had to begin developing its own approaches to value chains, irrigation development and agricultural training, missing the opportunity to leverage FAO's deep expertise in this area, and FAO's ability to leverage funding from the GOI for rural development projects.¹³⁰

80. In response to declining food security indicators during COVID-19, WFP launched a new area of work focused on urban livelihoods, including job skills (vocational training, Josour/EMPACT) (see section 2.2.1, Act. 2). This responded to the increase in the youth population of Iraq and the decline in traditional employment opportunities available through the public sector and oil industry. The expansion into job skills was based on a clear need, and WFP focused its activities on the subnational level where it is perceived to

¹²¹ WFP. 2023. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2022*. WFP. July 2023. *Iraq Country Brief*. KIIs with WFP staff and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

¹²² KIIs with United Nations partners, October 2023

¹²³ EU-UN Social Protection Program Design Document, 7 November 2023

¹²⁴ WB. 2022. *Iraq's Universal Public Distribution System*

¹²⁵ WFP. 2017. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*. KIIs with United Nations stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023

¹²⁶ WFP. 2023. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2022*. EU-UN Social Protection Program Design Document, 7 November 2023

¹²⁷ Memorandum of understanding between WFP and UN Women, 2022

¹²⁸ UNHCR/WFP. January 2019. *Mitigating risks of abuse of power in cash assistance in Iraq*

¹²⁹ FAO. *Iraq Country Programming Framework (CPF) 2018–2022*. KIIs with United Nations stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023

¹³⁰ KIIs with WFP staff and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023. Review of project design documents provided by WFP Iraq. FAO. 2019. Support for agricultural livelihoods Nineveh Governorate, Iraq. FAO. 2023. Iraqi Government allocates Five billion Iraqi Dinars to support FAO and MoA initiative for Buffalo Producers in South Iraq. Site observations during visits to Baghdad, Anbar, Basra, Dhi Qar, Erbil, Dohuk and Nineveh, October 2023

have a comparative advantage. However, under a development-focused future, other partners such as ILO and the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) have a stronger comparative advantage in these areas. ILO has a deep history and normative role with regard to vocational training, while GIZ has invested heavily in information and communications technology (ICT) and job linkages through vocational training centres, including over USD 237.8 million in 2022.¹³¹ In March 2023, WFP partnered with the ILO's International Training Centre to provide five days' training for the management, staff and trainers of vocational centres.¹³² In late 2023, the WFP Iraq country office submitted a three-year proposal to WFP's Changing Lives Transformation Fund (CLTF) to build the capacity of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to support the sustainable handover of job skills programmes during the next CSP period.¹³³

2.1.4 To what extent is the country strategic plan design internally coherent and based on a clear Theory of Change articulating WFP's role and contributions in a realistic manner and based on its comparative advantages as defined in the WFP strategic plan?

Finding 4. Despite the lack of an overarching ToC, WFP's CSP interventions are based on a coherent strategic logic that draws on WFP's comparative advantage, especially for climate change and resilience and social safety nets. WFP's strategic approach provides a logical pathway for its intended transition from implementer to enabler. However, the strategy of handing over capacity to government was not always based on a realistic design. The broad scope of the CSP's outcomes provided important flexibility but made it harder to articulate planned longer-term impact.

81. The evaluation team saw evidence of a coherent three-pronged strategy related to livelihoods and climate resilience (SO2), including a focus on resilience at the household/community level (irrigation, aquaponics), support for climate information systems (land use mapping and weather information station upgrades), and climate insurance/finance (planned approach, still under development). This approach draws on WFP's field presence in the governorates.¹³⁴

82. In 2023, WFP developed programme-level ToCs which set out a number of key elements on the pathway to progress Iraqis from emergency assistance into sustainable national social safety nets, including institutional capacity strengthening, evidence generation and building synergies across Iraq's different social safety nets programmes to transition vulnerable Iraqis into employment or long-term government social safety nets.¹³⁵ This directly built on findings from the 2016 *Iraq Country Portfolio Evaluation*, which called on WFP to reorient capacity development interventions for targeted social safety net programmes in food-secure areas, and the *Zero Hunger Strategic Review* (2018) which recommended a focus on improving safety net instruments and enhancing agricultural production and employment for women and youth.¹³⁶ Although the logic behind this transition is sound, United Nations stakeholders caution that reforming Iraq's complex social safety nets will require long-term engagement (see EQ 2.3 – Sustainability).¹³⁷

83. The strategic logic of WFP's approach in Iraq, captured in the reconstructed ToC (Annex 4), provides a coherent pathway towards WFP's role as an enabler rather than an implementer. According to the mid-term review of the CSP, the transition to direct delivery (rather than delivery through a cooperating partner) in 2022 strengthened WFP's capacity to work effectively as an enabler by forming closer relationships with key GOI stakeholders and helping WFP staff to build a deep understanding of reform priorities (see section

¹³¹ ILO. *Decent Work Country Programme in Iraq: Recovery and Reform: Annual Progress Report 2022*. GIZ. 2022. *GIZ in Iraq Fostering Stability and Sustainable Development in a Fragile Setting*. GIZ. 2017. Employment Promotion 4.0

¹³² ILO. March 2023. *Academy on the Management of Vocational Training Centres in Iraq*
https://www.ilo.org/beirut/events/WCMS_872142/lang--en/index.htm

¹³³ WFP. 2023. *Strengthening the Capacity of the Government of Iraq to Design, Develop and Implement Graduation Based Social Protection Programme*. WFP/Ministry of Higher Education of Iraq. 2023. Agreement between WFP and Ministry of Higher Education of Iraq in the implementation of the Josour Programme in Iraq

¹³⁴ KIIs with WFP staff and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

¹³⁵ EU–UN Social Protection Program Design Document, 7 November 2023. KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

¹³⁶ WFP. 2016. *Iraq Country Portfolio Evaluation*. WFP/ICARDA. 2018. *Zero Hunger Strategic Review*

¹³⁷ KIIs with United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

2.4.3).¹³⁸ GOI capacity strengthening, and the handover of activities to national programmes and actors, was embedded throughout WFP Iraq's activities and strategies.¹³⁹ However, the assumption of handing over capacity to the GOI was not based on a realistic design, requiring several budget revisions (see section 1.3.4). While the broad trajectory of handing over emergency and school feeding programmes to government largely evolved as planned in the CSP, the handover was regularly delayed, due to governance instability and COVID-19, from mid-2020 until the beginning of the 2023/24 school year (see section 2.2.1, Act. 3).¹⁴⁰ Likewise, plans to hand over emergency cash assistance to the GOI were postponed from 2021 to 2023 in response to protracted displacement, lower than expected returns, and capacity gaps in the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (see section 2.2.1, Act. 1).¹⁴¹

84. The broad scope of strategic outcomes – for example, combining all crisis response activities under SO1 and all capacity strengthening activities under SO3 – provided important flexibility in a fluid context. However, it also made it challenging to coherently articulate WFP's approach, especially under SO3 (institutional capacity strengthening). The mid-term review of the CSP highlighted gaps in the ability of WFP Iraq to report on long-term development impact in the midst of a major period of transition.¹⁴² WFP staff reported that the dual burden of continuing to report on emergency response activities, while working on the scale-up of resilience and capacity strengthening, made it challenging to develop tools and approaches to measure long-term impact (see section 2.4.2).¹⁴³

2.1.5 To what extent has WFP's strategic positioning remained relevant in Iraq throughout the implementation of the T-ICSP and CSP considering the changing national context, national capacities and needs, including in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Finding 5. The T-ICSP remained relevant to changes in the Iraqi context, providing a guiding framework to adapt WFP's approach from implementer to enabler and from crisis response to resilience and country capacity strengthening, while also providing flexibility to respond to major shocks. WFP adapted its programming in response to COVID-19, civil unrest and the return of Iraqis from Syria, adjusting transfer values, adding new urban livelihoods approaches and providing take-home rations and ready-to-eat meals. Country capacity strengthening plans were responsive to changing GOI priorities, but did not always adapt to governance instability which undermined the sustainable handover of platforms.

85. **The CSP remained broadly relevant to the changing context**, repositioning WFP as an enabler, including by partnering directly with the GOI, and transitioning from emergency response to resilience and country capacity strengthening. **The CSP largely foreshadowed the major strategic transitions that took place in the evaluation period, including the transition from humanitarian to development, an operational shift from partner to direct implementation, and the geographic transition from a focus on the north of Iraq towards resilience activities in the south and centre of the country, as well as in the Nineveh Governorate.**¹⁴⁴

86. The greater flexibility inherent in the CSP framework was crucial to navigate challenges, including COVID-19, instability and rising food prices.¹⁴⁵ WFP responded flexibly to a number of shocks throughout the period under evaluation, including COVID-19, civil unrest, economic shocks and returns from Syria.

¹³⁸ WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*. KIIs with WFP staff, GOI and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

¹³⁹ WFP Iraq. 2023. CLTF Theory of Change. WFP Iraq. June 2023. Social Protection Theory of Change. WFP. 2017. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*. WFP Iraq. Reconstructed Theory of Change. KIIs with WFP staff, United Nations and government stakeholders, October 2023

¹⁴⁰ Iraq CSP IQ02 BR04 – Narrative, September 2023. WFP. 2017. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*

¹⁴³ KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

¹⁴⁴ WFP. 2017. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*. KIIs with United Nations stakeholders, government and WFP staff, October 2023

¹⁴⁵ WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2018 to 2022*. KIIs with WFP staff and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

87. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 resulted in major losses in livelihoods, eroding households' ability to meet basic needs.¹⁴⁶ WFP responded across all three of its strategic outcomes. Under Act. 1, WFP added 39,000 additional beneficiaries, delayed a planned prioritization exercise which was expected to reduce beneficiaries by 20 to 30 percent, and introduced hybrid food and cash rations and virtual cards to reduce the need for people to move from camps.¹⁴⁷ Under Act. 2, WFP introduced new urban livelihoods activities, supporting 42,800 people who had lost sources of income and moving the EMPACT digital skills and English training programme online, supporting 10,900 vulnerable youth and their families.¹⁴⁸ Under Act. 3, WFP supported 113,000 children and family members with 'take-home' food baskets under the school feeding programme.¹⁴⁹ WFP headquarters established passenger flights in Iraq when commercial options were grounded and WFP's Supply Chain Team purchased essential items for the UNCT through the United Nations' Humanitarian Response Depot.¹⁵⁰

88. WFP made effective use of budget revisions to respond to changes in the national context, including establishing a contingency for food assistance in response to civil unrest in 2019 and 2020, increasing cash transfer values in response to rising food prices in 2021 and introducing immediate response rations to support Iraqi families returning from Al Hol camp in Syria in 2021. Government and United Nations partners respect WFP's ability to respond flexibly to changes in context.¹⁵¹

89. WFP staff considered that the CSP provided greater flexibility to respond to changes in the context compared with project-based planning. Staff reported that the CSP had reduced some of the bureaucratic processes that were needed in the old system. However, WFP staff who worked on the development of the CSP in 2018 and 2019 noted that the process was challenging for a country office in the midst of an ongoing emergency. Current staff noted that consolidating all capacity building activities under one strategic outcome (SO3) increased WFP's responsiveness to requests from the GOI.¹⁵²

90. GOI stakeholders reported that WFP was responsive in addressing government capacity gaps, including in school feeding, digitalization and climate information systems.¹⁵³ However, capacity strengthening plans consistently overestimated the absorptive capacity within GOI institutions, especially in light of government instability, long periods without the formation of a government, considerable turnover in senior leadership, large-scale protests in 2019 and 2020, and one of the worst COVID-19 outbreaks globally, all of which impacted the Government's ability to function.¹⁵⁴ As a result, government stakeholders expressed concern about their ability to take over and maintain digital platforms developed with support from WFP, despite several delays in timelines to handover activities to government (see section 2.2.3).¹⁵⁵

2.2 EQ2: What is the extent and quality of WFP's specific contribution to country strategic plan strategic outcomes and the UNSDCF in Iraq?

2.2.1 To what extent did WFP activities and outputs contribute to the expected outcomes of the CSP, T-ICSP and to the UNSDCF? Were there any unintended outcomes, positive or negative?

CSP SO1 – Activity 1: General food assistance

Finding 6. Stakeholders credit WFP unconditional food assistance with providing an important buffer against shocks for vulnerable IDPs and refugees. However, reducing funding for emergency response, limited GOI capacity and ongoing shocks such as COVID-19 meant that WFP's assistance

¹⁴⁶ WFP. May 2021. *Impact of COVID-19 on Iraq's Vulnerable Populations*

¹⁴⁷ Iraq CSP IQ02 BR02 – Narrative

¹⁴⁸ WFP. 2021. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2020*

¹⁴⁹ KIIs with government stakeholders, October 2023. WFP. 2021. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2020*

¹⁵⁰ WFP. *Iraq Country Briefs* – May 2020 and February 2022

¹⁵¹ WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports* – 2019, 2020 and 2021. WFP. March 2020. *Iraq Country Brief*. KIIs with government and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

¹⁵² KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

¹⁵³ KIIs with government stakeholders, October 2023

¹⁵⁴ WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*. Haddad, H. 25 May 2023. From shock and awe to stability and flaws: Iraq's post invasion journey. European Council on Foreign Relations

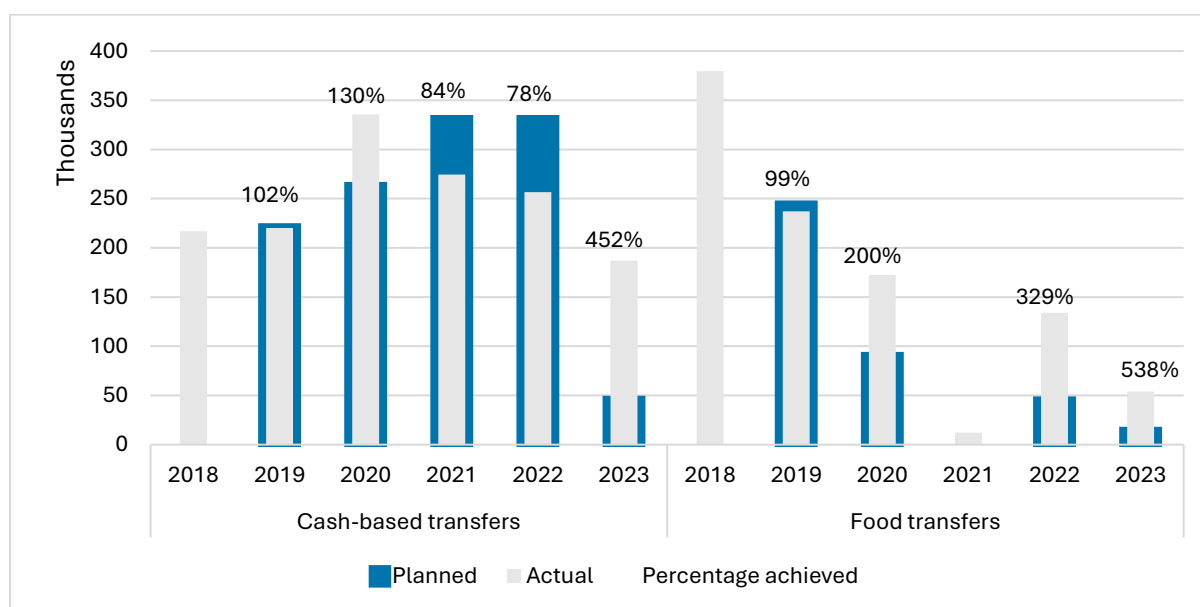
¹⁵⁵ KIIs with government stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023. Iraq CSP IQ02 BR02 – Narrative

fell short of the level needed to reduce IDPs' reliance on coping strategies and had a mixed impact on food security outcomes for Syrian refugees.

91. Under Act. 1, WFP provided unconditional food assistance, including cash-based transfers and food, to reduce the vulnerability of IDPs affected by conflict with ISIL and Syrian refugees in Iraq.¹⁵⁶ In line with the planned handover of emergency assistance activities to the GOI, WFP scaled down its general food assistance throughout the CSP period, from a planned 601,683 cash beneficiaries for 2019 to 41,402 in 2023 (Figure 17). Over the CSP period, Act. 1 accounted for 38 percent of total beneficiaries (see Annex 9).

92. WFP's ability to achieve its **planned outputs varied year on year**. WFP fell short of its beneficiary targets for cash-based transfers for 2021 and 2022, reaching 84 and 78 percent respectively of planned transfers, largely due to challenges mobilizing funding (Figure 17). Yet in 2020, WFP exceeded its targets for both cash-based transfers and food transfers in response to a sharp rise in food insecurity due to the COVID-19 crisis, supported by larger-than-average donor contributions (see Annex 9). WFP had originally planned to implement a cash-first approach based on beneficiary preference, identified in several assessments, as well as on the expected positive economic consequences for markets in areas targeted by WFP interventions.¹⁵⁷ However, the country office reintroduced food transfers in 2019 to complement cash transfers in response to market access restrictions.¹⁵⁸ As a result, the volume of food delivered in 2022 was significantly higher than initially planned (Figure 18).

Figure 17 – Number of beneficiaries reached through CSP SO1 by transfer modality (2018–2023)



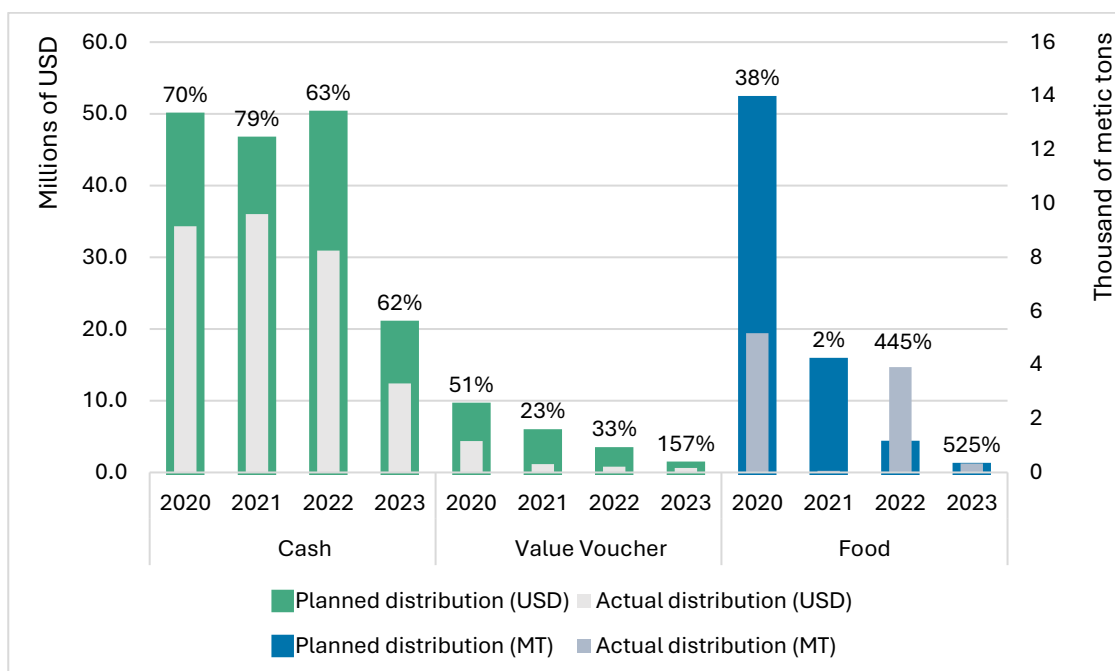
Source: WFP COMET Beneficiary data across modalities may include overlaps.

¹⁵⁶ WFP. 2017. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*

¹⁵⁷ Iraq Cash Working Group. 2019. *Vulnerability Assessment and Targeting Review: Multipurpose Cash in Iraq*. WFP. 2017. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*. KII with WFP staff and United Nations stakeholders. WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2018 to 2022*

¹⁵⁸ WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2019, 2020 and 2021*. WFP. *Iraq Country Briefs – March 2020 and July 2023*. KIIs with government and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

Figure 18 - Total CSP SO1 transfers (planned versus actual) by transfer modality (2020–2023)

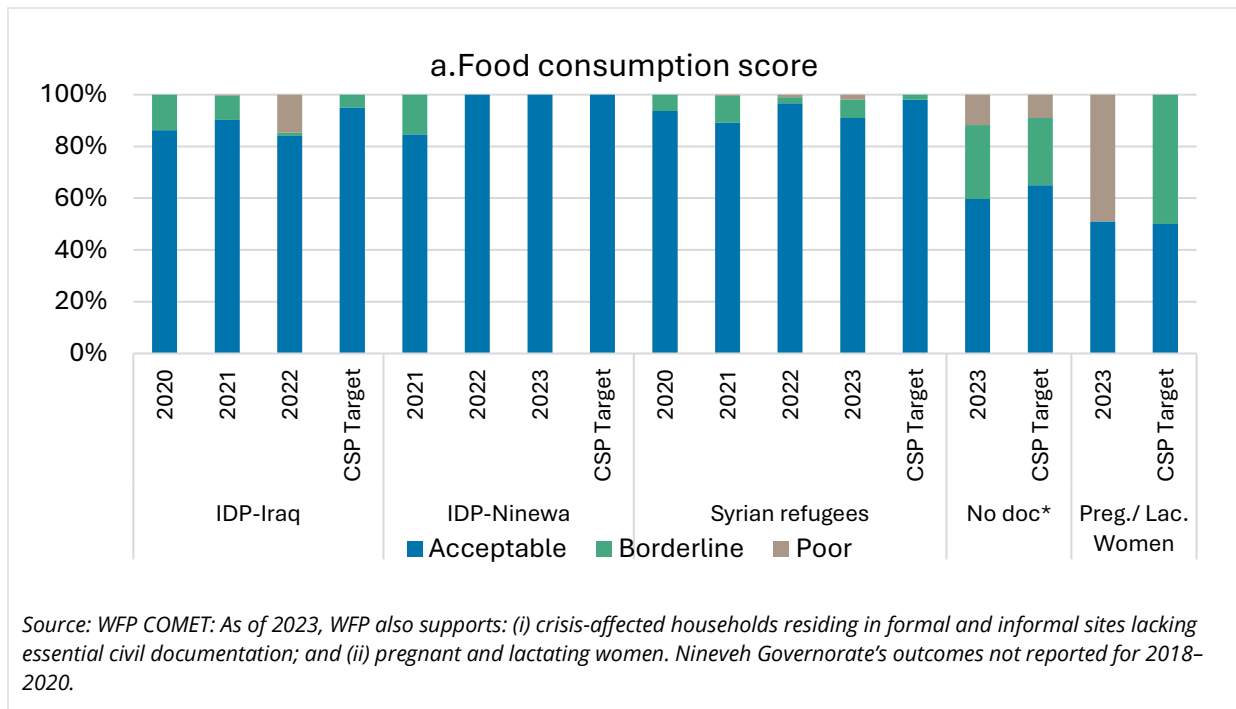


Source: WFP COMET. T-ICSP data are only available at the strategic outcome level and can therefore not be used to compare transfer volumes at the level of the CSP strategic outcome.

93. WFP fell short of its outcome targets to reduce borderline food consumption and negative consumption coping strategies for IDPs and achieved mixed results for Syrian refugees. Syrian refugees' FCS improved from 2020 to 2022; however, the proportion using food coping strategies peaked in 2021, decreasing only in 2022. The percentage of IDPs using stress coping strategies increased from 46 percent in 2020 to 69 percent in 2022. While the percentage of IDPs in Iraq with an "acceptable" FCS remained stable from 86 percent in 2020 to 84 percent in 2022, the situation worsened over time for the remaining population, with 13 percent of IDPs in Iraq (excluding Nineveh Governorate) recording a "borderline" FCS in 2020 compared with 14 percent recording a "poor" FCS in 2022. The Food Expenditure Share increased for both IDPs and Syrian refugees from 2020 to 2022 (Figure 19). Act. 1 beneficiaries and government and United Nations stakeholders report that WFP assistance did play a valuable role in stabilizing crisis spending among IDPs and Syrian refugees, which helped to avoid an even more rapid deterioration in food security. However, the volume of assistance provided was insufficient to offset the deterioration of food security outcomes caused by COVID-19, increased food prices and the overall decrease in international assistance.¹⁵⁹

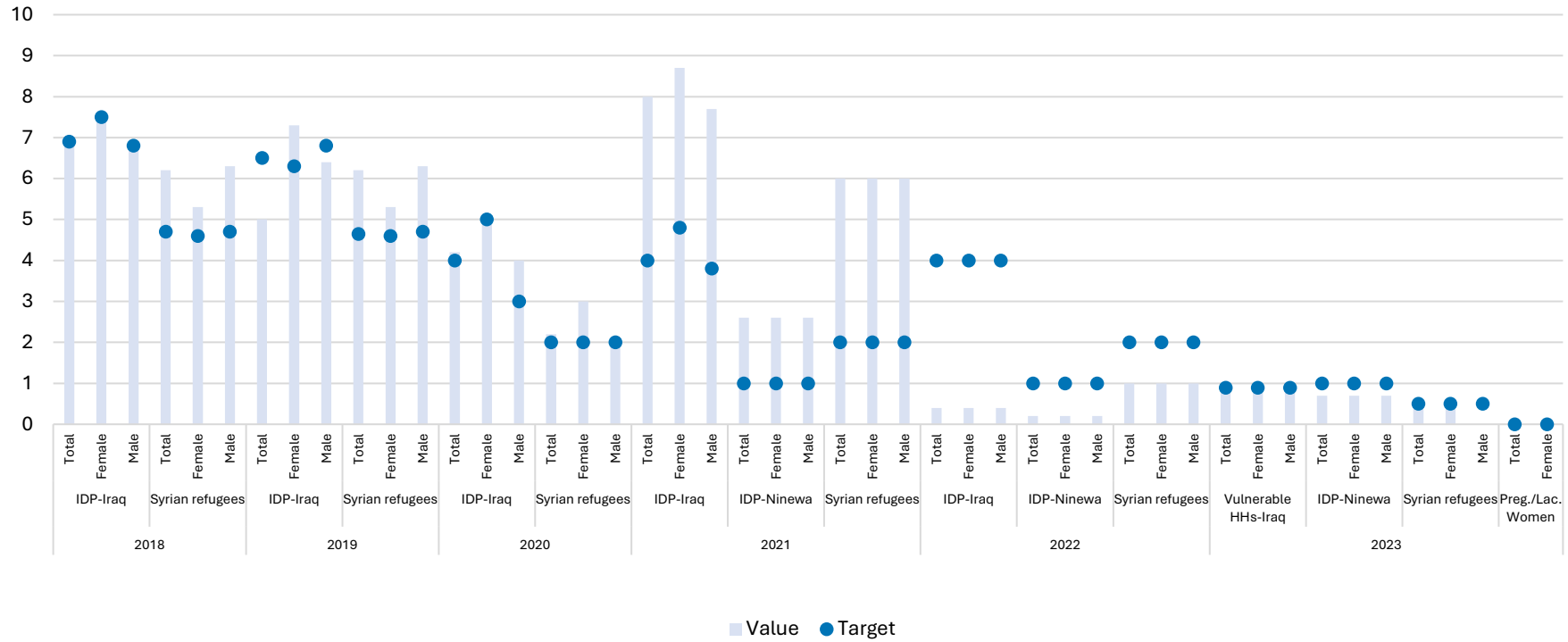
¹⁵⁹ KIIs with WFP staff, government and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023. FGDs with Act. 1 beneficiaries, October 2023. WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report. Iraq CSP IQ02 BR04 – Narrative, September 2023

Figure 19 – Selected SO1-related outcome indicators (2018–2023)¹⁶⁰

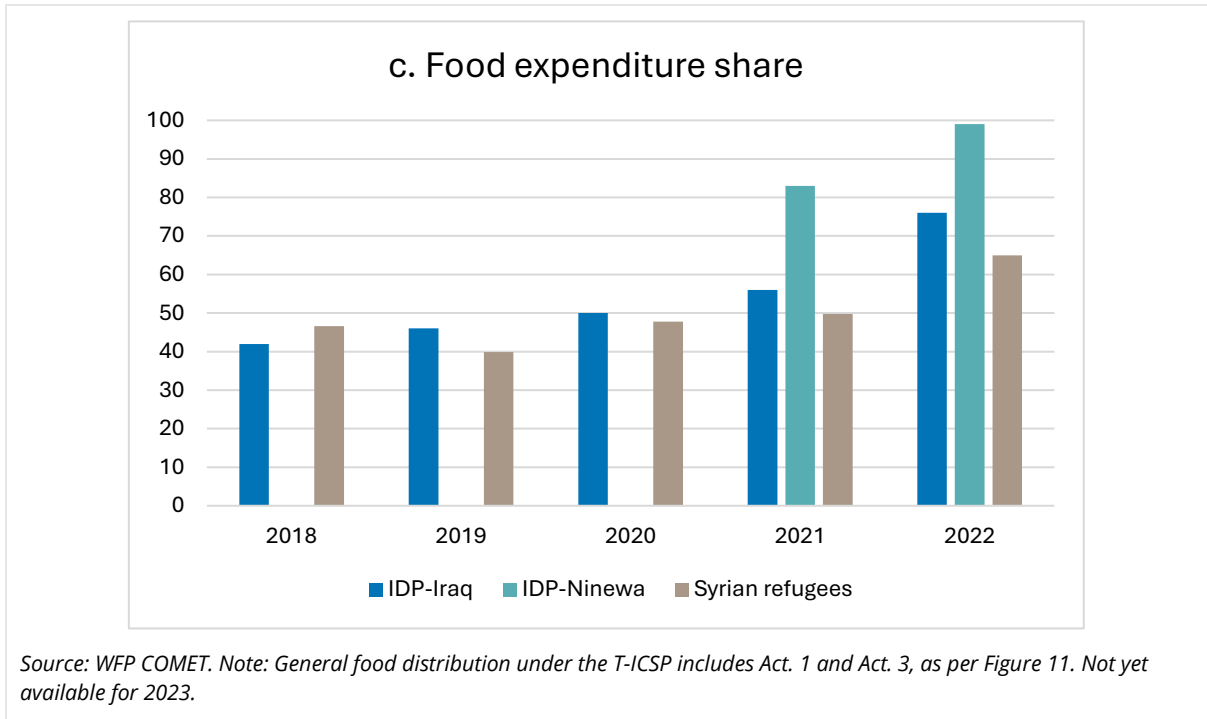


¹⁶⁰ Households relying on livelihood coping strategies due to a lack of food are classified based on the severity associated with the strategies applied. The higher the category, the more severe and longer-term the negative consequences are for households. The application of “stress consumption strategies” indicates a decrease in the households’ capacity to manage future shocks; “crisis consumption strategies” reduce future household productivity, including human capital formation; “emergency consumption coping strategies” affect future productivity and are more difficult to reverse or more dramatic in nature (WFP. 2022. *WFP Corporate Results Framework 2022–2025*)

b. Consumption-based Strategy Index



Source: WFP COMET. Note: Indicator not reported under the T-ICSP. Note: As of 2023, WFP also supports: (i) crisis-affected households residing in formal and informal sites lacking essential civil documentation; and (ii) pregnant and lactating women.



94. Mobilization of funding to maintain SO1 has been a continuous challenge since 2018. This affected the sustainability of support to beneficiaries. To cope with funding shortages, WFP had to reduce cash transfer sizes for several months in some areas in 2018, 2021 and 2022. Another strategy WFP used to cope with budgetary restrictions was to move from working with partners to direct implementation in 2022. This saved over USD 1 million under strategic outcomes 1 and 2 (see section 2.3.3).¹⁶¹ Despite these challenges, WFP was still able to increase cash-based transfer values twice, in 2021 and 2022, to address needs created by inflation, using prioritization exercises to focus resources on people with the greatest needs.

95. The CSP originally envisaged handing over unconditional food assistance to the GOI by 2021. However, this was delayed due to: (i) capacity gaps in the Ministry of Displacement and Migration; (ii) the lack of a clear coordinated plan between WFP and authorities on the division of tasks and responsibilities between GOI and the KRI; and (iii) rising food insecurity, particularly related to COVID-19. Despite the challenges, WFP maintained close coordination with the GOI and KRI to avoid duplication and overlap and to “top-up” gaps in GOI assistance.¹⁶²

96. Throughout the T-ICSP and CSP, WFP prioritized beneficiaries living in camps for unconditional food assistance. On the one hand, thanks to an agreement with the GOI and Ministry of Displacement and Migration, WFP had privileged access to the camps where vulnerable Syrian refugees and IDPs were located and played a key role in addressing food insecurity in camps, especially during COVID-19. On the other hand, WFP faced challenges targeting IDPs relocated outside camps. This was particularly evident when the GOI started to close the camps. WFP adapted to these circumstances by implementing monitoring systems to track returnees and by building logistic capacities to reach areas outside of camps where vulnerable populations were less concentrated and harder to identify.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ WFP. CSP BR03 – Narrative

¹⁶² WFP. 2017. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*. KIIs with WFP staff and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023. WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2018 to 2022*. Iraq CSP IQ02 BR03 – Narrative

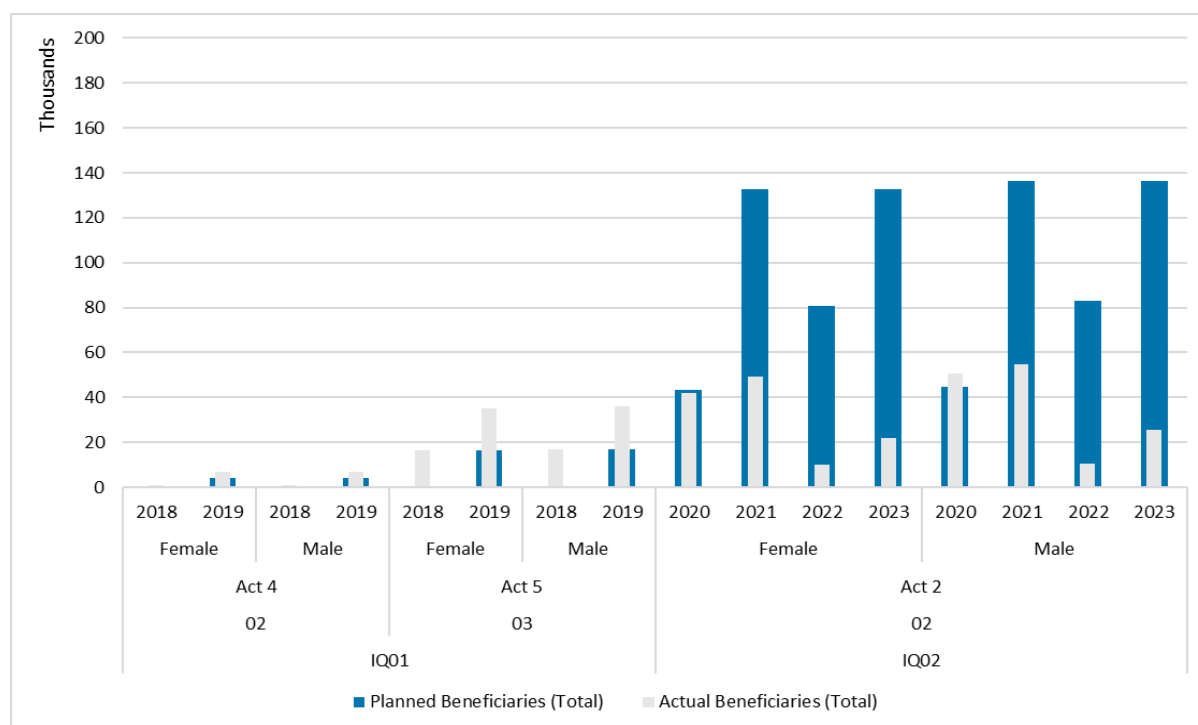
¹⁶³ KIIs with WFP and external stakeholders

CSP SO2 – Activity 2: Livelihoods and climate adaptation

Finding 7. WFP’s livelihoods and climate adaptation interventions have supported IDP returns and social cohesion through the re-establishment of agricultural activities, income generation and skills development. These investments have improved food security and reduced emergency coping strategies; however, funding constraints meant WFP was unable to reach its targets and the scale of activities remained small. The sustainability and quality of activities were impacted by a lack of consideration for market and value chain investment, short cycles for employment support and the lack of a differentiated approach to skills development.

97. WFP deepened the scope and breadth of its livelihoods and climate adaptation activities in the CSP compared with the T-ICSP, underpinned by an ambitious strategy (see section 2.1.4). However, limited resources meant WFP was unable to reach its planned beneficiaries for Act. 2 and the scale of interventions was small compared with other strategic outcomes (Annex 9). Resilience interventions under CSP Act. 2 encompassed food assistance for assets (FFA) (including rural cash for work),¹⁶⁴ food for training for rural households to restart or expand agricultural activities, and Emergency Cash for Work,¹⁶⁵ which provided a conditional cash transfer to vulnerable households during COVID-19 and supported community asset rehabilitation. Emergency Cash for Work was also the precursor to urban livelihoods support from 2021 onwards, including vocational training and EMPACT/Josour which provided training and job-seeking support to young people. From 2022, WFP expanded resilience building activities from post-conflict areas such as Anbar and Nineveh to areas in the south vulnerable to food insecurity through scaled-up climate adaptation activities. Figure 20 shows the number of beneficiaries reached against planned by gender and by year for 2018 to 2023.

Figure 20 – Resilience and livelihoods beneficiaries planned versus actual by gender (2018–2023)

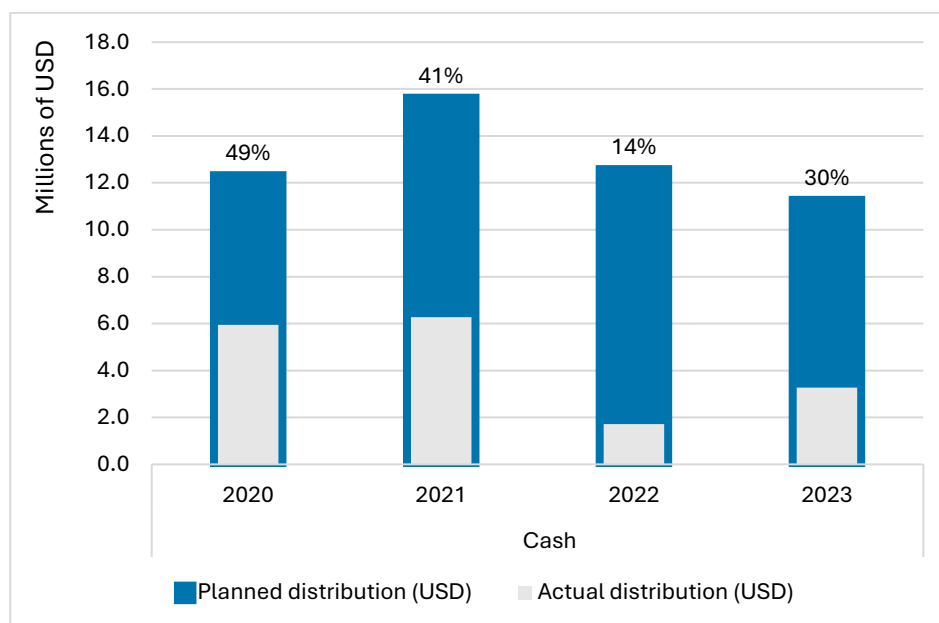


Source: WFP COMET 2023 data from Iraq Annual Country Report.

¹⁶⁴ FFA included cash for work schemes for the rehabilitation of agriculture and irrigation infrastructures, the provision of agriculture inputs and equipment – including greenhouses, livestock shelter, community bread ovens and home gardening

¹⁶⁵ Specifically, the project included works on 147 schools, 25 public parks, 3 health centres, 1 centre for disabled people, 1 orphanage, and 2,490 km of main and secondary roads

Figure 21 – Total SO2 transfers (planned versus actual) by modality (2020–2023)



Source: WFP COMET-ICSP data is only available at the strategic outcome level and can therefore not be used to compare transfer volumes at the level of the CSP strategic outcome.

98. **During the CSP, WFP never achieved the amounts of cash-based transfers it intended to,** which meant that recipients of cash-based transfers under Act. 2 received less than their planned entitlement (Figure 21). Act. 2 beneficiaries only made up 8 percent of the total number of WFP beneficiaries (Annex 9). A number of factors contributed to WFP not reaching CSP Act. 2 planned beneficiaries, reducing the amount of cash-based transfers and falling short of planned outputs. In 2020, WFP only secured 65 percent of required funding, resulting in a scale-back of activities and beneficiary outreach. Conversely, in 2022, WFP secured substantial funding for resilience programming, in fact more than required for the implementation plan, but the funding arrived late which resulted in WFP missing its planned number of beneficiaries (see section 2.4.1).

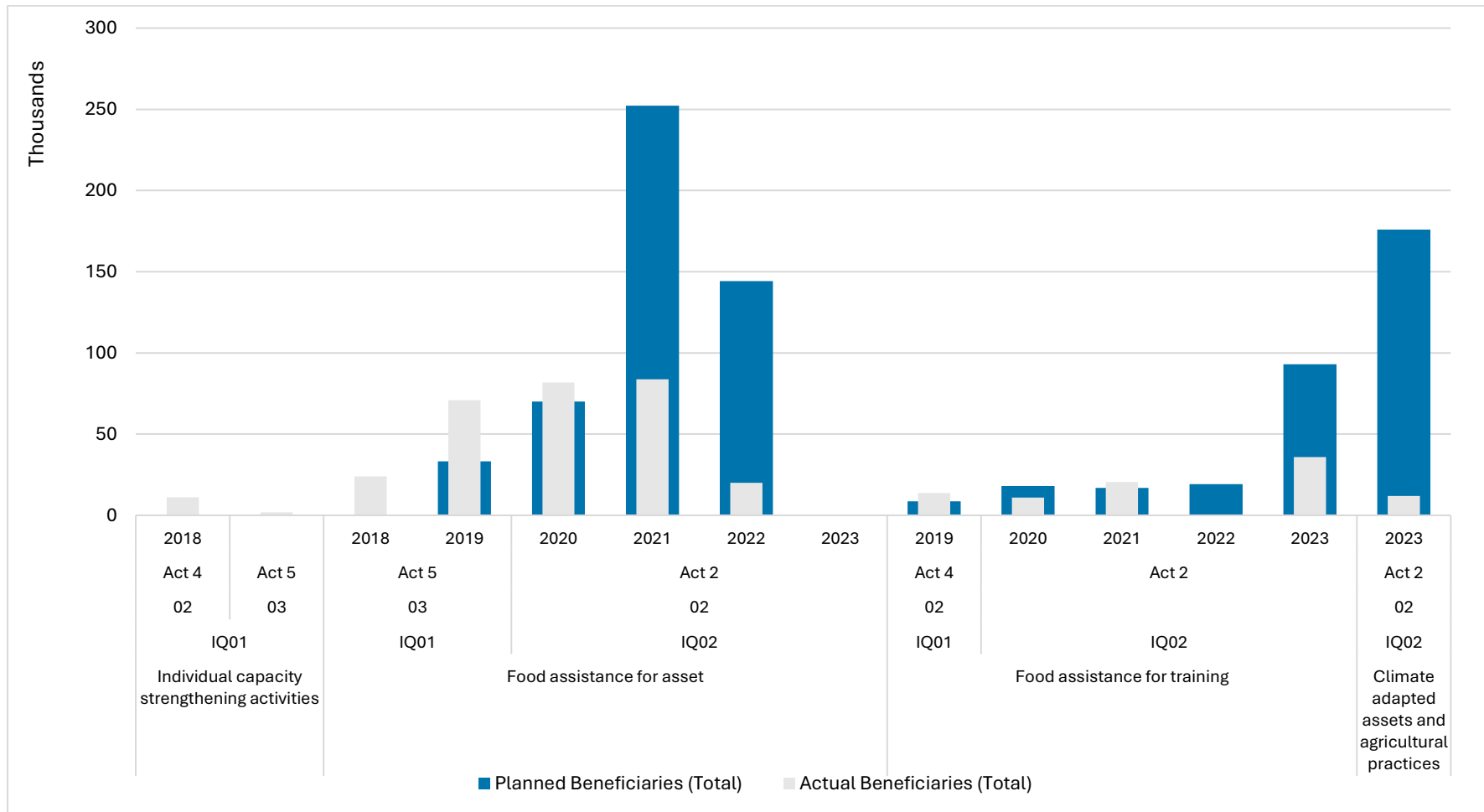
99. COVID-19 mitigation measures also impacted on beneficiary reach in 2022. These resulted in delays in commencing resilience activities due to required approvals. Access restrictions in some areas resulted in disruptions in FFA and food for training activity implementation. In addition, key informants reported that the need to adapt EMPACT (Josour) activities to online training delayed implementation. There were also indications that **planning did not sufficiently account for the transition the WFP Iraq office was going through between 2020 and 2022.** The 2023 decentralized evaluation highlighted ambitious planning targets that were inadequately resourced and did not account for the disruption caused by switching to a direct implementation modality.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, the recent shift of focus from humanitarian activities to development required consideration of longer implementation periods to achieve results.¹⁶⁷

100. Figure 22 shows the achieved numbers of beneficiaries reached under CSP Act. 2 and related T-ICSP activities. Table 4 below provides a sample of the types of outputs achieved under the FFA. Full output data are given at Annex 9.

¹⁶⁶ WFP. 2023. *Evaluation of WFP Livelihood Support, Asset Creation and Climate Adaptation Activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*

¹⁶⁷ WFP/Antezana, O. 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategic Plan 2020–2024 Mid Term Review Report*

Figure 22 – CSP SO2-related number of beneficiaries reached by subactivity (2018–2023)



Source: WFP COMET.

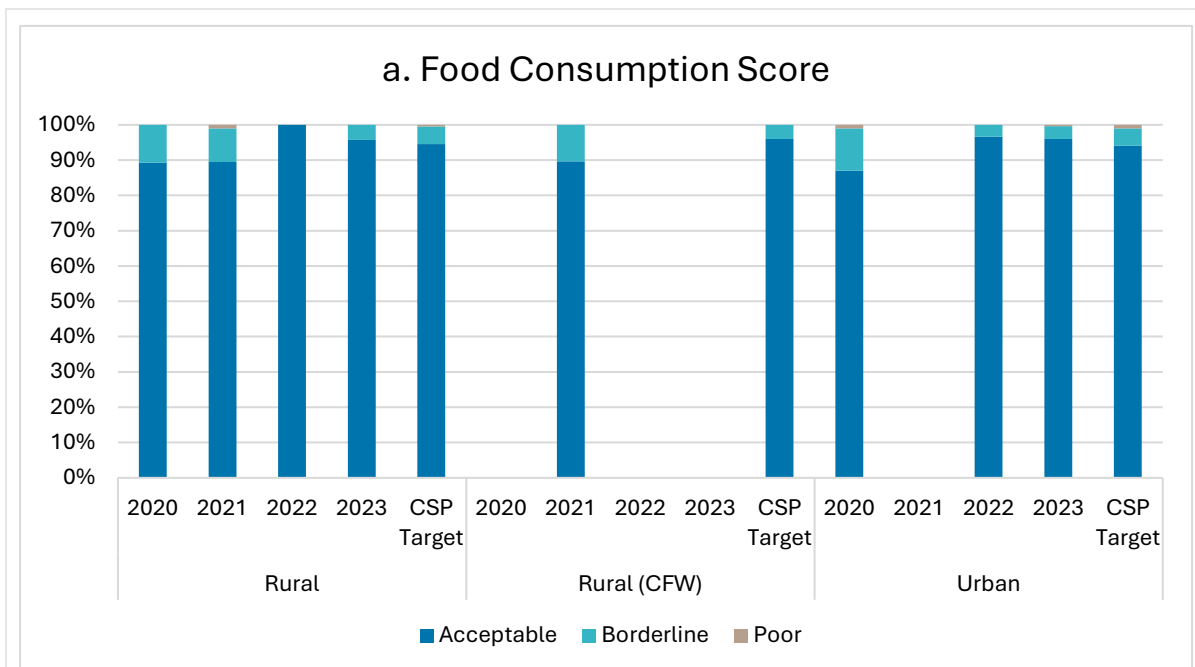
Table 4 –CSP Activity 2 FFA-related output indicators (2018–2022)

	2018			2019			2020			2021			2022		2023			
	Planned	Actual	Percentage achieved	Planned	Actual	Percentage achieved	Planned	Actual	Percentage achieved	Planned	Actual	Percentage achieved	Planned	Actual	Percentage achieved	Planned	Actual	Percentage achieved
Hectares (ha) of agricultural land benefiting from rehabilitated irrigation schemes							432.5	655.53	152%	27 360	24 350	89%	9 681.2	6 017	62%	164 805	166 656	101%
Kilometres (km) of irrigation canals rehabilitated	200.7	1 583	788%	230	180	78%	519.53	544.34	105%	457.95	411.6	90%	103.63	33.63	32%	6	7	117%
Number of assets built, restored or maintained by targeted communities							7 298	4 893	67%	550	557	101%	557	558	100%	6 574	6 344	97%
Number of participants in beneficiary training sessions (livelihood support/agriculture & farming/Income Generating Activities)	1 200	1 200	100%	1 000	1 138	114%	2 825	2 544	90%	2 350	2 311	98%				79 325	55 925	71%

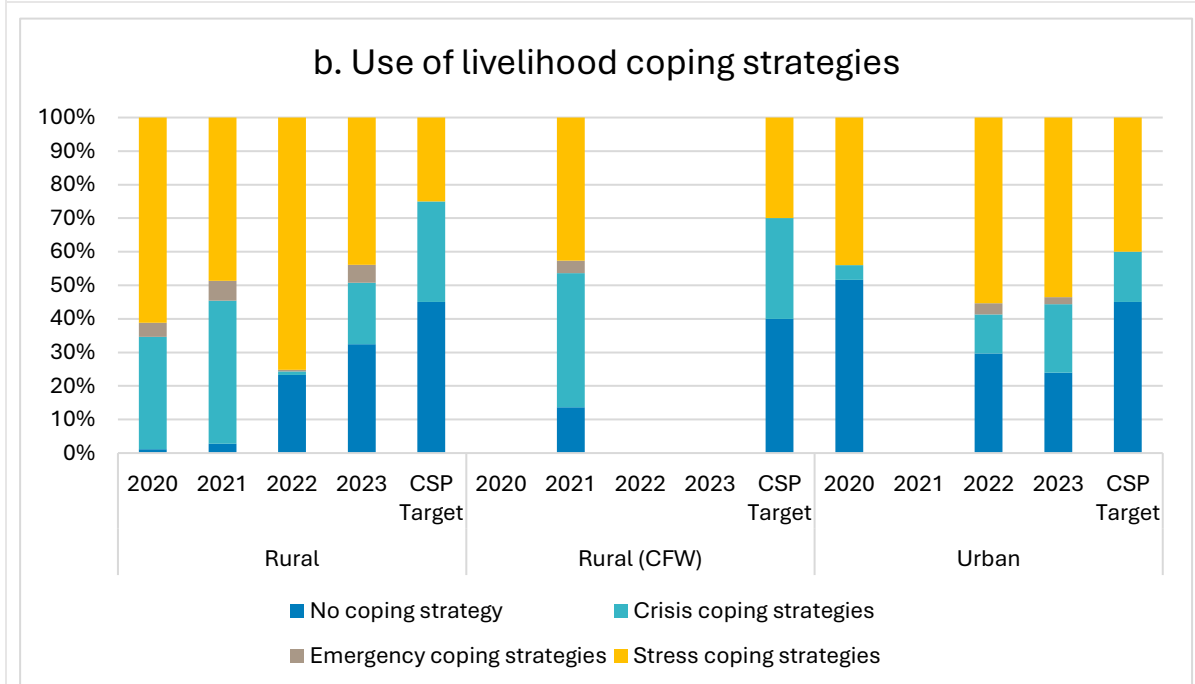
Source: WFP. Iraq Annual Country Reports (2018–2022). Values for 2018–2019 from the Iraq T-ICSP Act. 5.

101. **Though it fell short of some output targets, and did not consistently** achieve annual outcome targets throughout the CSP, **WFP’s support contributed to increased FCS and reduced emergency coping strategies.** Figure 23 shows WFP achievements in terms of selected outcome indicators, such as the FCS, the Livelihood Coping Strategy Index and the Food Expenditure Share.¹⁶⁸

Figure 23 – Selection of SO2 outcome indicators (2020–2023)

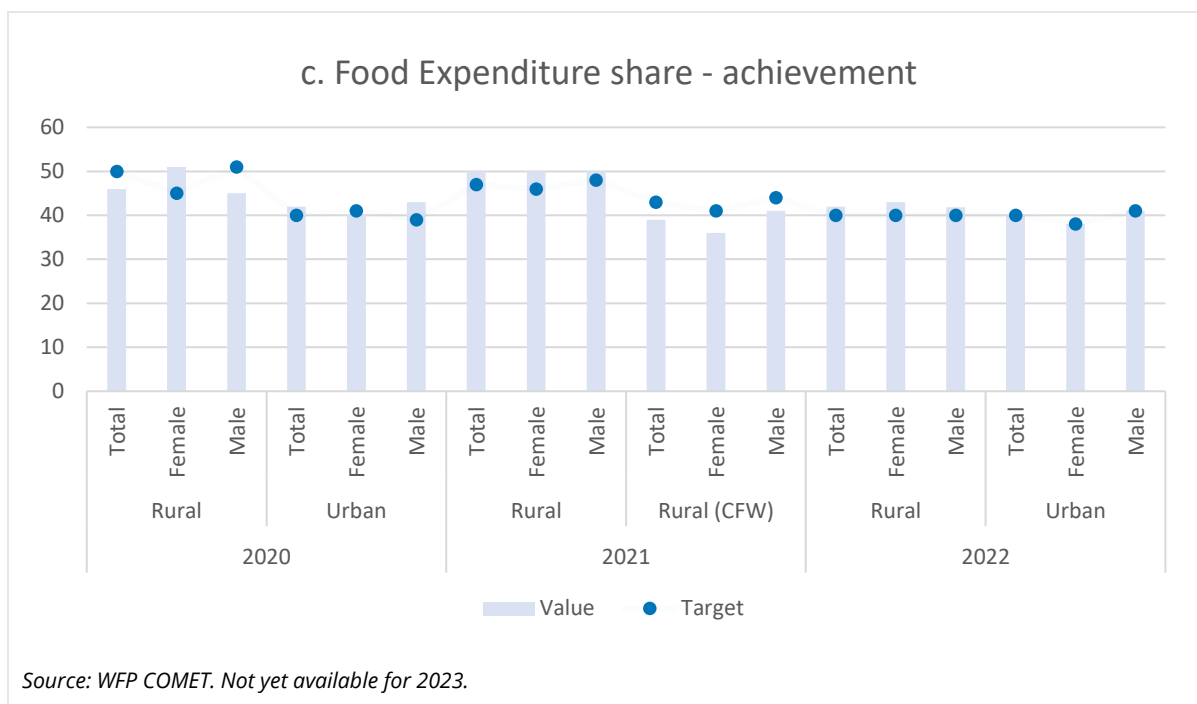


Source: WFP COMET.



Source: WFP COMET.

¹⁶⁸ Reporting data in the *Iraq Annual Country Report* showed gaps in outcome monitoring making trend analysis difficult. Outcome indicator annual targets are provided in Annex 9



102. WFP’s scale-up of support to agricultural livelihoods was key to facilitating sustainable returns, as agriculture employs significant numbers of people in Iraq. WFP’s work to rehabilitate irrigation networks, install sprinkler systems, and support greenhouses and tilling machines helped returnees to restart production on land that had been abandoned for several years due to conflict and supported social cohesion (see section 2.2.4).¹⁶⁹ Cash-based transfers under Act. 2 were used for the purchase of food, and to support access to health care and medicine as well as payment of debts.¹⁷⁰ FGDs with beneficiaries also reported increased agricultural production and income as a result of the inputs provided by WFP, including supporting sprinklers and greenhouses for smallholder farmers to undertake agriculture on land that had previously been left fallow. Emergency Cash for Work helped to address economic challenges caused by COVID-19, providing a cash injection to targeted vulnerable households and cleaning and rehabilitating public assets (schools, public parks, health centres). However, these activities were less suitable for women, with women making up only 15 percent of participants, given conservative social norms and the physically demanding work involved (see section 2.2.2).¹⁷¹

103. WFP contributed to youth job skills and employment through vocational training and a university-based job skills programme (Josour, previously EMPACT), though it is too early to fully assess these programmes’ contribution to long-term employment. Results from the predecessor EMPACT programme found that 39 percent of men and 32 percent of women participants were able to secure full-time or informal jobs or engage in online work. However, the programme suffered from high initial dropout rates, with women finding it harder to find work following the training due to conservative social norms and travel restrictions.¹⁷² FGDs with vocational training participants were generally positive, with a number reporting they started their own businesses while some had secured employment. However, others faced challenges

¹⁶⁹ UN. March 2020. *Iraq Common Country Analysis*. Site visits to Act. 2 project sites. FGDs with Act. 2 beneficiaries. KIs with government and United Nations stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023. WFP. 2023. *Evaluation of WFP Livelihood Support, Asset Creation and Climate Adaptation Activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*

¹⁷⁰ WFP. 2023. *Evaluation of WFP Livelihood Support, Asset Creation and Climate Adaptation Activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*. FGDs with Act. 2 beneficiaries

¹⁷¹ WFP. 2023. *Evaluation of WFP Livelihood Support, Asset Creation and Climate Adaptation Activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*

¹⁷² Ibid. FGDs with project beneficiaries, October 2023. WFP. 2023. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2022*

with poor-quality inputs, training that was too short to allow them to gain the skills needed to get a job, and weak linkages to employers or credit schemes (see section 2.2.3)¹⁷³

104. Despite examples of good practice, the quality of WFP livelihood interventions was hindered by poor-quality inputs and a lack of follow-up, impacting the effectiveness and sustainability of activities. These included delays in seed distributions, pest infestations (for example, white flies infecting pumpkins and cucumbers), a lack of pesticides and peat moss, distributions that were not always timed well with respect to the seasonal calendar, poor-quality seeds in Nineveh Governorate and Abu Al-Khasib, delays in planting trees, poor-quality greenhouse nylon sheets, inadequate age of livestock, and quality issues with the junction piping for sprinkler systems.¹⁷⁴

105. These factors impeding the effectiveness and sustainability of livelihoods interventions highlight the need for WFP to continue to build its development experience addressing issues of quality, sustainability and longer follow-up periods recognizing that development is a multiyear endeavour.

CSP SO3 – Activity 3: Institutional capacity strengthening

Finding 8. WFP's work to strengthen institutional capacities to target and assist food-insecure vulnerable people is most developed through the school feeding programme. Despite challenges and delays, including the need to reduce the number of school feeding days, the successful piloting and handover of the school feeding programme serves as a model for potential future capacity strengthening work. Other institutional capacity strengthening activities have failed to achieve the outputs and outcomes set in the CSP. Early warning and preparedness activities have not progressed due to a lack of funding, while planned SBCC activities lost focus as the CSP progressed.

106. Act. 3 incorporates three interventions – school feeding, early warning and emergency preparedness, and SBCC – reflecting WFP's strategic approach of addressing these issues through capacity strengthening with the GOI (see section 1.3.3). Reported beneficiary numbers are exclusively for the school feeding subactivity, as shown in Figure 24.

School feeding

107. **WFP successfully established the school feeding programme in 2018**, expanding it to 13 governorates, and handing it over to the GOI at the start of the 2023/24 school year.¹⁷⁵ Leveraging escrow funding¹⁷⁶ from the Oil for Food Programme, WFP was able to pilot the programme nationally.

108. **School feeding met or exceeded its output targets for beneficiaries reached after a slow start in 2019.** The programme scaled up rapidly in 2020, reaching 321,000 beneficiaries in 2020 and almost 450,000 in 2022. The programme also provided take-home rations during COVID-19 for 138,534 children (Figure 24).

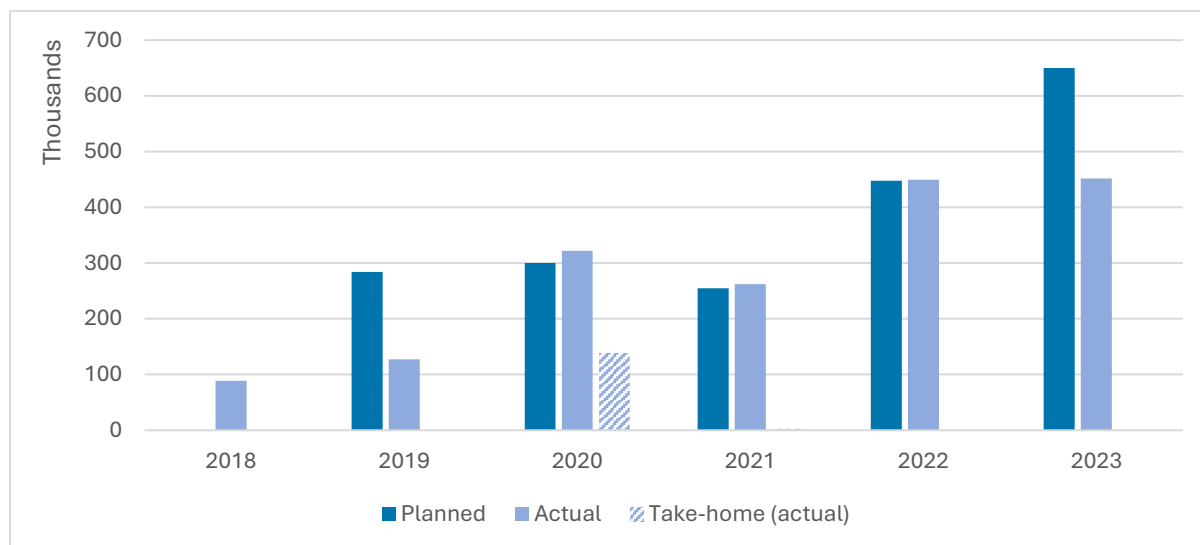
¹⁷³ Overall results of vocational training and Josour had not yet been assessed by WFP at the time of writing, although this was planned. WFP. 2023. *Evaluation of WFP Livelihood Support, Asset Creation and Climate Adaptation Activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*. FGDs with project beneficiaries, October 2023

¹⁷⁴ WFP. 2023. *Evaluation of WFP Livelihood Support, Asset Creation and Climate Adaptation Activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*. Site visits to Act. 2 projects, October 2023. FGDs with Act. 2 beneficiaries, October 2023

¹⁷⁵ NRT. 2 December 2023. The Ministry of Education explains the importance of the school feeding project. Available at: <https://www.nrtv.com/ar/detail3/18836> Accessed 22 December 2023

¹⁷⁶ This is GOI funding which was held by a third party, the UN Oil for Food Programme, under the sanctions and reparations regime following the 1991 Gulf War

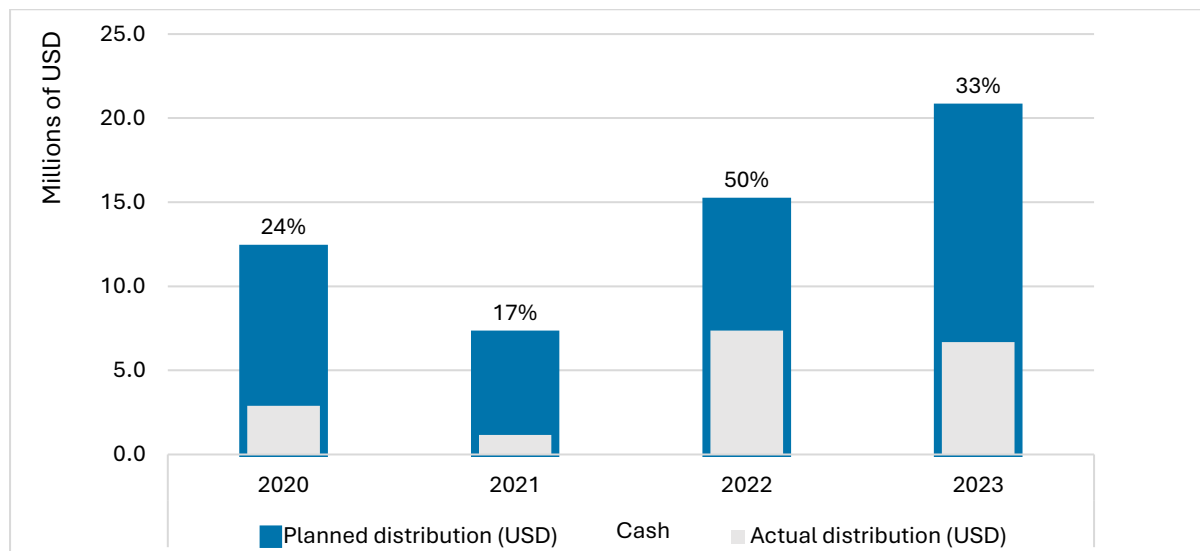
Figure 24 – SO3 planned versus actual beneficiaries (school feeding)



Source: WFP. Iraq Annual Country Reports (2020–2023). No reported values for 2018.

109. The school feeding programme reached high numbers of beneficiaries. However, lower than planned funding, instability, COVID-19, and onerous GOI administrative and bureaucratic hurdles meant that WFP was only able to deliver low volumes of assistance. WFP delivered between 6 and 25 days of school feeding per year, well below the recommended level of at least 60 days per academic semester.¹⁷⁷ As a result, **school feeding consistently fell short of its output targets for the volume of resources transferred**, achieving only 77 percent of its planned resource distribution targets in 2019, and as little as 17 percent in 2021 (Figure 25).

Figure 25 – Total SO3 cash-based transfers (planned versus actual) by modality (2020–2023)



Source: WFP COMET.

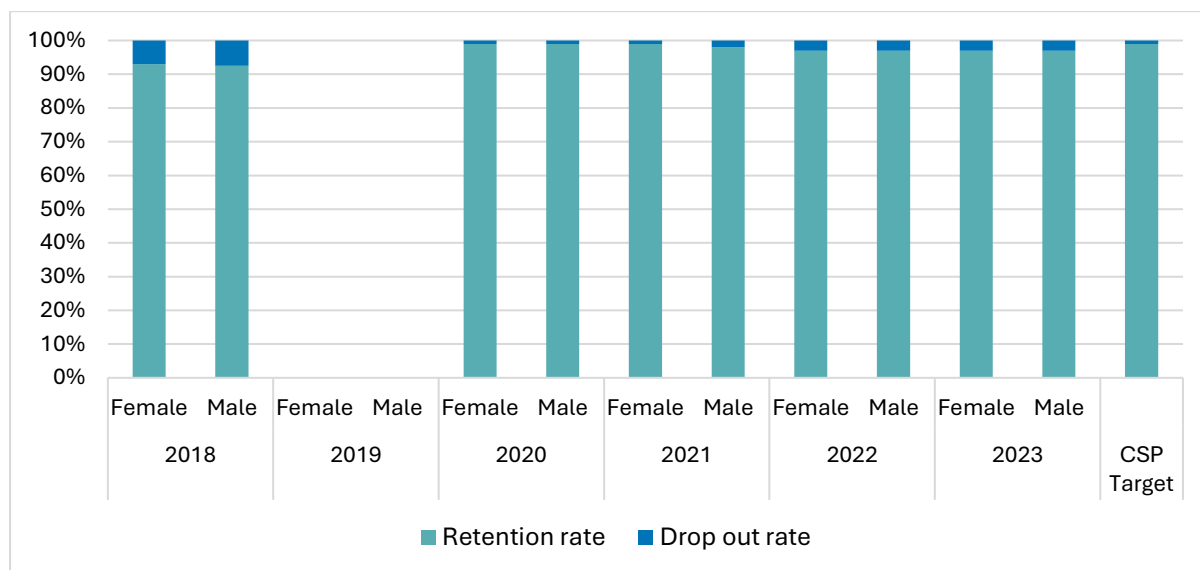
110. Despite the limited delivery, the teachers and students consulted had positive perceptions of the programme, considering that it helped to improve concentration when available.¹⁷⁸ **Data collected by WFP show that attendance and dropouts met targets** (Figure 26 and Annex 9). **However, this was only for**

¹⁷⁷ FGDs with school feeding beneficiaries, October 2023. KIIs with government stakeholders, October 2023. Alaman, L. & Arif, N. *Management review of school feeding activities in Iraq (2010 to 2020)*. WFP Iraq. 2023. *Final School Feeding Report 2022–2023*

¹⁷⁸ FGDs with school feeding beneficiaries, KIIs with government stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023

the months that school feeding was provided and no comparator data are available, so the actual contribution of school feeding to these outcomes is unclear.

Figure 26 – CSP SO3: Outcome indicator: Dropout and retention rate (2018–2023)



Source: WFP. Iraq Annual Country Reports (2020–2022) – annual targets and CSP targets are the same. According to the WFP corporate results framework, attendance rate is collected as part of the indicator on retention rate.

111. **Despite challenges, WFP was able to support GOI ownership and capacity building to hand over the school feeding programme.** The initial timeline for handing over the programme was overly ambitious and extended through several budget revisions from mid-2021 until mid-2023.¹⁷⁹ However, government stakeholders value WFP’s mentoring and support for the programme, including conducting an assessment of the Ministry of Education’s logistics capacity, support to draft the National School Nutrition Policy with the Ministry of Planning, development of a detailed handover plan, and capacity building to support supply chain, logistics, food quality control, financial management and project management. Budget is allocated at the national level and directorate staff report they feel equipped to take the programme forward. WFP is planning a Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) exercise in 2023 to 2024 to support handover.¹⁸⁰ **This serves as a model for the successful piloting and handover of programmes to the GOI.**

112. FGDs and KIIs indicate that some schools have experienced challenges in providing meals, including receiving them after official working hours or receiving damaged or insufficient food. WFP was able to work with suppliers to resolve issues with late delivery. However, teachers and school officials continued to express a preference for different types of food in the basket, including options for gluten- or dairy-intolerant children.¹⁸¹

113. The school feeding programme also contains fresh items sourced from local suppliers, which helps to boost the local economy and create jobs. This initiative has resulted in nearly USD 5 million being infused into local markets and has generated almost 900 jobs for people in nearby areas.¹⁸²

Early warning and emergency preparedness

114. In 2019, following improved security, the Logistics Cluster was deactivated (see section 2.2.1.6). WFP launched a Logistics Preparedness Project in order to bring the humanitarian community together to

¹⁷⁹ Iraq CSP IQ02 BR03 – Narrative

¹⁸⁰ WFP. 2022. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2021*. MoP, 2 Oct 2023. The Ministry of Planning and the World Food Program discuss the pillars of the national school feeding policy in Iraq. Available at: <https://mop.gov.iq/archives/14753>. Accessed 22 December 2023. FGDs with school feeding beneficiaries, October 2023. KIIs with government stakeholders, October 2023. Alaman, L. & Arif, N. *Management review of school feeding activities in Iraq (2010 to 2020)*. WFP Iraq. 2023. *Final School Feeding Report 2022–2023*

¹⁸¹ KIIs with government stakeholders, FGD with beneficiaries, October 2023

¹⁸² WFP. 2023. *Final School Feeding Report for the Academic Year 2022–2023*

build a resilient national supply chain and a collaborative logistical response.¹⁸³ However, as a result of COVID-19 and staff changes, both in the different ministries involved and in WFP, the Logistics Preparedness Project ceased to operate in 2022 and the gaps identified had not been addressed. WFP had only received initial funding through the corporate-level Logistics Cluster and repeated resource mobilization attempts failed to secure additional funding.¹⁸⁴

115. WFP reports that 3,000 people were trained on preparedness, early warning, disaster risk management and climate adaptation from 2020 to 2022. However, this training actually targets beneficiaries of water/irrigation system rehabilitation delivered under Act. 2 and is focused more on awareness raising on water management rather than disaster early warning and preparedness (Table 4).¹⁸⁵

116. WFP Iraq reported on the Emergency Preparedness Capacity Index (EPCI)¹⁸⁶ in 2021 and 2022 as an outcome indicator for preparedness and early warning activities (see Table 5). WFP has not achieved EPCI targets in 2021 or 2022; however, it is unclear how this composite index reflects the work of WFP in Iraq today given that WFP no longer directly carries out food security vulnerability analysis (see section 2.1.5), food assistance is implemented through direct implementation (see section 2.3.3), and the humanitarian supply chain management project has not been continued. In 2022, WFP began work on early warning through climate information and capacity strengthening, but this work remains nascent.¹⁸⁷ While the EPCI was included under the T-ICSP logframe, no values were reported against it for 2018/19.

Table 5 – Emergency Preparedness Capacity Index

Year	Baseline	Target	Actual
2021	6	>8	7
2022	1	3	2

Source: WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports (2021 and 2022)*. Not yet available for 2023.

117. Recent investments by the country office in training staff on EPCI and the renewal of discussions on the Logistics Preparedness Project with the GOI and donors were noted as efforts in **building government capacities in emergency preparedness**.¹⁸⁸

Social and behaviour change communication

118. **WFP plans to support the GOI with SBCC have lost focus and are not well integrated into school feeding activities.** WFP planned that SBCC on nutrition would be a subactivity of institutional capacity strengthening (Act. 3) under the CSP, to start in January 2020. In 2019, a Harvard University fellow worked with WFP to conduct research on people’s dietary habits to help underpin an SBCC action plan.¹⁸⁹ Consultations were held with the Nutrition Working Group, the Nutrition Research Institute of the Ministry of Health and UNICEF.¹⁹⁰ The *2019 Iraq Annual Country Report* stated that “under the CSP, WFP will support the government in SBCC to tackle the dual issues of micronutrient deficiency and obesity among the Iraqi population. Partnering with the Nutrition Working Group, WFP will continue to advocate for healthy eating

¹⁸³ Logistics Cluster. 2020. *Preparedness Roadmap for Emergency Logistics*

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. KIIs with WFP staff and GOI stakeholders, October 2023. Evaluation team review of project proposals

¹⁸⁵ See discussion on M&E and suitability of corporate indicators for monitoring purposes. WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2018 to 2022*. KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023. FGDs with Act. 2 beneficiaries, October 2023

¹⁸⁶ The Emergency Preparedness and Capacity Index (EPCI) represents an average score of the changes resulting from WFP’s interventions in preparedness for emergency response. The EPCI consists of six variables that measure how effectively WFP is working with governments to establish and manage disaster preparedness measures. These measures include food security and vulnerability analysis, food assistance planning, humanitarian supply chain management, emergency telecommunications, hazard analysis, and early warning in support of food security, national preparedness and response

¹⁸⁷ KIIs with WFP staff and government stakeholders, October 2023. Evaluation team review of programme proposals provided by the country office in December 2023

¹⁸⁸ KIIs with WFP staff and government stakeholders, October 2023. Evaluation team review of programme proposals provided by the country office in December 2023

¹⁸⁹ WFP. 2019. *Situation Report #64*

¹⁹⁰ WFP. 2020. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2019*

and share nutrition information through a national campaign.” However, the evaluation team found no evidence that this was followed up during the implementation of the CSP.¹⁹¹

119. In 2019, under the school feeding programme, nutrition and healthy eating formed a key part of WFP’s complementary activities around providing healthy meals, alongside hygiene, physical activity and waste management. WFP and its partners shared nutrition posters throughout the 1,200 schools being reached over the 2019/20 academic year. These posters provided messages on food groups and a balanced diet including fruits and vegetables. In 2021, WFP reported that, as part of the handover of school feeding, it had drafted an SBCC strategy.¹⁹² This was followed by an SBCC workshop and a food safety and quality workshop.¹⁹³ However, by 2023, SBCC activities were no longer active in schools, although the evaluation team found some evidence of ad hoc SBCC sessions provided by WFP staff in schools in Basra and Dhi Qar governorates. Government stakeholders and a WFP mid-year review identified the need for further capacity strengthening to equip the GOI to undertake SBCC activities.¹⁹⁴ The planned SABER analysis as part of the handover strategy of school feeding to the Ministry of Education may be an opportunity to return SBCC to the agenda and build institutional capacity.

120. The evaluation team also found activities labelled SBCC under resilience and livelihoods interventions (Act. 2). However, these did not integrate nutrition messaging and were more akin to FAO’s farmer field school activities, focused on water management and changing agricultural practices.¹⁹⁵

CSP SO3 – Activity 4: Information technology for PDS modernization and safety nets

Finding 9. The shift in strategic focus from development of digital assets to providing technical support to build a robust social protection system is positive. WFP is well positioned to advise the GOI on the modernization of its PDS, in line with its policy on social protection as well as that of the GOI. Social projection offers a key pathway to safeguard and foster people’s ability to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs, and to manage the risks and shocks they face. Challenges sourcing appropriate technical capacity, both within WFP and from the private sector, and an insufficient focus on ensuring that the GOI has the capacity to maintain systems, have impacted on the sustainability and effectiveness of WFP’s approach to digitalization and social protection reform.

121. WFP has successfully been able to work with the GOI to address poor targeting, high cost and challenges reaching people in need under Iraq’s two existing social protection programmes, the PDS and Social Safety Net (see section 2.1.2). Throughout the CSP period, WFP shifted its focus from digitalization and PDS modernization to a more holistic focus on creating a social system supported by the right ICT solutions. WFP liaised closely with key GOI social protection actors, including the Ministry of Trade and Ministry of Interior, leveraging its historical relationships dating back to the Oil for Food programme in the 1990s (see section 1.2.9).¹⁹⁶

122. From 2018 until 2022, WFP followed an organic path, adapting to the challenges encountered through the process of digitalization. In 2020, WFP invested in a digital application called “Tamwini”¹⁹⁷ after uncovering challenges and inefficiencies while updating PDS registers, including non-existent families. The testing and roll-out of “Tamwini” uncovered the need to link it with the national ID system, which in turn uncovered challenges with data compatibility between different ministries holding personal data in Iraq. There is no reported progress for usage or impact data for “Tamwini” in WFP’s Annual Report after 2022,

¹⁹¹ WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2020, 2021 and 2022*. FGDs with Act. 3 beneficiaries, October 2023. KIIs with WFP staff and GOI stakeholders, October 2023

¹⁹² WFP. 2022. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2021*

¹⁹³ WFP. 2023. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2022*

¹⁹⁴ WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2020, 2021 and 2022*. FGDs with Act. 3 beneficiaries, October 2023. KIIs with WFP staff and GOI stakeholders, October 2023. WFP. 2023. *Annual Performance Plan Mid-Year Review 2022*

¹⁹⁵ Site visits to Act. 2 projects, FGDs with Act. 3 beneficiaries, KIIs with WFP staff and GOI stakeholders, October 2023

¹⁹⁶ WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2020, 2021 and 2022*. KIIs with WFP staff, United Nations and GOI stakeholders, October 2023. UN. March 2020. *Iraq Common Country Analysis*. EU-UN Social Protection Program Design Document, November 2023. Republic of Iraq Ministry of Planning, High Committee for Poverty Reduction Strategy. January 2018. *Iraq Poverty Reduction Strategy 2018 to 2022*

¹⁹⁷ Arabic for “my food ration”

which makes it challenging to assess the impact and sustainability of this investment.¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, in hindsight, the development of this digital asset is one element in a long chain of events that led WFP to build trust with the GOI and a thorough understanding of the needs of the overall social protection system.

123. In 2021, WFP developed a social protection strategy to focus its current digitalization work on building robust systems to strengthen national safety nets. In 2023, WFP signed a programme with UNICEF and ILO to jointly progress social protection reform (see section 2.1.3).¹⁹⁹ This allowed WFP to better integrate its digitalization activities into broader social protection reform efforts, including transforming the registration process linked to the PDS and integrating a needs-based approach to targeting to support evidence generation, transparency and effective management of social protection resources.²⁰⁰

124. WFP does not report on output indicators for Act. 4, which makes it difficult to assess the specific capacity building activities completed. However, a qualitative analysis of results suggests progress has been made in a number of key areas, including supporting the Ministry of Trade to progress policy reform related to efficient and effective targeting, digitalizing the PDS system, and supporting PDS registration exercises in Najaf and Dohuk.²⁰¹

125. **WFP has achieved most of its Act. 4 outcome targets.**²⁰² However, it is difficult to assess the overall contribution of WFP's support as consistent reporting across indicators and years is lacking (see Figure 27). United Nations and GOI stakeholders assess that WFP is providing valuable leadership in efforts to right size the PDS, which is allowing UNICEF and the World Bank to lead in assisting the GOI to develop pathways to transition vulnerable Iraqis from in-kind to cash-based social protection. However, stakeholders also considered that WFP could do more to work with partners in developing a vision of what "good social protection" looks like in Iraq and in building shock-responsive social safety nets.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ KIIs with WFP staff and GOI stakeholders, October 2023

¹⁹⁹ WFP. 2021. *WFP Strategy for Support to Social Protection*. KIIs with WFP staff, GOI and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

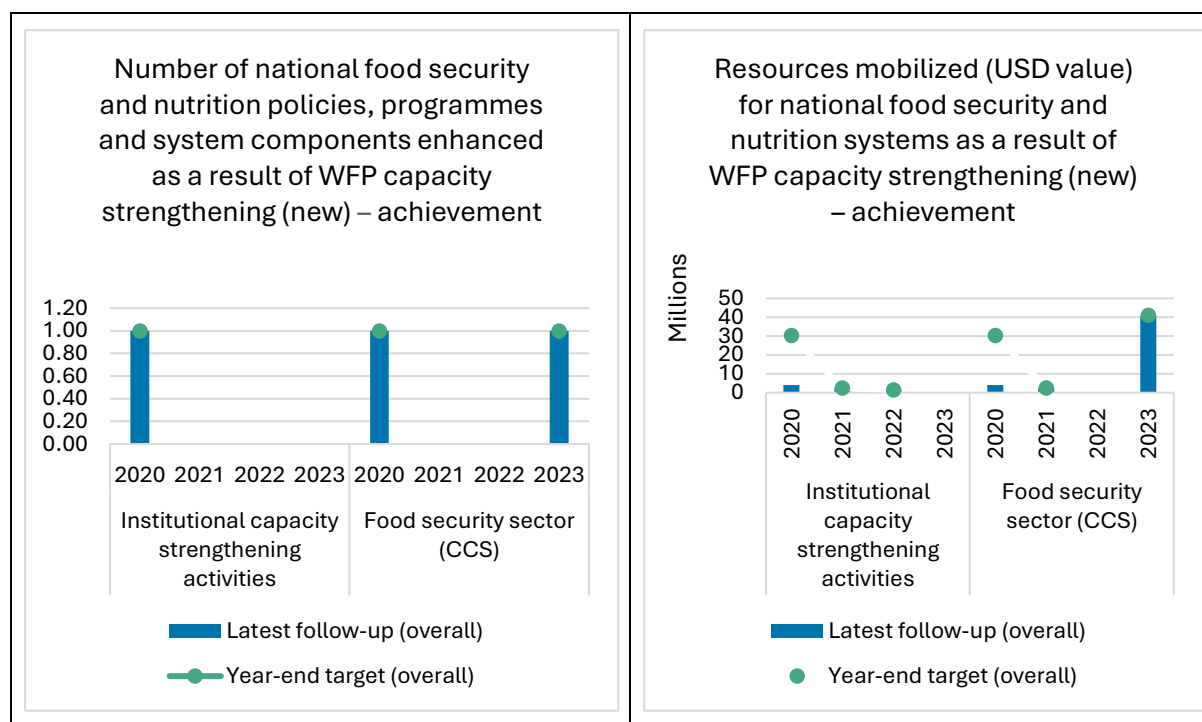
²⁰⁰ EU–UN Social Protection Program Design Document, November 2023. WFP. 2021. *WFP Strategy for Support to Social Protection*. KIIs with WFP staff, GOI and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

²⁰¹ WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021*. Site visits to Act. 4 projects, KIIs with GOI and United Nations stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023

²⁰² Reported indicators are: resources mobilized (USD value) for national food security and nutrition systems as a result of WFP capacity strengthening (new); and number of national food security and nutrition policies, programmes and system components enhanced as a result of WFP capacity strengthening (new) – achievement.

²⁰³ KIIs with GOI and United Nations stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023

Figure 27 – CSP SO3 – Act. 4 level of achievement outcome indicators (2020–2023)



Source: WFP COMET.

126. Challenges sourcing appropriate technical capacity, both within WFP and from the private sector, impacted on the sustainability and effectiveness of WFP’s approach to digitalization and social protection reform. WFP made progress in increasing its internal capacity to manage long-term development approaches by receiving technical support from the Regional Bureau and HQ. However, Iraq lacks adequate local profiles to manage complex digitalization and social safety net reform, and the unstable context makes it challenging to recruit and retain external experts. As a result, WFP has lacked the capacity to effectively source and manage the work of IT partners delivering digitalization work, leading to delays in delivery and challenges around scope and quality. The WFP Iraq country office also reported that the corporate requirement to work with an international IT company made it difficult to manage and implement the project and may have undermined the sustainability of the programme.²⁰⁴ There has been insufficient focus on developing GOI capabilities to maintain what WFP is building. GOI stakeholders reported that they lacked the technical capacity to maintain the digital platforms without ongoing support. In this respect, the mid-term review of the CSP states that WFP’s move from implementer to enabler will be difficult to achieve without a long-term approach to address capacity gaps within the GOI, private sector developers and WFP.²⁰⁵

127. By supporting the social protection system in Iraq, WFP is supporting the national transition from humanitarian to development outcomes for people in need. **Social protection has the potential to become a guiding thread that safeguards and fosters people’s ability to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs, and to manage the risks and shocks they face after the end of international assistance.** There is an opportunity to apply a stronger social protection lens across all areas of WFP’s programming in Iraq under a future CSP design.

T/ICSP SO5 – Activities 7–9: Humanitarian coordination

Finding 10. WFP contributed to effective coordination for humanitarian and development support in Iraq, drawing on its logistical and technical capacity. The handover of humanitarian coordination capacities to the GOI and development partners was not well managed, though this

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*. KIIs with United Nations and GOI stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023

largely related to gaps in government and United Nations leadership that were beyond WFP’s control.

128. Under SO5 of the T-ICSP (2018 to 2019), WFP delivered three activities that aimed to support humanitarian coordination, namely leadership of the Logistics Cluster and common logistics services (Act. 7), Emergency Telecommunications Cluster services (Act. 8) and co-coordinating the Food Security Cluster with FAO (Act. 9). T-ICSP SO5 received sufficient funding to implement its planned activities in both 2018 and 2019, with support from the Iraq Humanitarian Pooled Fund and donors (Annex 9).²⁰⁶

129. WFP largely achieved its output and outcome targets for effective humanitarian coordination (T-ICSP SO5), though it fell short on one output indicator (planned metric tonnes of cargo transported) in 2018 and 2019, as the Logistics Cluster (Act. 7) began to phase out activities from late 2018 in preparation for the handover of activities to the GOI-led Joint Operations Centre in March 2019 (Table 6).²⁰⁷ WFP largely achieved its output targets for the number of emergency telecoms and ICT systems established and the number of WFP-led clusters that were operational. WFP recorded 100 percent satisfaction on user surveys outcome indicator for the Logistics Cluster in 2018 and for the Food Security Cluster in 2018 and 2019. WFP did not collect user satisfaction data on Emergency Telecommunications Cluster services (Table 7).

Table 6 – T-ICSP SO5: output indicators

Activity	Name of the indicator	2018			2019		
		Planned	Actual	% Achieved	Planned	Actual	% Achieved
Act 7	Metric tons of cargo transported	50	37	74%	50	1	2%
Act 8	Number of emergency telecoms and information and communications technology (ICT) systems established	18	21	117%	1	1	100%
Act 9	Number of WFP-led clusters operational	4	3	75%	3	3	100%

Source: WFP. Iraq Annual Country Reports (2018 and 2019).

Table 7 – T-ICSP SO5: outcome indicator – user satisfaction rate

Activity	Target group	End-CSP Target	2018 Target	2018 Follow-up	End-CSP Target	2019 Target	2019 Follow-up
Act 9	Provision of Food Security Cluster services to the humanitarian community	=100	=100	100	=100	=100	100

*the phrasing of this indicator in ACR 2018 is: “Provision of Food Security Cluster services to the humanitarian community, CPA: Provision of Logistics Cluster services to the humanitarian community.”

Source: WFP. Iraq Annual Country Reports (2018 and 2019).

130. **In line with the transition to development, humanitarian coordination activities were not included in the CSP design.** WFP progressively phased out its support, deactivating the Logistics and Emergency Telecommunications clusters in March 2019, handing over mobile storage units and supplies to the GOI and humanitarian partners and ICT equipment to the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq and United Nations Department of Safety and Security.²⁰⁸ The Food Security Cluster was extended until August 2022 to support the COVID-19 response and in line with the broader United Nations timeline to close the humanitarian response.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ In addition to coordination, the Logistics Cluster activity provided common storage services for humanitarian partners through logistics hubs and mobile storage units and facilitated customs clearance through a one-stop shop for relief items entering the KRI. The ETC provided internet and radio communications to humanitarian partners through common operational areas in 18 camps. WFP. Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2018 and 2019. KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

²⁰⁷ WFP. 2020. Iraq Annual Country Report 2019. KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

²⁰⁸ WFP. 2020. Iraq Annual Country Report 2019

²⁰⁹ KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

131. The handover of humanitarian coordination functions to the GOI and development actors was poorly planned and communicated.²¹⁰ As a result of a continued disconnect with the GOI, stakeholders report that the Agricultural Working Group is currently not very active.²¹¹ Donors were largely positive about WFP's role in the transition, attributing the gaps to heavy turnover within key positions in the UNCT and instability within the GOI.²¹² However, WFP staff acknowledged that turnover within their own organization undermined the transition process and a 2023 mid-term review noted that "WFP could have been more proactive and more supportive to push this forward."²¹³

132. WFP continues to contribute to United Nations coordination under the development architecture, including co-chairing PWG 4 – Climate Change under the UNSDCF with UNDP and FAO, and co-chairing the PWG on social protection with UNICEF and ILO.²¹⁴ In line with the long-term development focus of the CSP, these activities are reported under their respective strategic outcomes: SO2 for climate change and SO3 for social protection.

2.2.2 To what extent did WFP contribute to achievement of cross-cutting aims (AAP, GEWE, nutrition integration, environmental sustainability)?

Finding 11. WFP made good progress on mainstreaming inclusion and gender across its programmes and systems, achieving gender parity in programming and introducing a number of interventions tailored to women and girls. However, progress in achieving the CSP's more ambitious gender transformation agenda is mixed due to limited investment and challenges engaging with GOI stakeholders. WFP made a concerted effort to include people with disabilities in its programmes, but needs to do more to tailor approaches to the needs of people with disabilities. WFP has established processes to manage protection risks, including prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, but must urgently publicize its new feedback mechanism to fill a gap in accountability left by the closure of the joint Iraq Information Centre in 2022. WFP's effort to integrate nutrition into its programming lost momentum after the T-ICSP. Despite a slow start, WFP's policy, research and programming work on climate change, and strong environmental safeguarding, has positioned it to play a leading role in environmental sustainability. WFP maintained appropriate adherence to humanitarian principles, throughout the transition to development.

Gender and disability inclusion

133. The CSP aimed at mainstreaming gender-transformative programming while ensuring that gender and age analyses are used to inform programming and targeted action plans, including through gender-sensitive livelihoods and social safety nets.²¹⁵ **The evaluation team found good evidence of gender inclusion and gender mainstreaming in WFP programming.**

134. WFP achieved gender parity in its programming (see Annex 9) and introduced a number of strategies to ensure programming was tailored to the specific needs of women and girls. This included designing irrigation projects which reduced farm labour and increased incomes for rural households headed by women, who spend a higher proportion of household income on food than urban women (see Annex 9b). WFP also targeted cash assistance to households headed by women, which were less likely to record an acceptable FCS than households headed by men (Annex 9d). On the other hand, WFP's initial emergency cash for work programme designed in response to the COVID-19 crisis was not sufficiently culturally adapted to women, with women making up only 15 percent of beneficiaries (see section 2.2.1.2). However, the follow-up EMPACT youth skills programme achieved equal enrolment of young women,

²¹⁰ KIIs with donors, United Nations stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² KIIs with donors and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

²¹³ WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*. KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

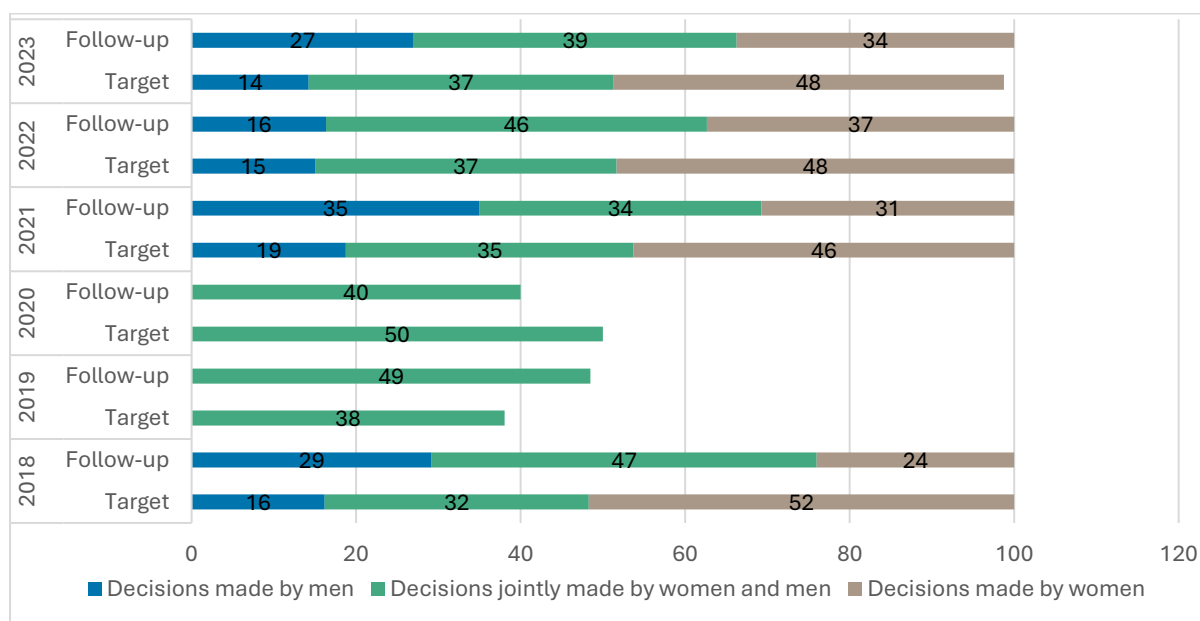
²¹⁴ WFP. 2023. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2022*. EU-UN Social Protection Program Design Document, 7 November 2023

²¹⁵ WFP. 2019. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan (2020–2024)*. Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, 2020

although they continued to find it harder to gain work following the training due to conservative social norms and travel restrictions (see section 2.2.1.2).²¹⁶

135. WFP fell short of targets for the proportion of households where women make decisions, achieving 31 percent and 37 percent in 2021 and 2022, respectively, against targets of 46 percent and 49 percent. WFP almost achieved the targets for households where decisions are made jointly, achieving 34 percent and 46 percent for 2021 and 2022, respectively, against targets of 35 percent and 47 percent. An increase in households where men are the sole decision makers is observed for 2023 (Figure 28). Overall, WFP fell short of its target for members of food assistance decision making entities who are women, with the exception of 2021 when the target was achieved for IDPs returning and 2022 when the target was achieved for Iraqi IDPs and IDPs returning (Figure 29).

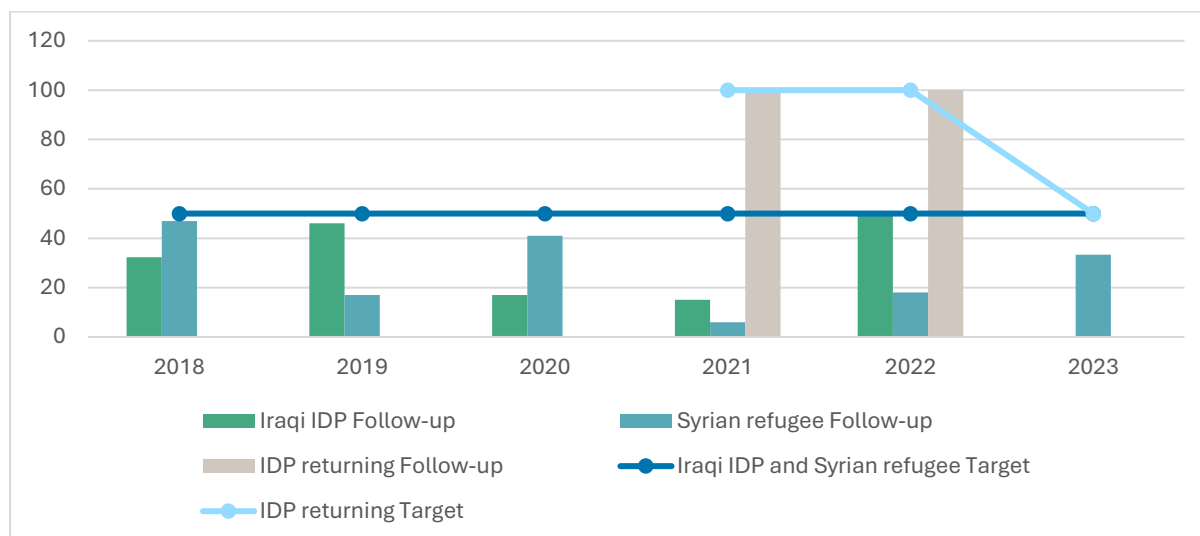
Figure 28 – CSP cross-cutting outcome indicator: proportion of households where women, men or both women and men make decisions (2018–2023)



Source: WFP COMET. In 2019 and 2020, only values for joint decisions were recorded.

²¹⁶ WFP. 2023. *Evaluation of WFP Livelihood Support, Asset Creation and Climate Adaptation Activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*. FGDs with project beneficiaries, October 2023. WFP. 2023. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2022*

Figure 29 – CSP cross-cutting outcome indicator: proportion of food assistance decision making entity members (committees, boards, teams) who are women (2018–2023)



Source: WFP COMET.

136. **Evidence on gender-transformative action was mixed.** WFP’s CSP 2020–2024 set a higher level of ambition for gender transformation than the T-ICSP, which mainly sought to mainstream gender analysis into programming (section 1.3.2). However, the evaluation team could gather limited evidence of actions taken by WFP to address the root causes of gender inequality. For example, there was no systematic data collection about the challenges that women face in accessing and controlling resources, accessing markets, and overcoming stereotypical gender norms that prevent Iraqi women from engaging in markets and the workplace. WFP was able to support access to non-traditional training for women in vocational training centres, for example by supporting women electricians. However, some women beneficiaries told the evaluation team they were prevented from attending training on areas like car maintenance because it was “only suitable for men”.²¹⁷

137. WFP consistently integrated gender (Gender and Age Marker – GAM 3) into its programming and reporting throughout the CSP period, but did not sufficiently integrate age data (GAM 4) in 2020 and 2022 (see Table 8).

Table 8 – Gender and Age Marker (2020–2022)

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Act 1	3	4	3	3
Act 2	3	4	3	3
Act 3	4	4	3	1
Act 4	4			1

No data
1: Partially integrates gender and age
2: Fully integrate age
3: Fully integrate gender
4: Fully integrate gender and age

Source: WFP. Iraq Annual Country Reports (2020–2022).

²¹⁷ FGDs with Act. 2 beneficiaries, October 2023. KIs with government stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023

138. **WFP did not sufficiently resource its gender commitment**, allocating only USD 6 million (0.5 percent of total budget) for CSP gender-sensitive activities, including monitoring, reporting and women's participation measures, well below the target of 13 percent set in the T-ICSP.²¹⁸

139. **WFP took a number of efforts to strengthen the gender capacities of Iraq country office staff and government counterparts.** In 2022, WFP completed the Gender Transformation Programme which aimed to promote gender equality at both the institutional and operational level. As part of this transformation, WFP organized training sessions and webinars for its staff and partners in Iraq to help them better understand key gender inequalities and ensure that gender aspects were mainstreamed into the work environment. The 2022–2024 Iraq country office Gender Action Plan strengthened the capacity of the country office to collect and disaggregate data by gender, age and disability, and to conduct gender analyses to inform the design of WFP's intervention.²¹⁹ Gender analysis resulted in the country office making strategic investments in government capacity strengthening for GEWE – for example, by building the capacities of officials and schoolmasters on gender and nutrition and school-related GBV.²²⁰

140. At the beginning of August 2023, the GOI banned the use of the terms "gender" and "homosexuality" from the media. This makes it difficult to engage with partners (especially government ministries) on the issue of gender. As a result, WFP was forced to adapt its training approach in some areas to include gender-segregated training.²²¹

141. **WFP made a concerted effort to address disability inclusion in all its programmes**, with support from the HQ Disability Inclusion helpdesk. In 2021, over 97,900 people with disabilities received support. In 2022, approximately 108,000 people with disabilities were assisted, including over 1,500 participants engaged in livelihood activities and training, and support was provided to cooperating partners on revised data collection methods for people with disabilities. Adjustments were made to distribution sites and work sites to ensure that these groups had easy access to WFP assistance based on a WFP disability priority checklist that was developed in late 2021. Although WFP is phasing out aid to IDPs and refugees, it continued to prioritize cash-based transfers to those with disabilities. **However, site visits did not find clear evidence of programme activities that met the different needs of people with disabilities.** For example, the majority of training venues were not accessible for people with disabilities, with some exceptions such as vocational training programmes in Dohuk.²²²

Accountability to affected populations, protection, and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse

142. WFP reporting suggests that 100 percent of targeted people had safe and dignified access to WFP programmes from 2019 to 2021 and that all beneficiary feedback was documented, analysed and integrated into programme improvement (see Annex 9). **However, the vast majority of beneficiaries consulted during site visits and FGDs were not aware of how to make a complaint or provide independent feedback on programmes, though many participants said they provided feedback through WFP staff.**²²³ The closure of the United Nations inter-agency feedback system in 2022 resulted in a gap in WFP's AAP system. In July 2023, WFP activated a new community feedback mechanism, through a WFP toll-free number but, at the time of the evaluation data collection (October 2023), this had not been widely communicated to beneficiaries.²²⁴

²¹⁸ WFP. 2023. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2022*. WFP Iraq. T-ICSP 2019. WFP Iraq. CSP 2020 to 2024

²¹⁹ WFP Iraq. *Gender Action Plan 2022 to 2024*. KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023. WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2020 to 2022*

²²⁰ KII with WFP staff and government officials, October 2023

²²¹ KIIs with WFP staff and UN stakeholders. CNN. 10 August 2023. Amnesty International urges Iraq to rescind the decision to prevent the media from using the terms "homosexuality" and "gender". Available at: <https://arabic.cnn.com/middle-east/article/2023/08/10/amnesty-urges-iraq-overturn-decision-homosexuality>. Accessed 24 December 2023

²²² WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2021 and 2022*. KIIs with WFP staff and government stakeholders, October 2023. FGDs and site visits, October 2023. WFP Iraq. 2021. Disability Priority Checklist

²²³ Site visits and FGDs, October 2023. WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2018 to 2022*

²²⁴ WFP. July 2023. *Iraq Country Brief*. Site visits and FGDs, October 2023

143. **The evaluation team observed one case of poor follow-up and accountability by WFP**, with refugees participating in hydroponic agriculture awaiting feedback from WFP after facing personal financial losses investing in lettuce that did not sell and had gone to waste (see section 2.2.1.2).²²⁵

144. The country office has implemented various procedures to handle complaints related to fraud, corruption, and sexual exploitation and abuse, including focal points in each sub-office overseeing the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) agenda, mandatory online training for all staff, and regular PSEA refreshers. WFP developed a 2021 PSEA action and work plan to sensitize staff. All PSEA cases are directed to, and handled by, the Deputy Country Director. It is not clear to what extent the new WFP feedback hotline has been equipped to handle PSEA cases. Some WFP staff expressed the need for additional training of trainers on PSEA and gender for the focal points in the field offices.²²⁶

Nutrition

145. Under the T-ICSP, there were no dedicated resources to implement nutrition-related activities. This resulted in nutrition being funded using resources from T-ICSP SO1 (general food assistance for IDPs) and SO4 (resilience for IDPs). In 2019, WFP undertook a number of policy and capacity strengthening initiatives, including research on dietary habits to promote healthy eating, and publishing the second volume of the Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas, which provides comprehensive district-level health and nutrition data to help decision makers prioritize and target food and nutrition programmes.²²⁷

146. Efforts to mainstream nutrition in the T-ICSP were not followed through in the CSP, and there was no evidence that CSP commitments to address micronutrient deficiencies and obesity have been acted on. The CSP stated that “WFP will introduce community-based interventions that follow a gender-transformative approach to nutrition using social and behaviour change communication methods tailored to the diverse needs of women, men, girls and boys in the different communities, with special attention to the triple burden of malnutrition.”²²⁸ However, there was little evidence of SBCC nutrition integration, even in schools (see section 2.2.1.3).²²⁹ Both WFP and GOI key informants noted that SBCC had slipped as a focus of school feeding as a result of the need to prioritize handover arrangements to the GOI (see section 2.2.3).

Environment and climate change

147. A recent mid-term review of the CSP found that “implementation of SO2 activities explicitly focused on climate change did not really start until mid-2022. COVID-19 was the main obstacle that impeded any significant implementation work.”²³⁴ WFP did submit a joint proposal with the Ministry of Health and Environment to the Green Climate Fund in August 2019, but it was not funded.²³⁰

148. Despite the slow start, WFP has widely integrated climate-adaptive practices in FFA activities in rural areas (see section 2.2.1.2). WFP investments in reforestation and mangrove rehabilitation in the marshes in 2022 aimed at carbon fixation as well as support to livelihoods protection and development. These are positive initiatives more explicitly signalling WFP’s shift to addressing climate change in the Iraq context. However, while positive and potentially scalable, it was too early to determine the effectiveness of the approach.

149. WFP also commissioned a feasibility study in May 2023 to determine the eligibility of reforestation and mangrove rehabilitation work for carbon credits to fund further expansion and climate adaptation work. The feasibility study found that it is possible the projects are eligible for carbon credits subject to further technical clarifications.²³¹ This potentially provides a more sustainable source of funding for climate change activities in a constrained funding environment (see section 2.4.1).

²²⁵ Site visits and FGDs with Act. 2 beneficiaries, October 2023

²²⁶ WFP Iraq. 2021. *PSEA Action Plan*. KIs with WFP staff

²²⁷ WFP. 2019. *Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas*. WFP. 2020. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2019*

²²⁸ WFP. 2020. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan 2020-2024*

²²⁹ The evaluation team visited and conducted FGDs with a group that WFP had registered as having participated in SBCC; however, the evaluation team determined the training had been more akin to FAO’s Farmer Field School training

²³⁰ GCF. 2019. Concept Note Promoting Climate Resilient Livelihoods for food insecure in Southern Iraq

²³¹ WFP. 2023. *Feasibility Study Report for Generation of Carbon Credit for Afforestation and Conservation, Mangrove and Marshland in Iraq*

150. **WFP ensured compliance with the corporate Environment and Social Sustainability Screening Framework.**²³² WFP applied screening tools to its field-level agreements and activities to measure potential adverse environmental and social impacts and identified measures to mitigate harm to the surrounding environment. WFP screened 71 percent of field-level agreements/memorandums of understanding and construction contracts in 2021 and 100 percent in 2022, with screened activities rating as low environmental and social risk.²³³

151. **WFP also put in place environmental-friendly tools in offices,** such as solar panels, motion-activated lighting and water taps, water treatment, and recycling systems, contributing to a reduction in the carbon footprint of its operations.²³⁴

152. **At a policy level, WFP conducted research activities aimed at informing evidence-based climate policies and programmes.** This included a comprehensive drought study undertaken in partnership with the Ministry of Water Resources, the first whole-country study of its kind, and a partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Kurdistan Region Statistics Office (KRSO) to undertake land use studies, soil studies and studies on the impact of climate change on rivers and groundwater reserves, which reversed the KRG's understanding of irrigated versus rainfed land and informed investment in water management.²³⁵ In 2023, WFP supported a national stakeholder consultation workshop on climatic information and supported climate conferences in Baghdad (2022) and Basra (2023), providing evidence and data to inform national climate plans. The studies and engagement at national and subnational level have established WFP as a competent and reliable contributor on climate and environmental issues in Iraq.²³⁶

Humanitarian principles and access

153. **WFP maintained adherence to humanitarian principles in its crisis response programming,** though its prioritization of beneficiaries living in camps at times impeded its ability to access people in need outside of camps (see section 2.2.1.1).²³⁷ To uphold the humanity and impartiality principles, WFP conducted regular prioritization exercises to focus unrestricted resource transfers on the most vulnerable and to adjust assistance levels in response to shocks (see section 2.4.2).²³⁸ Throughout the CSP period, WFP expanded its access across Iraq, leveraging partnerships with national, KRI and district-level government, community leaders and NGOs, and establishing new offices in the governorates (see section 2.2.4). Donors and United Nations stakeholders generally reported that WFP took appropriate efforts to uphold humanitarian principles, but some said WFP could have advocated more for local resettlement as a durable solution option for displaced people.²³⁹

154. WFP continued to prioritize the principles of humanity and impartiality during its transition to development initiatives and long-term solutions, maintaining targeted cash assistance for vulnerable people and working to integrate marginalized groups into livelihoods and social safety nets programming (see section 2.1.3, Act. 1 and Act. 4).²⁴⁰

²³² WFP. 2021. *WFP Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework*

²³³ WFP. 2023. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2022*

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ WFP Iraq. May 2023. *Decentralized Evaluation of WFP livelihood support, asset creation and climate adaptation activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*. KIIs with government stakeholders, October 2023

²³⁶ WFP Iraq. Report: National Stakeholder Consultation Workshop of Climatic Information in Iraq, 10 to 12 April 2023. WFP. Quarterly Bulletin: Q1 2022, Q2 2023. WFP. March 2023. *Iraq Country Brief*. KIIs with government and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

²³⁷ WFP. Iraq Country Strategic Plan Narrative 2020 to 2024. KIIs with United Nations stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023

²³⁸ WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2019 and 2022*. KRSO/UNHCR/WFP. June 2018. *Joint Vulnerability Assessment*. UNHCR/WFP. January 2019. *Mitigating risks of abuse of power in cash assistance in Iraq*

²³⁹ Evaluation team site visits, October 2023. KIIs with United Nations stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023. WFP Iraq VAM Map, program locations by strategic outcome

²⁴⁰ UNHCR/WFP. January 2019. *Mitigating risks of abuse of power in cash assistance in Iraq*. EU–UN Social Protection Program Design Document, 7 November 2023. OCHA. 2023. *Humanitarian Transition Overview – Iraq*. KIIs with United Nations stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023. WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2018 to 2022*

2.2.3 To what extent are the achievements of the CSP likely to be sustainable, from a financial, social, institutional and environmental perspective?

Finding 12. WFP pivoted towards more sustainable approaches over the CSP period, including working directly with the GOI and academic institutions to build community assets and invest in job skills development. However, these investments remain too short term to ensure sustainability. Skills development investments are not tailored enough to individual beneficiary capacities undermining sustainability.

155. **From 2022, WFP scaled up intrinsically sustainable interventions**, including youth job skills (Josour and vocational training), increasing potential for beneficiaries' self-reliance through employment and income generation.

156. WFP invested in strengthening government capacities to sustain livelihood investments under Act. 2, working with universities and government counterparts to pilot and scale up innovative farming approaches (aquaculture and fisheries).

157. **WFP's intention to hand over projects to the GOI was overly ambitious.** Key informants and FGDs noted substantial sustainability challenges in terms of governmental human resource capacity at all levels (Federal, KRI and governorate). FGDs reported a lack of support from the GOI for agriculture, including inputs such as seed and fertilizer and extension services. Key informants from government reported a lack of budget to undertake their normal tasks. Farmers pointed to government decisions to reduce investment in agriculture by 50 percent in 2023 as a result of water scarcity, highlighting the precariousness of the sector. GOI stakeholders appreciated WFP's support to develop new capacities in land use mapping (Act. 3), school feeding (Act. 3) and digitalization of the PDS (Act. 4), but constant government turnover, lack of budget allocations and challenges hiring skilled staff, especially people with data skills, meant that GOI counterparts were not always confident they could continue the work without ongoing support.²⁴¹

158. **The evaluation team found little evidence of investments by WFP to ensure sustainability of food for asset interventions.** FGDs found the skills training under food for assets to be useful. However, work on irrigation canals in Anbar, for example, could have benefited from efforts to organize water user associations to ensure the fair disbursement of water, reduce tensions that may arise from unfair water distribution and provide a savings scheme for future rehabilitation work. The evaluation team observed that canals that had previously been cleared had then re-silted, and farmers had not taken the initiative to re-clean them. In addition, a greater focus on value chains (for example, for greenhouse and home garden production) could increase income-earning opportunities and provide a greater share of profits to smallholder farmers. Focusing on value chain work could particularly help increase incomes for rural women. At the time of writing, WFP Iraq had specifically recruited a value chains specialist and was working with partners to develop proposals for value chain activities.

159. In order to support the sustainability of Josour investments, WFP set up partnerships aimed at improving job placement. This included web development and programming internship opportunities with Lezzoo, a local delivery start-up operating across Iraq, including the KRI. Through the partnership with Lezzoo, the programme provided career guidance, freelancing and CV building training as well as a "hackathon" to maintain the motivation of Josour participants.²⁴² However, participants of Josour FGDs identified that a greater focus on job placements following the training was needed. This was despite WFP efforts at organizing job fairs and internships. Training was also too short – for example, two months of English language training – for many FGD participants to gain the skills that companies required. FGD participants thought that WFP should consider payment for job placements in private sector companies for a period of three to four months providing work experience that could lead to future employment either at the placement companies or other private sector employers. These findings point to the need for a more bespoke approach to training and skills development tailored to individual needs.

²⁴¹ WFP Iraq. May 2023. *Decentralized Evaluation of WFP livelihood support, asset creation and climate adaptation activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*. KIs with government stakeholders, October 2023

²⁴² WFP. 2023. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2022*

160. In addition, some participants reported the need for a loan to set themselves up as freelancers, with many reporting that they no longer had access to laptops which were provided during the course. Similarly, participants of vocational training FGDs suggested that a revolving loan scheme would have enabled or supported small business start-ups. Both vocational training and Josour could have benefited from linking participants to GOI enterprise funding schemes or other micro-credit mechanisms.

161. Both mangrove and forestation support show potential for sustainability because they have support from local government but require further WFP support for three to five years. Such projects, however, highlighted the challenges and risks that WFP faces in undertaking development work using short-term humanitarian funding models. The current lack of substantial multiyear funding secured by WFP could have a negative impact on the sustainability of these programmes.

162. The timeline for handover of school feeding to the Ministry of Education was overly ambitious and ran two years behind schedule. While later than intended, it was nonetheless a positive development in terms of the sustainability of the programme. The GOI is committed to continuing the school feeding programme and has already undertaken the tendering and selection of the supplier. However, key informants highlighted the need for continued capacity investment by WFP, including for improved tendering and supply chain management as well as SBCC integration. WFP intends to undertake a SABER exercise with the Ministry of Education which should provide a more detailed plan for future capacity development support requirements (see section 2.2.1.3).

2.2.4 To what extent did the CSP facilitate strategic linkages between humanitarian action, development cooperation and contributions to peace in Iraq?

Finding 13. WFP facilitated strategic linkages between humanitarian action and development cooperation by laying the framework for a transition from emergency to resilience and drawing on WFP's core strengths in food security to support broader peace and stability objectives. WFP's resilience and capacity strengthening work, underpinned by conflict-sensitive approaches and effective inclusion of different groups, is contributing to sustainable returns and community-level social cohesion. From 2022 onwards, WFP has increasingly focused on the nexus between climate, conflict and food security.

163. **United Nations stakeholders and donors value WFP's ability to work across the nexus over the CSP period.**²⁴³ Capacity building for social safety nets (Act. 4) provides a clear link from humanitarian crisis into long-term development, contributing to stability and mitigating the adverse effects of conflicts and emergencies on vulnerable groups.²⁴⁴ Recent work by WFP to develop graduation pathways under the social safety nets programme seeks to strengthen the linkages between emergency assistance (Act. 1), livelihoods and resilience (Act. 2), and government social safety nets (Act. 4).²⁴⁵

164. In line with the WFP policy evaluation on peacebuilding, WFP in Iraq has appropriately focused its efforts on leveraging its core strengths in reducing food insecurity and supporting local food production systems as part of broader United Nations and government coordinated efforts to prevent conflict and support peace. **WFP has particularly focused on supporting sustainable returns and social cohesion.**²⁴⁶

165. WFP Iraq's resilience programming (Act. 2) helped to re-establish rural livelihoods for returnees, contributing to social cohesion objectives at the community level. FGDs with beneficiaries in rural areas reported that WFP's livelihoods and resilience programming had helped to restart agricultural livelihoods for returnees, contributing to employment and social cohesion in areas affected by conflict (see section 2.2.1.2).²⁴⁷ The creation of jobs is a priority in Iraq to make the recurrence of conflict less likely, as well as to

²⁴³ KIIs with United Nations stakeholders and donors, October 2023. To note that this subquestion focused primarily on CSP activities since most nexus programming started in 2022

²⁴⁴ EU-UN Social Protection Program Design Document, November 2023

²⁴⁵ KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

²⁴⁶ WFP. 26 January 2023. *Evaluation of the Policy on WFP's Role in Peacebuilding in Transition Settings*. KIIs with United Nations stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023. FGDs with SO2 beneficiaries, October 2023

²⁴⁷ FGD with SO2 beneficiaries, October 2023. WFP Iraq. May 2023. *Decentralized Evaluation of WFP livelihood support, asset creation and climate adaptation activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*. KIIs with Government and UN stakeholders, October 2023

generate and spread incomes and productivity, especially for women.²⁴⁸ Young Iraqis and GOI stakeholders credited WFP's support to vocational training and job skills (Josour, EMPACT) with improving communication skills and opportunities for young people, contributing to a decrease in anti-social behaviour and tensions in local communities.²⁴⁹

166. **WFP promoted intentional inclusion of different population groups in its programming**, for example prioritizing a mix of IDP, refugee and host community youth in its Josour youth employment programme. While beneficiaries reported a positive impact on social cohesion, this approach may have unintentionally undermined the effectiveness of the programme as it was challenging to build skills among beneficiaries coming from very different starting points in terms of capacities and languages (see section 2.3.2).²⁵⁰

167. From 2022 onwards, WFP began to strengthen its research and advocacy work on the nexus between food security, climate change and conflict. This is critical as Iraq is currently experiencing adverse effects of climate change, with heavy impacts on agriculture, especially in southern Iraq.²⁵¹ In 2023, WFP supported a national stakeholder consultation workshop on climatic information to promote nexus approaches to linking the energy, water and agricultural sectors to strengthen food security in areas most vulnerable to climate change.²⁵² Research in 2022 focused on the linkages between food security, competition over natural resources and livelihoods.²⁵³

168. **WFP took appropriate measures to strengthen the conflict sensitivity of its approach in Iraq.** During site visits, the evaluation team saw evidence of tailored conflict-sensitive strategies to access conflict-affected areas of Iraq, including providing rural development support to both returnees and host communities to avoid exacerbating tensions, and providing life skills training and connections to local traders for youth to promote social cohesion. WFP drew on a mix of field presence, close collaboration with communities and local government, third party monitoring, and partnerships with local organizations to reach particularly challenging communities.²⁵⁴

169. United Nations partners and donors appreciate WFP's ability to operate across Iraq, including during times of government instability and intercommunal tensions.²⁵⁵ In 2018 and 2019, WFP Iraq was a pilot country (along with El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan and Mali) for a Stockholm International Peace Research Institute project on how WFP programmes contribute to peace. This research informed the reopening of WFP's projects in Basra, an area with complex local conflict dynamics.²⁵⁶

2.3 EQ3: To what extent has WFP used its resources efficiently in contributing to country strategic plan outputs and strategic outcomes?

2.3.1 To what extent were outputs delivered within the intended timeframe?

Finding 14. WFP delivered assistance in a relatively timely manner, even though external challenges occasionally hampered delivery. To address this, WFP implemented appropriate mitigation measures to COVID-19, local conflict and access challenges. However, WFP was late in delivering outputs related to capacity strengthening and climate change, with substantial areas of work only beginning in 2022.

170. Overall, feedback from stakeholders – including national authorities, cooperating partners and beneficiaries – was positive about the timeliness of WFP's assistance, comparing WFP favourably with other

²⁴⁸ WFP. 2020. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2019*. UN. March 2020. *Iraq Common Country Analysis*. WFP. Comp 2020 – Iraq – IQ02

²⁴⁹ FGD with SO2 beneficiaries, October 2023

²⁵⁰ FGD with Josour graduates and staff, October 2023

²⁵¹ WFP. November 2022. *Iraq Country Brief*

²⁵² WFP Iraq. *Report: National Stakeholder Consultation Workshop of Climatic Information in Iraq, 10 to 12 April 2023*

²⁵³ WFP. 2021. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2020*

²⁵⁴ Evaluation team site visits, October 2023

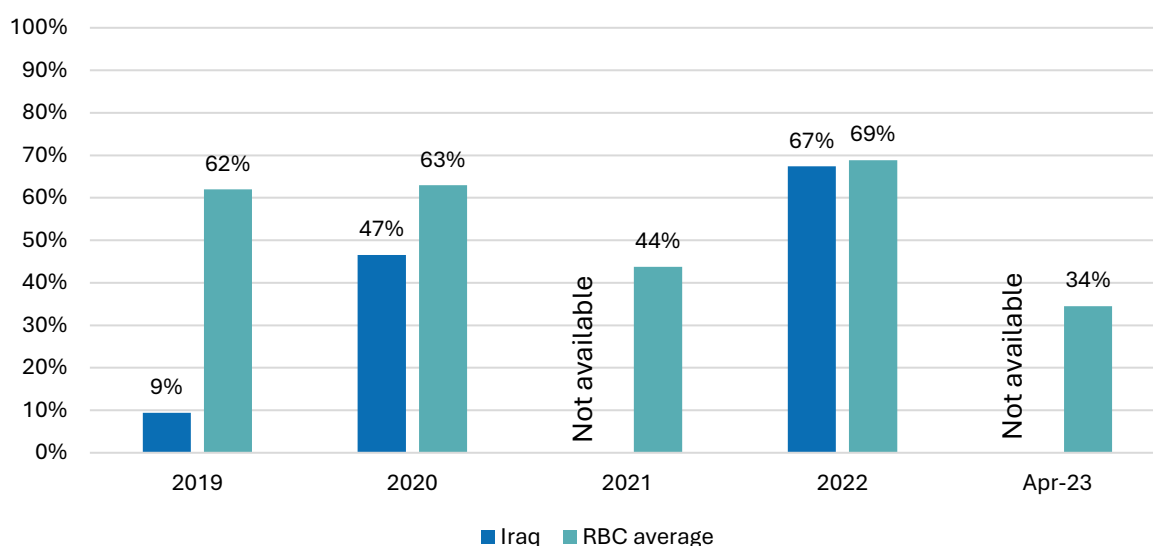
²⁵⁵ KIIs with government, donor and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

²⁵⁶ WFP. December 2019. *Triple Nexus: WFP's Contribution to Peace: Beyond the Annual Performance Report 2018 Series*. WFP. 2020. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2019*

humanitarian and development actors in Iraq.²⁵⁷ In FGDs, beneficiaries of cash-based transfers, vocational training, Josour, rural development and school feeding almost overwhelmingly reported receiving cash or food transfers or assets on time. WFP's use of mobile money, and its partnership with mobile money transfer agents across the country, was a key enabling factor allowing it to deliver timely assistance.²⁵⁸

171. **The timeliness of WFP Iraq's supply chains also compared favourably overall with other Regional Bureau Cairo country offices.** Delays in the delivery of supplies occurred less than the regional average for each year that data were available. However, WFP Iraq did experience significant delays in two years, with 47 percent (in 2020) and 67 percent (in 2022) of supplies delivered after the planned date. This was due to external challenges, such as the impact of COVID-19, the effects of the war in Ukraine, governance instability, social unrest and local insecurity (Figure 30).²⁵⁹

Figure 30 – Percentage of delays in assistance delivered²⁶⁰ in the recipient country office versus plan (RTA) (2019–2023)



Source: Supply Chain Unit, Indicator RL 3.2. Not reported for 2018.

172. Delivery of cash-based transfer assistance as part of Act. 1 faced delays with international transfers in 2018. However, WFP addressed these delays by opening an IQD account which allowed WFP to maintain cash reserves in country. COVID-19 caused disruptions to delivery of all WFP outputs in 2021, due to both movement restrictions and cases among WFP and cooperating partner staff. Outputs delivered as part of Act. 2 (resilience and livelihoods) and Act. 3 (institutional capacity strengthening) also faced delays due to government instability, resulting in discontinued coordination with national authorities and social unrest.²⁶¹

173. **In some cases, internal organizational issues affected timeliness.** Beneficiaries consulted in Dhi Qar and Basra governorates highlighted issues at the start of the school feeding programme with the quality and timeliness of food, including late deliveries by suppliers. However, these were promptly addressed by WFP.²⁶² Delays in the provision of seeds under resilience and livelihoods (Act. 2) in 2020 and 2021 also meant that distributions were not always well timed with respect to the seasonal calendar (see section 2.2.1.2).²⁶³ During the T-ICSP period, when WFP implemented activities through cooperating

²⁵⁷ KIIs with GOI and cooperating partners, October 2023. FGDs with beneficiaries, October 2023

²⁵⁸ FGDs with SO1, SO2 and SO3 beneficiaries, October 2023. COMP 2020 – Iraq – IQ02 – Revised

²⁵⁹ KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023. WFP. *Annual Performance Report 2021*. WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2019 to 2022*

²⁶⁰ Here, assistance delivered is considered as delayed when the output is delivered to beneficiaries at least one day after the planned date

²⁶¹ WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2019 to 2022*

²⁶² FGDs with school feeding beneficiaries, October 2023. KIIs with government stakeholders, October 2023. Alaman, L. & Arif, N. *Management review of school feeding activities in Iraq (2010 to 2020)*

²⁶³ WFP. 2023. *Evaluation of WFP Livelihood Support, Asset Creation and Climate Adaptation Activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*

partners, issues regarding the procurement of equipment were identified by a number of partners as contributing to delays. The slow processing of field-level agreements and contractual payments from WFP was also reported by cooperating partners, in addition to time spent waiting for local governments to approve projects.²⁶⁴

174. WFP Iraq’s ability to disburse funding fluctuated by year as well as by activity, with low expenditure of allocated resources in 2020 (55 percent) and 2018 (69 percent), balanced by high expenditure in 2021 (122 percent) and 2023 (161 percent) (Table 9).²⁶⁵ Sharp variations in the amount of allocated resources year on year, as well as a proliferation of smaller grants which made financial management more challenging, contributed to challenges with timely disbursement (see section 2.4.1). Expenditures steadily decreased from USD 78.3 million in 2020 to USD 68.1 million in 2022. WFP was able to manage expenditures in an unpredictable donor environment by carrying over funding from years where resources received by donors were abnormally high (in 2020 and 2022) and using these surplus resources for lower years (in 2021 and 2023). The total CSP disbursement rate (82 percent) was in line with yearly global median disbursement rates (averaging 84 percent).²⁶⁶

Table 9 – WFP disbursement rates per year in Iraq compared with global

Strategic plan	Activity	Expenditures as a percentage of allocated resources					
		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
T-ICSP	Act. 1	55%	184%				
	Act. 2	76%	143%				
	Act. 3	96%	92%				
	Act. 4	76%	166%				
	Act. 5	54%	133%				
	Act. 6						
	Act. 7	72%					
	Act. 8	100%	102%				
	Act. 9	100%					
	Act. 10	1%					
CSP	Act. 1			67%	135%	104%	102%
	Act. 2			67%	105%	40%	183%
	Act. 3			30%	296%	137%	1 033%
	Act. 4			57%	111%	40%	140%
Total per year		69%	137%	55%	122%	76%	161%
Global median		67%	85%	80%	93%		

Source: WFP Resource Management Analytics Platform, Evaluation of WFP’s Policy on Country Strategic Plans. Median values are taken from WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP’s Policy on Country Strategic Plans. Legend: Grey cells did not record allocated resources or expenditures.

175. Despite the delays outlined above, WFP was able to successfully implement mitigation measures to address and prevent major bottlenecks in programme implementation. These included the swift transition from in-school to take-home rations distributed under the school feeding programme during COVID-19 lockdowns, the opening of new field offices in Basra and Nineveh governorates, as well as the use of recruitment companies to hire staff in areas without a WFP office in order to be closer to targeted areas in

²⁶⁴ WFP key informants also noted that the time to get agreement from local authorities would often delay the start of activities

²⁶⁵ Here, “disbursement rate” refers to expenditure as a percentage of allocated resources

²⁶⁶ WFP. 2023. Evaluation of WFP’s Policy on Country Strategic Plans

case of travel restrictions due to COVID-19 or localized insecurity. In addition, WFP partnered with local NGOs to gain access to particularly challenging areas and to navigate local conflict dynamics.²⁶⁷

2.3.2 To what extent does the depth and breadth of coverage ensure that the most vulnerable to food insecurity in Iraq benefit from the programme?

Finding 15. The depth and breadth of coverage was appropriate to reach the most vulnerable IDPs, returnees and host community members. WFP appropriately adapted its prioritization in response to changing needs, declining funding and an overall transition to development. However, prioritizing beneficiaries with very different backgrounds and needs occasionally undermined results for resilience activities, especially in terms of skills development.

Appropriateness of coverage

176. **WFP's activities and coverage were appropriate to address the particular needs across Iraq.** Unconditional food assistance (Act. 1) targeted people displaced by conflict, including both IDPs and refugees. Responding to high food insecurity and GOI and UNSDCF priorities, WFP pivoted livelihoods and resilience (Act. 2) and school feeding (Act. 3) to high-poverty, climate-exposed central and southern governorates, while also maintaining support to re-establish livelihoods for returnees in the north and west of Iraq.²⁶⁸

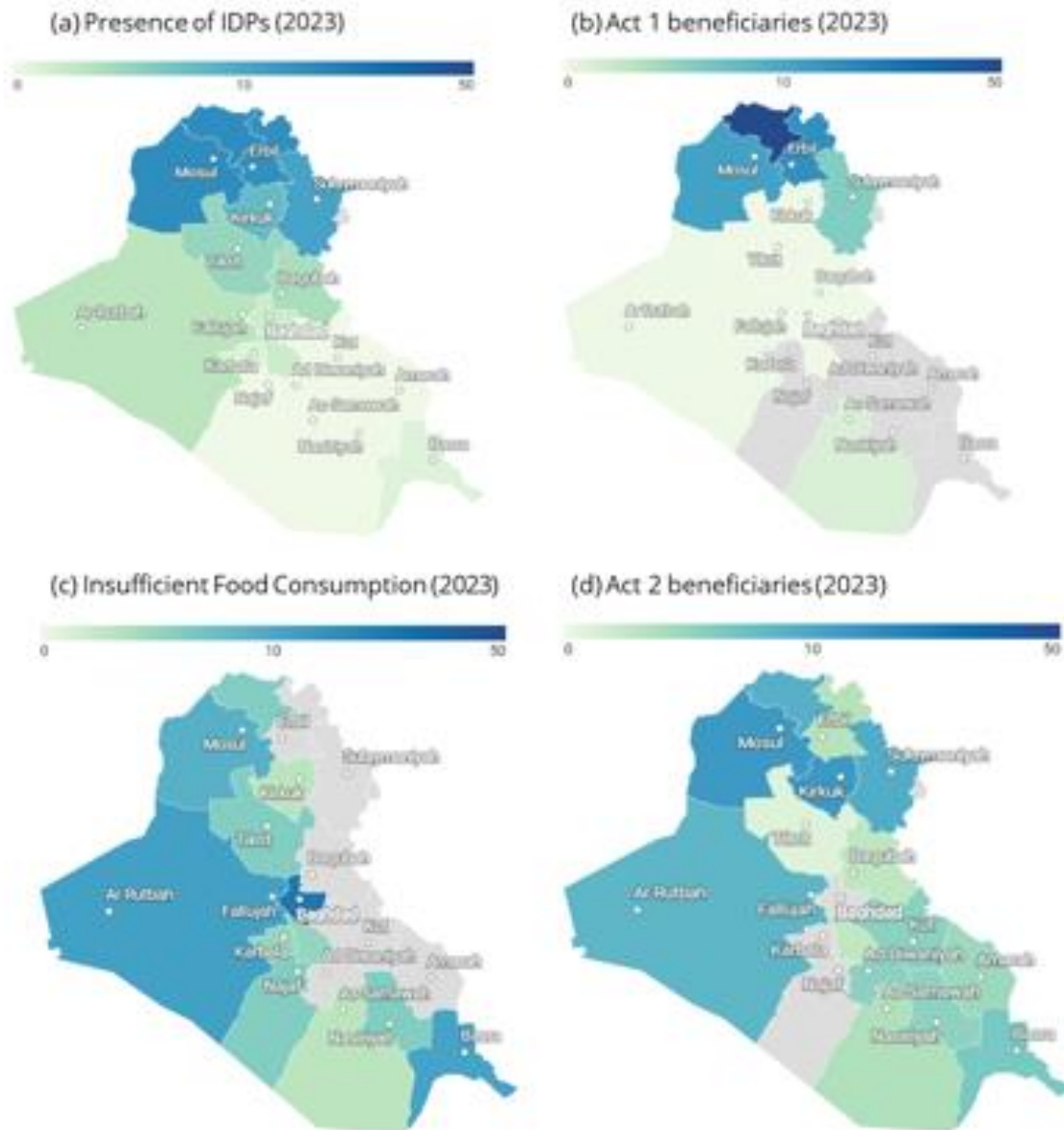
177. Figure 31 demonstrates that WFP was able to effectively adapt its coverage to specific needs. Unrestricted food assistance (Act. 1) beneficiaries (panel b) align very closely with IDP presence (panel a). Resilience and livelihoods beneficiaries (Act. 2) (panel d) align both with areas of high food insecurity (panel c) and displacement (panel a), reflecting the dual strategy of supporting sustainable returns while transitioning to long-term approaches to tackle food insecurity and climate risks.²⁶⁹ The T-ICSP achieved very close alignment between governorates affected by conflict and unrestricted food assistance and livelihoods activities, reflecting the priority focus on supporting IDPs and returnees (see Annex 9).

²⁶⁷ Site visit to SO2 activities, October 2023. WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023 *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*. WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2020, 2021 and 2022*

²⁶⁸ WFP. *Iraq Country Strategic Plan 2020 to 2024*. KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

²⁶⁹ WFP. February 2019. *Iraq VAM. Priority Areas for Intervention Based on SE and Climate Indicators*. WFP Iraq. May 2023. *Decentralized Evaluation of WFP livelihood support, asset creation and climate adaptation activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*

Figure 31 – Presence of IDPs, insufficient food consumption and 2023 Act. 1 and 2 beneficiaries per governorate as a percentage of total



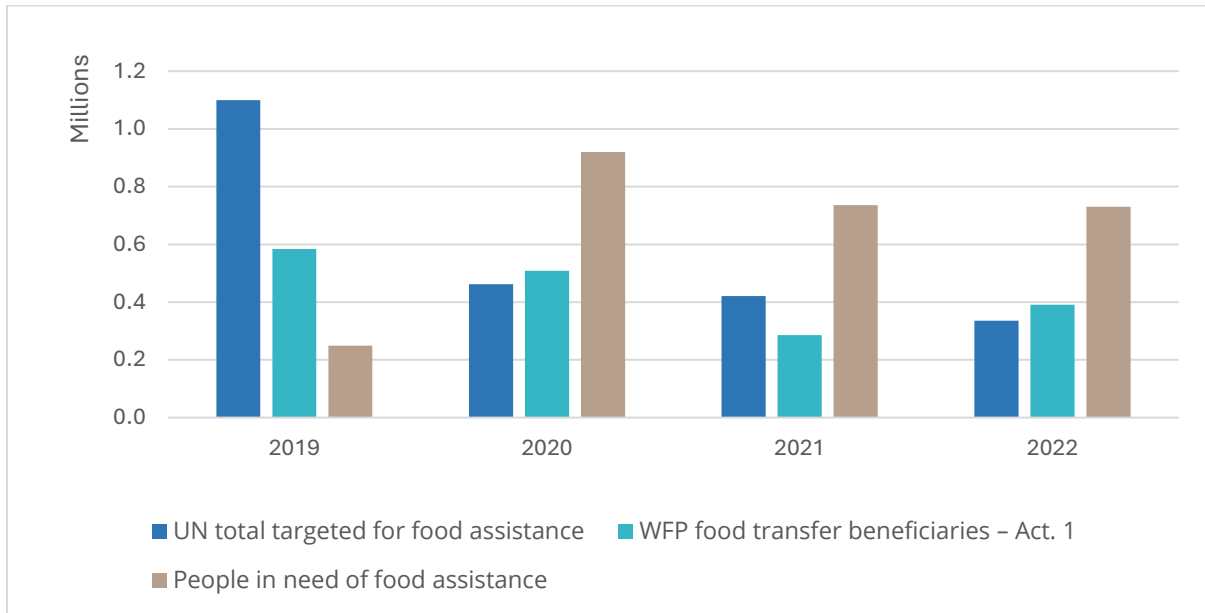
Source: WFP HungerMap data 2023, IOM IDPs Master Lists, WFP COMET.

178. **WFP’s ability to meet overall food needs varied across the T-ICSP period.** WFP was able to cover a very high proportion of food needs in 2020 and 2022, with WFP unconditional food assistance (Act. 1) beneficiaries accounting for over 100 percent of people targeted for food assistance under the HRP, helped by a boost in funding for the COVID-19 response.²⁷⁰ Coverage was much lower in 2019 (53 percent) and 2021 (68 percent), largely due to delays in allocated resources to WFP, civil unrest in 2019 and lower funding in 2021 (Figure 32).²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ EV_CP_B_Resources_Overview 100723. KILs with WFP staff, October 2023

²⁷¹ WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2019 and 2021*. KILs with WFP staff, October 2023

Figure 32 – WFP unconditional food assistance beneficiaries versus people in need and total UN targeted (2019–2022)



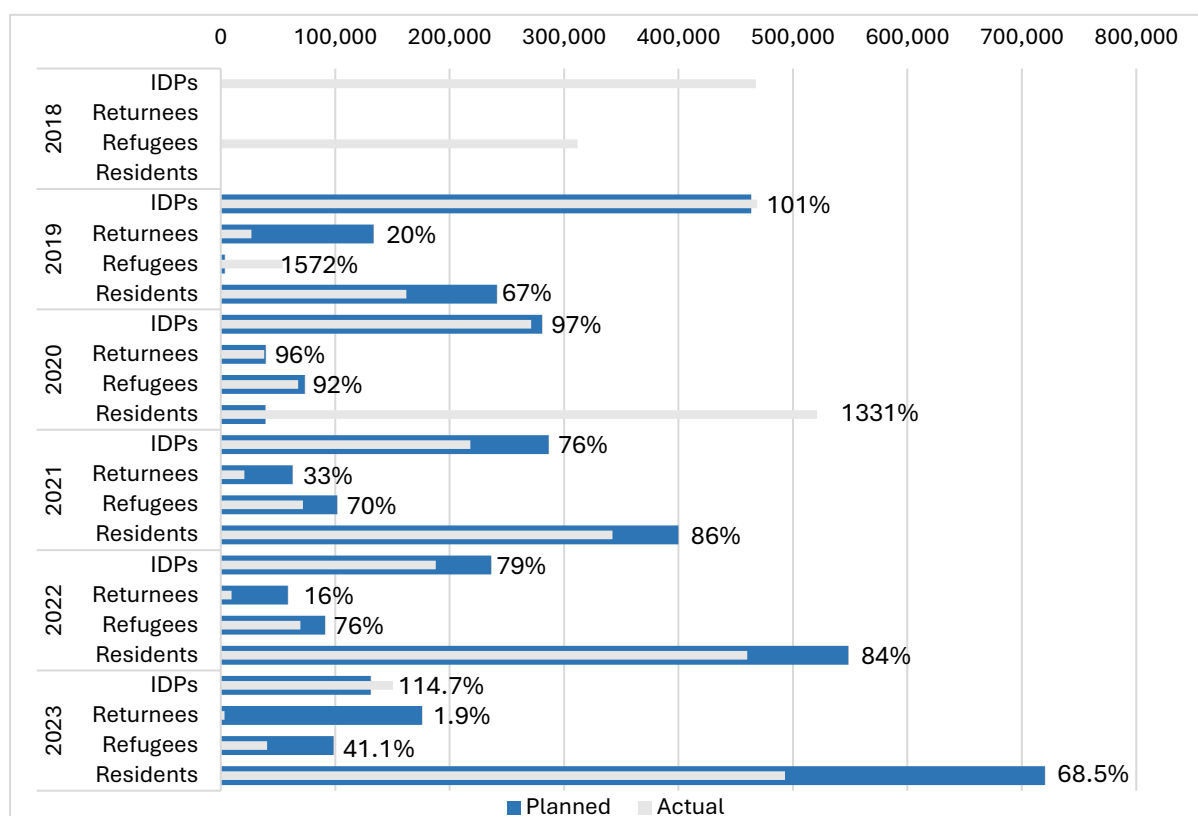
Source: WFP. Humanitarian Response Plans (2019–2022). WFP. Iraq Annual Country Reports (2019–2022). Note: No beneficiary data reported for 2018. Not reported for 2023.

179. Cash beneficiaries reported overall satisfaction with the adequacy of WFP’s unconditional food assistance, though, in FGDs, some expressed a preference to maintain broad coverage at lower levels rather than reducing assistance based on prioritization exercises.²⁷²

180. Overall, **Iraqi residents were by far the most reached beneficiary group by WFP interventions under the CSP** (58 percent of total beneficiaries), followed by IDPs (30 percent). Both refugees (9 percent) and returnees (3 percent) represented a small share of beneficiaries (Figure 33). This represents a major shift from the T-ICSP, which heavily targeted IDPs and refugees (100 percent of beneficiaries in 2018 and 73 percent in 2019).

²⁷² FGDs with Act. 1 beneficiaries, October 2023

Figure 33 – Beneficiaries (planned and actual) by year and beneficiary category (2018–2023)



Source: WFP COMET

Appropriateness of prioritization

181. WFP applied appropriately tailored prioritization strategies to ensure that the most vulnerable to food security benefited from assistance. Unrestricted food assistance (Act. 1) targeted vulnerable IDPs and Syrian refugees identified through joint needs assessments with UNHCR. Resilience and livelihoods activities (Act. 2) targeted the restoration of rural livelihoods for returnees in northern and central Iraq, communities impacted by climate change and poverty in southern Iraq, and unemployed young women and men through skills activities, determined using VAM poverty and climate data and in consultation with GOI ministries. School feeding (Act. 3) targeted districts with high poverty, selected in partnership with the Ministry of Education. Selection of governorates and districts for resilience and livelihoods activities (Act. 2) was based on in-depth analysis of social, economic, food insecurity, displacement and climate indicators to identify and prioritize relevant governorates and districts.²⁷³²⁷⁴

182. WFP’s prioritization strategies had mixed results. Overall, prioritization was well aligned to needs and the local context and adapted to shortfalls in allocated resources (see sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2). Working with UNHCR and the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, WFP developed targeted support for particularly vulnerable groups, including ready-to-eat meals in camps hosting Iraqis returning from Syria and ongoing support for undocumented IDPs and Yazidis, despite the gradual handing over of responsibility to the GOI. WFP conducted prioritization exercises in 2019 and 2022 to ensure that support reached the most vulnerable groups in a time of shrinking resources. Budget revisions extended unconditional food assistance to an additional 39,000 people in 2020 in response to COVID-19 and increased transfer values to offset price rises, helped by increased donor contributions for Act. 1 in response to COVID-19 (see Annex 9). WFP also increased transfer values in 2022 in response to Iraq’s

²⁷³ WFP Iraq. May 2023. *Decentralized Evaluation of WFP livelihood support, asset creation and climate adaptation activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*. Site visits to SO2 activities, October 2023

²⁷⁴ Site visits to school feeding projects, October 2023. WFP Iraq. *Final School Feeding Report for the Academic Year 2022 to 2023*

currency devaluation crises. This was made possible by previous prioritization exercises which decreased the overall number of Act. 1 beneficiaries.²⁷⁵

183. However, WFP faced trade-offs between scaling up development assistance and maintaining crisis response activities. At times, WFP Iraq's attempts to meet both development and humanitarian objectives undermined sustainability and results. For example, under the Josour programme, WFP selected a mix of young people from refugee, IDP and host communities. This contributed to social cohesion goals (see section 2.2.4), but made it challenging to tailor support to the diverse group of participants to ensure they graduated with the necessary skills (see section 2.2.3).²⁷⁶ Incentives paid to Josour and vocational training participants helped young people from poorer backgrounds and rural areas to attend training, but unintentionally led to inclusion errors by allowing participation of citizens with low interest in active employment interventions.²⁷⁷ Forty-nine percent of young people in 2023 said they were "unsure if they would attend vocational training without incentives", while 5 percent said they would not attend.²⁷⁸ WFP also transitioned many humanitarian staff to resilience programming. Not all of them had the skills to design and deliver long-term development programmes (see section 2.4.4). In hindsight, WFP could have moved more quickly towards development-focused prioritization.

2.3.3 To what extent were WFP's activities cost-efficient in the delivery of its assistance?

Finding 16. Overall, a positive evolution in the cost-efficiency of WFP Iraq's activities is observed. Efficiency improved as the CSP progressed, with large cost savings in cash-based transfers due mainly to the switch from cooperating partners to direct implementation. On occasion, cost-efficiency was achieved at a cost to sustainability as many beneficiaries needed longer and deeper support to restart livelihoods.

184. The cost-efficiency of WFP activities prioritizing beneficiaries related to food and cash-based transfers has increased over the period under evaluation. As shown in Table 10, the implementation cost per beneficiary of cash-based transfers decreased, while it followed a more irregular trend for food transfers. The most notable gains in cost-efficiency were achieved by cash-based transfer as part of Act. 2 and Act. 3, where the cost per beneficiary respectively decreased by a factor of three, and more than fivefold from 2020 to 2022 due mainly to efficiency gains from the switch to direct implementation. In 2021, cost-efficiency of food assistance under Act. 1 was very low, with cost per beneficiary more than two times higher than in the previous year. This was due to global and national supply chain challenges due to COVID-19 and losses in economies of scale, as the volume of food transferred was especially low in 2021. The situation was resolved in 2022 as Iraq eased lockdowns and WFP was able to resume normal operations.

²⁷⁵ Iraq CSP IQ02 BR03 – Narrative. Iraq CSP IQ02 BR01. WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2019, 2020 and 2021*. KIIs with United Nations and GOI stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023

²⁷⁶ Site visits to vocational training and Josour programmes, October 2023. KIIs with WFP staff and implementing partners, October 2023

²⁷⁷ KIIs with WFP staff and implementing partners, October 2023. FGDs with Josour and vocational training graduates, October 2023

²⁷⁸ WFP Iraq. 31 October 2023. *Economic Empowerment Through Skills and Business Development Project (Vocational Training Project): Outcome Assessment Report*

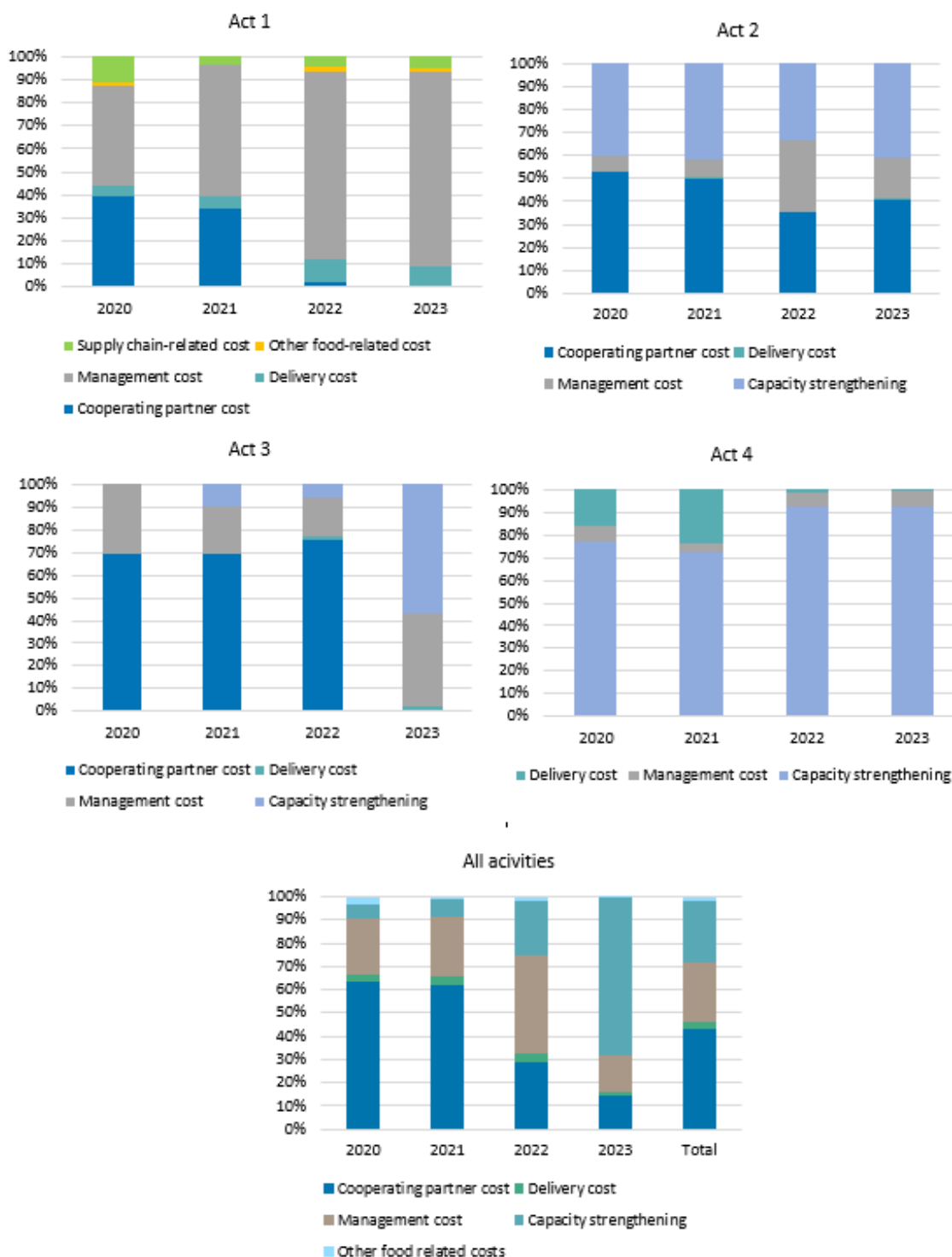
Table 10 – Implementation cost per beneficiary in USD (2020–2022)²⁷⁹

		2020		2021		2022		
		Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	
Food assistance	Beneficiaries	86 250	172 409	0	12 147	40 770	134 092	
	Implementation cost	3 552 746	1 156 307	137 792	205 393	88 054	329 679	
	Cost per beneficiary	41.19	6.71	–	16.91	2.16	2.46	
CBT	Total	Beneficiaries	646 310	888 645	850 980	643 311	938 380	726 144
		Implementation cost	12 658 112	8 956 480	9 250 524	6 390 410	3 796 811	3 453 341
		Cost per beneficiary	1.96	10.08	10.87	9.93	4.05	4.76
	Act. 1	Beneficiaries	258 750	335 661	327 000	274 360	327 000	256 623
		Implementation cost	4 716 005	3 225 356	3 400 524	2 736 558	1 693 706	1 256 967
		Cost per beneficiary	18.23	9.61	10.40	9.97	5.18	4.90
	Act. 2	Beneficiaries	87 560	92 674	268 980	104 303	163 380	20 081
		Implementation cost	1 707 478	2 364 746	1 750 000	1 848 483	1 240 115	170 604
		Cost per beneficiary	19.50	25.52	6.51	17.72	7.59	8.50
	Act. 3	Beneficiaries	300 000	138 534	255 000	583 899	448 000	451 965
		Implementation cost	6 234 628	3 366 378	4 100 000	1 805 369	862 990	2 025 770
		Cost per beneficiary	20.78	24.30	16.08	3.09	1.93	4.48

Source: WFP Resource Management Analytics Platform. WFP. Iraq Annual Country Reports (2020–2022).

²⁷⁹ "Implementation cost" is an aggregation of all annual costs related to resource transfers except the value of the resource transferred itself, as reported in CPB_Plan_vs_Actual_Report_v2.1 dataset. "Cost per beneficiary" is the ratio between the implementation cost and the number of beneficiaries per resource transferred and/or activities, as reported in Iraq Annual Country Reports.

Figure 34 – Share of expenditure per implementation cost components per activity (2020–2023)



Source: WFP Resource Management Analytics Platform.

185. **Overall, WFP was consistently able to deliver its planned outputs with minimal losses or delays.** WFP exceeded its targets for tonnage uplifted on the agreed date (100 percent for each year that data were available versus a target of 95 percent) and recorded less than 0.003 percent of post-delivery losses, well below its target of 2 percent (see Table 11).

Table 11 – Key Performance Indicators related to timeliness²⁸⁰

Key Performance Indicators	2018 value	2019 value	2020 value	2021 value	2022 value	2023 value	2023 target
Percentage of post-delivery losses	0.01%	1%	0.003%	0.001%	0.001%	0.10%	up to 2%
Percentage of tonnage uplifted as per the agreed date		100%	100%	100%		98%	95%
Percentage of metric tonnes not reconciled			0.01%	0%	0%	100%	100%

Source: WFP. Iraq Annual Country Reports (2018–2023).

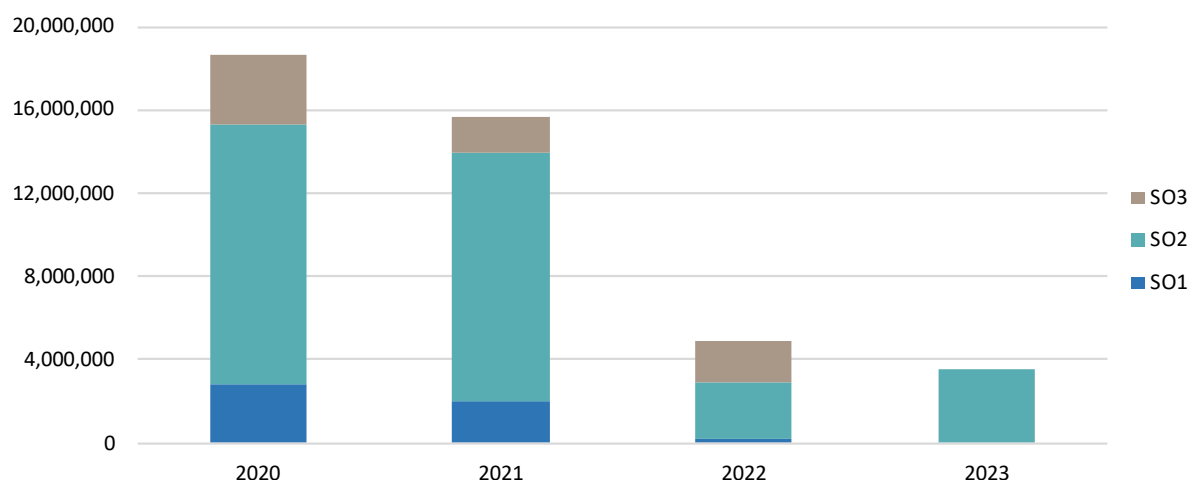
186. **WFP Iraq improved the cost-efficiency of its operations by introducing more than USD 3 million in cost-saving measures in 2022.** Faced with reduced funding, WFP Iraq established an internal Cost-Containment Working Group in April 2022 to explore cost-efficiency measures. Saving measures recommended by the working group represented more than USD 3 million in 2022, or 5 percent of total expenditures for that year. As shown in Table 12, **the most significant cost savings measures came from the switch to direct implementation for activities under SO1 and SO2**, as WFP was able to directly contract money exchange agents and work with government vocational training centres and universities to provide venues and trainers, without incurring intermediary costs. Other actions, such as asset sales and savings on logistics, contributed 9 percent of the total amount saved. In December 2021, WFP also conducted a market assessment for logistics services to map out and manage potential risks to supply chain efficiency.²⁸¹

187. The amount of funding channelled to cooperating partners steadily decreased from 2020 to 2023 for all CSP strategic outcomes, as a result of the transition to direct implementation. No funding was sent to cooperating partners for unconditional food assistance (SO1) and school feeding (SO3) in 2023, while the amount channelled through resilience and livelihoods (SO2) decreased threefold from 2020 to 2022 (Figure 35). An overview of the most prominent partnerships is presented in Annex 10: Summary of partnerships.

²⁸⁰ Definitions of the indicators: (i) Post-delivery losses: “all food losses (calculated in MT) incurred after the delivery point and up to final distribution of food to beneficiaries”. Post-delivery losses include warehouse and transport losses; food losses at distribution points (losses during food distribution); deviated or damaged food; and sales and donations of food. (ii) Percentage of food quantity lifted and issued from a specific warehouse within the Stock Transport Order (STO) validity period against total quantity dispatched for the relevant STO. (iii) Stock Transport Order (STO): system-generated instructions to the transporter (as well as the storekeeper) that provide detailed transport information about what commodity is to be loaded, when (STO validity start date and end date), and its destination. (iv) Percentage of metric tons not reconciled measures the total amount of tonnage related to discrepancies between supply chain and monitoring data in terms of CSP activity and partnership. This indicator measures the extent to which discrepancies in the supply chain and the programme implementation occur (due to differences in vendor/partnerships and/or activities WBS code) and are registered in the corresponding system.

²⁸¹ WFP Iraq Supply Chain Unit. December 2021. *Minimum Standard Requirements for Logistics Services Market Assessments*

Figure 35 – WFP funding channelled to cooperating partners per year and by strategic outcome in USD (2019–2023)



Source: Country office data, monthly payments to cooperating partners, 2020–2023.

Table 12 – Amount saved through cost-saving measures in 2022

Type of cost-saving measure implemented	USD amount saved	Percentage of total savings
Direct implementation SO1	1,826,936	56%
Direct implementation SO2	1,128,000	35%
Others	299,289	9%
Total	3,254,225	100%

Source: IRCO Cost-Containment Working Group – Gains and Achievement in December 2022.

188. Direct support costs as a share of total direct costs was slightly higher in Iraq (6.4 percent) compared with the global average (4.3 percent), largely due to WFP Iraq not being able to achieve the economies of scale found in larger offices.²⁸² Indirect support costs remained at a satisfactory level of 6.1 percent of total expenditure (see Table 13).

Table 13 – Direct and indirect support CSP costs in USD (2020–2023)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total	Global average (2019–2022)
Direct support costs	8 337 240	8 171 592	8 806 458	9 091 866	8 299 413	42 706 568	
Indirect support costs	10 913 106	8 235 279	8 616 619	6 972 635	8 403 574	43 141 213	
Direct support costs as a percentage of total direct costs	5.0%	6.4%	6.6%	8.5%	6.4%	6.4%	4.3%
Indirect support costs as a percentage of total costs	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%	6.0%

Source: NBP-BR04, WFP management plans (2020–2021/2022–2023).

189. **Cost-efficiency measures enabled WFP Iraq to continue to reach beneficiaries despite reduced funding.** However, the decision to continue to reach a broad cross-section of beneficiaries came

²⁸² WFP Management Plans (2020–2021/2022–2023)

at a cost in terms of sustainability, including insufficient training to retain skills and insufficient inputs to ensure sustainable agricultural production (see section 2.2.3).²⁸³

2.4 EQ4: What are the factors that explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the country strategic plan?

2.4.1 To what extent has WFP been able to mobilize adequate, timely, predictable and flexible resources to finance the CSP, given its financing model in Iraq and the general unpredictability of funding and the relatively short window for spending the funds?

Finding 17. WFP Iraq was able to raise sufficient resources to cover 78 percent of its CSP implementation plan and 72 percent of its T-ICSP plan, but available resources varied sharply year on year. Inflexible funding, comparatively fewer resources for resilience and livelihoods and capacity strengthening activities, late arrival of funding, and a decline in multiyear funding from 2022 onwards made it more difficult to manage the transition from emergency response to development. Donors view WFP as a credible development partner but are unwilling to fund activities beyond building GOI capacity. The GOI values partnership with WFP but has not funded WFP direct costs, though it will scale up successful activities.

190. WFP Iraq's financing model is characterized by a reliance on two major donors (the United States and Germany), the challenge of fundraising simultaneously for humanitarian and development funding, and a reliance on escrow funding left over from the Oil for Food Programme to fund school feeding.

Adequacy and timeliness of resources

191. WFP Iraq's ability to raise sufficient resources varied sharply year on year. Overall allocated resources were sufficient to cover 72 percent of the implementation plan under the T-ICSP (2018 and 2019) and 78 percent under the CSP (2020 to 2023). However, yearly coverage varied sharply from over 100 percent of the implementation plan in 2018, 2020 and 2022, to only 47 percent, 60 percent and 32 percent in 2019, 2021 and 2023, respectively (Table 14 and Annex 9).

Table 14 – Financial coverage rates of T-ICSP and CSP by year (2017–2023)

Strategic plan	Year	Current implementation plan (USD)	Allocated resources (USD)	Expenditure (USD)	Coverage rate ²⁸⁴
T-ICSP	2017	0	37 500	37 500	
	2018	147 387 351	154 843 113	106 862 134	105%
	2019	115 283 923	54 019 721	73 872 646	47%
	2020	0	-19 447 875	132 402	
	Total T-ICSP	262 671 274	189 452 459	180 904 681	72%
CSP	2020	130 729 336	141 828 994	78 273 762	108%
	2021	102 350 215	61 119 739	74 481 846	60%
	2022	87 043 307	89 528 992	68 100 988	103%
	2023	89 731 720	28 829 585	46 469 951	32%
	Total CSP	409 854 578	321 307 310	267 326 546	78%

Source: WFP Resource Management Analytics Platform. Note: totals do not include unprogrammed resources allocated to the entire T-ICSP cycle.

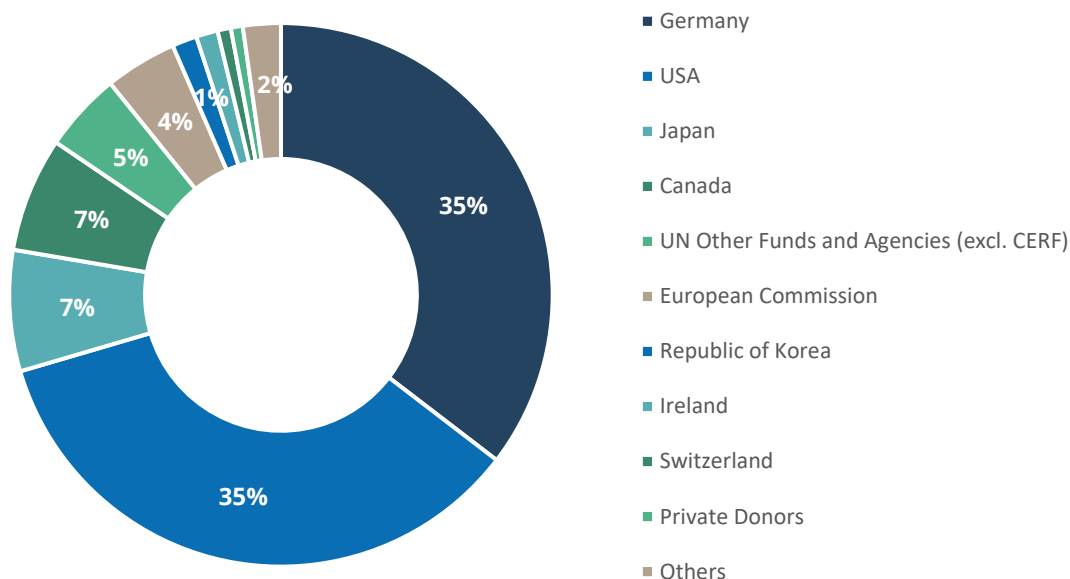
²⁸³ WFP. 2023. *Evaluation of WFP Livelihood Support, Asset Creation and Climate Adaptation Activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*. KIIs and FGDs, Iraq, October 2023

²⁸⁴ Coverage rate is computed as allocated resources as a percentage of current implementation plan.

192. Resilience and livelihoods (CSP Act. 2) and institutional capacity strengthening (CSP Act. 3) programmes were particularly impacted by funding shortfalls (respectively funded at 75 percent and 63 percent), due to the United States, WFP's tied largest donor, only funding unrestricted food (CSP Act. 1). This made WFP's transition to development challenging, as resilience and livelihoods was a key "bridging" activity, both supporting sustainable returns to reduce the need for emergency cash assistance and expanding to long-term climate resilience under Iraq's development agenda (see section 2.2.1.2). WFP's emergency response programme (CSP Act. 1) and social safety nets (CSP Act. 4) were funded at 84 percent and 83 percent of the implementation plan respectively (Table 14). WFP had to decrease the scale of its PDS reform assistance (CSP Act. 4) in 2020 and 2021 due to funding restrictions. However, in 2022, WFP, UNICEF and ILO received four years of funding from the European Union for social safety nets reform, providing a sustainable financial foundation for work going forward.²⁸⁵

193. WFP Iraq is currently navigating a number of risks to its financial stability, including heavy reliance on two main donors, the perception among some donors, the GOI and some United Nations stakeholders that WFP is a "humanitarian agency", an overall decline in donor funding for Iraq, and a steep decline in WFP global funding which limits the ability to call on HQ financial support. Two thirds of WFP's funding for the CSP has come from just two donors, Germany and the United States (Figure 36). US funding, focused almost exclusively on emergency response (SO1), ended in 2022. WFP is actively fundraising with development donors and the private sector, including a recent feasibility study to access private carbon offset markets (see section 2.2.2.7). However, it is too early to assess if these strategies will be successful in ensuring a sustainable funding base.²⁸⁶

Figure 36 – Top ten donors' share of the CSP Needs Based Plan (2020 to 10 July 2023)



Source: WFP data. 2023. FACTory Database, Annual Resource Situation Report, extracted on 10 July 2023.

194. The 2023 mid-term review of the CSP noted the need to develop an updated resources mobilization strategy and communications plan, building on the existing Partnership Action Plan and communications strategy. As of December 2023, this had not yet been developed.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ EU–UN Social Protection Program Design Document, November 2023. WFP. 2021. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2020*

²⁸⁶ WFP. 15 May 2023. *Feasibility Study Report for Generation of Carbon Credit for Afforestation and Conservation, Mangrove and Marshland in Iraq*. KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023. Evaluation team review of proposals provided by WFP Iraq, December 2023

²⁸⁷ WFP. January 2020. *Iraq Partnership Action Plan*. WFP Iraq. *Communications, Advocacy and Marketing Strategy (DRAFT) 2021 to 2024*. WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*

195. **In 2022, WFP's fundraising strategy largely focused on securing funding from the GOI.**²⁸⁸ The school feeding programme shows that WFP can play a catalytic role in piloting new programmes, then supporting the GOI to take over and scale them up (see section 2.2.1.3). However, discussions with government, United Nations stakeholders and WFP staff largely concluded that the **GOI is unlikely to fund WFP directly, despite a growing demand for partnership** (see section 2.4.3).

196. Donors and United Nations stakeholders view WFP as a credible development partner and value its ability to work across the nexus (see section 2.2.4). However, due to the GOI's high oil revenues and competing global priorities, interviewed donors consistently affirmed that they are only willing to fund targeted activities that build GOI capacity and have a plausible pathway to transition assistance to national budgets.²⁸⁹ United Nations stakeholders estimate that **resources for the upcoming CSP are likely to be significantly below current levels.**²⁹⁰

197. **Late arrival of resources put pressure on delivery.** In 2022, WFP received a USD 22 million resilience grant (Act. 2) which needed to be spent in four months. WFP was able to deliver, but the short implementation timeline stretched staff capacity and made it more difficult to deliver sustainable approaches (see sections 2.2.3 and 2.4.4).²⁹¹ Late arrival of funding in 2019 forced WFP to reduce distributions to IDPs from monthly to every six weeks for several months. This saw the number of households with acceptable food consumption fall from 90 percent to 75 percent.²⁹²

Predictability and flexibility

198. **Compared with other CSPs, the Iraq CSP has benefited from above-average levels of multiyear funding.**²⁹³ Yet the predictability and flexibility of funding began to decline in 2022, reflecting the challenging funding situation that the country office is coping with during its transition to development.

199. The overall share of multiyear funding for the T-ICSP was 12 percent, rising to 28 percent for the CSP. This compares favourably with the global average of 13 percent multiyear funding for 2016 to 2021, the latest period for which data are available.²⁹⁴ Concerningly, **the amount of multiyear funding decreased throughout the CSP period**, from 37 percent in 2020, to 8 percent and 11 percent in 2022 and 2023 respectively, at a time when WFP was actively working to transition from emergency response into long-term development funding (Figure 37). Simultaneously, **over the CSP period, there was a growing number of small grants compared with the T-ICSP, indicating a trend of fragmentation of resources.**

²⁸⁸ WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*

²⁸⁹ KIIs with donors, October 2023

²⁹⁰ KIIs with United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

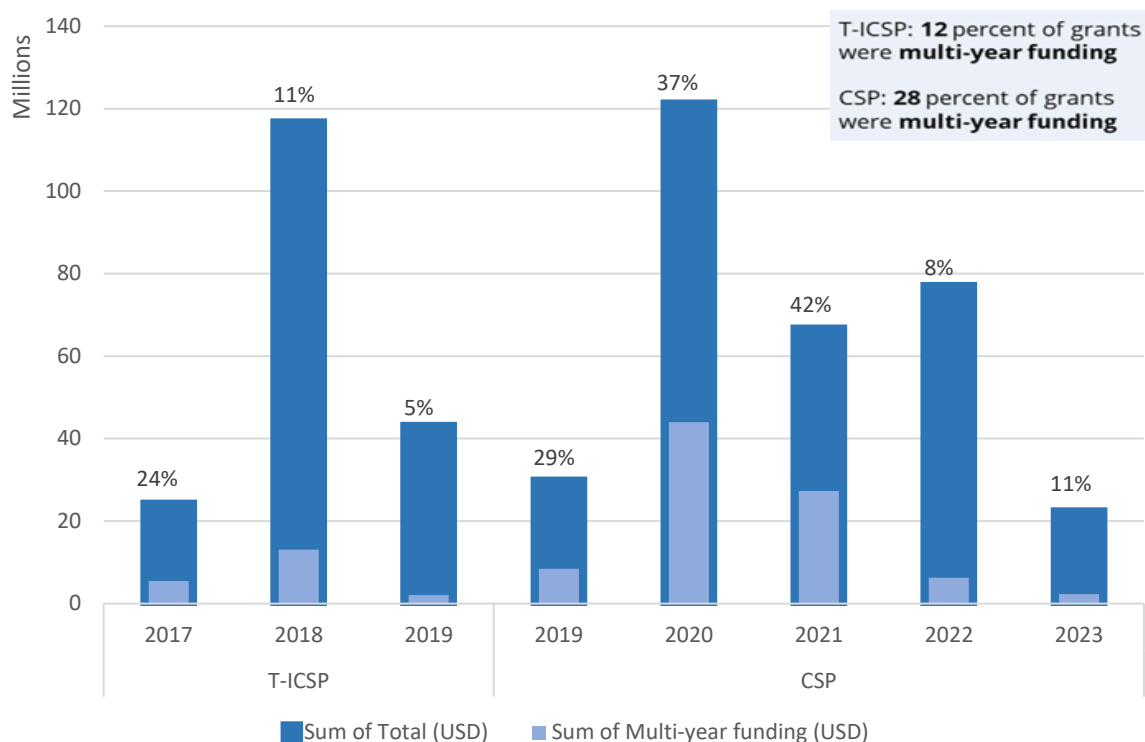
²⁹¹ Evaluation team analysis of project documents. KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

²⁹² WFP. 2020. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2019*. COMP 2021 – Iraq – IQ02

²⁹³ WFP. 2022. *Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Country Strategic Plans*

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

Figure 37 – Multiyear funding as a percentage of total T-ICSP and CSP funding



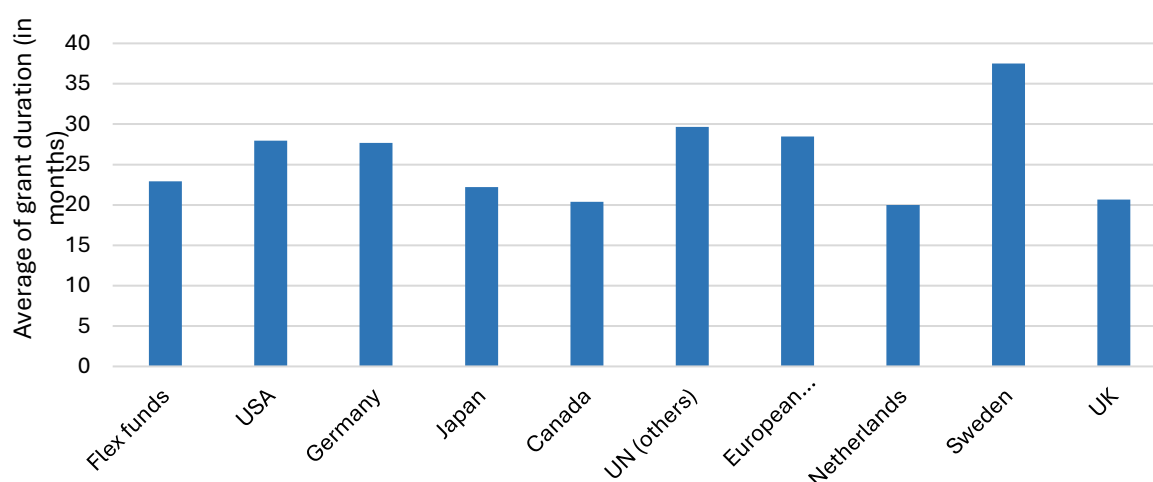
Source: WFP Resource Management Analytics Platform.²⁹⁵

200. The average duration of grants pledged by the top ten donors to WFP Iraq’s CSP was relatively stable, within a range between 20 and 30 months. This is in line with the global average for CSP funding, which has been consistently below 24 months since 2017.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ The dataset defines “multiyear funding” as “Contributions whose validity covers more than 12 months but the programming, implementation, and expenditures of these funds should happen in the future year specified by the donor.” Note that this excludes contributions whose validity covers more than 12 months, but for which the donor has not requested to block the funds’ utilization by year. Instead, the funds can be used on any point in time within grant validity.

²⁹⁶ WFP. 2022. *Evaluation of WFP’s Policy on Country Strategic Plans*

Figure 38 – Average months per grant for top ten donors for T-ICSP and CSP funding



Source: WFP Resource Management Analytics Platform.

201. **Most T-ICSP and CSP funding was earmarked at the activity level.** Only 8 percent of CSP funding was unearmarked, up from 4 percent in the T-ICSP (Table 15). This compares poorly with the already low global average of 20 percent unearmarked CSP funding in 2022.²⁹⁷

Table 15 – Summary of earmarking to WFP Iraq (2018–2023)

Earmarking level	Amount (USD)	Percentage of total (2018–2023)
T-ICSP	31 707 312	8%
Strategic result	19 829 000	5%
Strategic outcome	135 280 239	32%
Activity	232 006 769	55%
Total	418 823 321	

Source: WFP FACTORY.

2.4.2 To what extent were the monitoring and reporting systems useful to track and demonstrate progress towards expected outcomes and to inform management decisions?

Finding 18. WFP Iraq’s monitoring and reporting system is aligned with WFP’s corporate results framework; however, this did not suit the specific needs of a country office transitioning towards more development-oriented activities under the CSP. The ability to generate and disseminate evidence, often in partnership with other key actors, was a key enabling factor in ensuring the relevance of WFP’s strategy throughout a period of major transition. WFP appropriately transitioned away from direct data collection to supporting GOI evidence generation across the CSP period.

202. Data collected and analysis conducted by the country office proved useful to adjust CSP programming during its implementation, including monitoring, evaluation and community feedback mechanisms. For example, in adapting cash-based transfer values in response to changes in food prices, and for tailoring support to communities impacted by climate change.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ WFP OEV. May 2023. *Evaluation of WFP’s Policy on Country Strategic Plans*

²⁹⁸ KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023. FGDs with beneficiaries, October 2023. WFP Iraq VAM. February 2019. *Priority Areas for Intervention Based on SE and Climate Indicators*, February 2019. WFP Iraq. Many 2023. *Decentralized Evaluation of WFP livelihood support, asset creation and climate adaptation activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*

203. WFP further added to its evidence base throughout the CSP implementation period, conducting a Decentralized Evaluation of SO2 (resilience and livelihoods) in 2022 and a mid-term review of the CSP in 2023.²⁹⁹

204. **WFP adjusted its emergency assistance in response to the changing context, camp closures and declining funding**, conducting prioritization exercises in 2019 and 2022.³⁰⁰ Support to alleviate the emergency needs of IDPs, refugees and host communities was underpinned by regular and robust analysis and needs assessments. In 2018, WFP, UNHCR and the KRG Central Statistics Office conducted a joint vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees in Iraq.³⁰¹ In 2019, WFP and UNHCR published lessons learned on efforts to reduce abuse of power in cash transfer programming.³⁰²

205. Among several products, WFP produced an “Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas” in 2018 and 2019, which provided detailed maps on agriculture, environmental challenges, food security, poverty, unexploded hazards, health, nutrition, gender and youth at the national and district level.³⁰³ However, this was discontinued as part of **WFP’s transition from direct data production towards GOI-led food data collection**, enabling the GOI to take on responsibility for evidence generation. From 2021, WFP worked with the Iraq Central Statistics Organization and the World Bank to integrate food security indicators into the Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey.³⁰⁴ In January 2022, WFP signed a letter of understanding with the KRSO to support food security monitoring, and supported climate conferences in Baghdad (2022) and Basra (2023), providing evidence and data to inform national climate plans.³⁰⁵ In May 2023, WFP conducted a feasibility study to explore options to leverage private carbon credits for forestry conservation, and mangrove and marshland rehabilitation in Iraq (see section 2.2.2.4).³⁰⁶ Efforts to integrate evidence collection into existing processes is particularly important given the strategic emphasis on building GOI capacity to address future shocks to food security.³⁰⁷

206. Stakeholders value WFP’s contextual understanding and its contribution of evidence and data to respond to food security crises.³⁰⁸ Throughout the CSP period, WFP produced regular context reports and analysis, including monthly country briefs.³⁰⁹ Good-quality and regular market monitoring reports tracked the impact of threats such as drought, changes in oil prices and shocks to global supply chains.³¹⁰ Donors and United Nations partners noted that WFP’s food security and market data were a valued input into their own planning and strategy development.³¹¹ Partners particularly valued WFP’s partnership with the World Bank to collect evidence for the response to COVID-19, instituting COVID-19 monitoring bulletins, high-frequency phone surveys and regular briefings to inform the international and national response.³¹² WFP Iraq’s monitoring and reporting is in line with WFP’s corporate results framework. Monitoring activities included Food Security Outcome Monitoring in person or remotely at household level, with baseline and post-distribution monitoring. Regular process monitoring of distribution points, partner voucher shops and financial service providers was also conducted and was observed by the evaluation team. **To improve the efficiency of data collection, WFP used mobile data collection systems** which reduced the time needed for data collection, improved the accuracy of data compared with manual processes, and made it easier to

²⁹⁹ WFP. 2023. *Evaluation of WFP Livelihood Support, Asset Creation and Climate Adaptation Activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*. WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*

³⁰⁰ WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2019 and 2022*

³⁰¹ KRSO/UNHCR/WFP. June 2018. *Joint Vulnerability Assessment*

³⁰² UNHCR/WFP. January 2019. *Mitigating risks of abuse of power in cash assistance in Iraq*

³⁰³ WFP, *Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas*, 2018 and 2019

³⁰⁴ WFP. 2022. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2021*

³⁰⁵ WFP. Quarterly Bulletin: Q1 2022, Q2 2023. WFP. March 2023. *Iraq Country Brief*

³⁰⁶ WFP. 15 May 2023. *Feasibility study report for generation of carbon credits for afforestation and conservation, mangrove and marshlands in Iraq*

³⁰⁷ KII with WFP staff, October 2023

³⁰⁸ KIIs with government, United Nations stakeholders and donors, October 2023. WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*

³⁰⁹ WFP. March 2023. *Iraq Country Brief*

³¹⁰ WFP. October 2022. *Iraq Market Monitor Report Issue 33*

³¹¹ KIIs with United Nations stakeholders and donors, October 2023


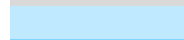


³¹² KIIs with United Nations stakeholders and donors, October 2023. WFP/WB/IFAD/FAO. *Food Security in Iraq: Impact of COVID-19, June-August 2020*. WB/WFP. Iraq High Frequency Phone Survey. Results from August, September and October 2020 rounds

analyse and compare data through dashboards and other data visualization. WFP also successfully outsourced monitoring to third party monitors in areas where security concerns limited access.³¹³

207. WFP used evidence and data to enhance the responsiveness of the CSP to the needs of vulnerable people in Iraq. WFP Iraq conducted regular monitoring visits and monitoring interviews, averaging around 70 to 300 visits per month.³¹⁴ However, **a recent mid-term review of the CSP highlighted quality issues with the data collected during project implementation.**³¹⁵ The evaluation team also found that beneficiary data were not always available in annual country reports and that, across the different years of CSP implementation, data were collected from different target groups making it difficult to analyse trends in the results. Table 16 highlights availability of data and changes in the groups that data were collected from over the CSP. The evaluation team acknowledges that the main reason for the gaps is because not every subgroup was reached in each year. A recent evaluation of resilience activities also found that there were limitations in measuring achievements and contributions using corporate monitoring data.³¹⁶

Table 16 – Availability of monitoring data and changes in beneficiary cohorts

		2020	2021	2022
Act 1	Iraqi IDPs – Iraq			
	Iraqi returnees – Nineveh			
	Syrian refugees – Iraq			
Act 2	Iraqi – urban			
	Iraqi – urban (2nd group)			
	Iraqi returnees – rural			
	Iraqi returnees – rural – FFA			
Act 3	Households in conflict-affected areas – Iraq			
	The girls in grade 7 in Shatt Al Arab district of Basra governorate – Basra			
	Government officials and partners			
	Ministry of Planning			
	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research			
Act 4	Government officials and partners			

	No data
	Cohort group selected in 2020
	Cohort group selected in 2021
	Cohort group selected in 2022

Source: WFP. Iraq Annual Country Reports (2020–2022). Data for 2023 not yet available.

³¹³ WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*. KIIIs with WFP staff and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

³¹⁴ WFP. *Iraq Country Brief*. March 2023, November 2022 and November 2021

³¹⁵ Findings are in line with the experience of the evaluation team and include large focus on activities, gaps for Act. 4 and government capacity strengthening, high volume and low specificity and clarity of indicators.

³¹⁶ WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*. WFP Iraq. May 2023. *Decentralized Evaluation of WFP livelihood support, asset creation and climate adaptation activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*. WFP. *Iraq Annual Country Reports – 2018 to 2022*

208. The Research Assessment and Monitoring (RAM) team showed flexibility, undertaking ad hoc studies based on specific evidence generation needs, such as a joint FAO/WFP/IFAD/World Bank impact study on COVID-19, as well as adapting the mVAM modality to collect monitoring information on more vulnerable households.³¹⁷

209. Perhaps the biggest challenge to WFP monitoring and reporting was the transition from humanitarian programming to a predominant focus on resilience and development programming under the CSP. WFP Iraq continues to report using WFP's corporate results framework which is better suited to humanitarian monitoring and reporting. The mid-term review of the CSP highlighted the weakness of WFP Iraq in development results measurement and the fact that it has continued to use humanitarian tools and processes for the design and implementation of projects with short timelines.³¹⁸ Key informants listed a number of factors that make the current corporate reporting system unsuitable: (i) it does not recognize the longer timescale associated with working with government and the related slower pace to achieve outputs and outcomes; (ii) development output indicators are less about tonnage of food distributed and more about policy development, enabling and capacity strengthening actions; (iii) corporate results framework indicators are not able to adequately capture progress in development interventions around resilience, poverty reduction, employment and agricultural development; and (iv) there is a lack of corporate guidance on how to best incorporate development indicators.³¹⁹

2.4.3 How did partnerships and collaboration with other actors, government, academia, the private sector and NGOs influence results, and what were the effects of WFP cooperation on different partner types?

Finding 19. WFP's move to direct implementation facilitated its transition from implementer to enabler by allowing it to build a diverse network of partnerships across government, the United Nations, universities and the private sector. This enabled the shift towards new approaches to enhance livelihoods, build community resilience to climate shocks, and support national and subnational capacities for addressing food insecurity under a development-focused future. Further opportunities were identified to strengthen engagement with FAO and to develop stronger partnership engagement strategies to mitigate the impact of poor communication between central and district ministries on the sustainability of WFP activities.

210. **From 2022 onwards, WFP transitioned from implementing its programmes through cooperating partners to direct implementation.** This entailed taking responsibility for designing projects, procuring contractors and money transfer agents, monitoring results, and working with government vocational training centres and universities to deliver training.

211. WFP's decision to directly implement programmes helped to facilitate the transition from implementer to enabler by allowing WFP to strengthen partnerships with the GOI, universities and communities to build a deep understanding of capacity strengthening priorities. From 2022, WFP rapidly scaled up its partnerships with government, signing 16 agreements with government counterparts (including federal ministries, KRI agencies, directorates and government universities) in 2022 and 2023, compared with only three between 2018 to 2021 (see Figure 39). These agreements covered areas that directly contribute to CSP outcomes, including social safety net reform, school feeding, climate resilience, urban and rural livelihoods, land use and food security monitoring.³²⁰ WFP staff and government partners credit the transition to working directly with the GOI with improving the relevance and sustainability of WFP's work (see section 2.2.3). For example, direct partnerships with the GOI allowed WFP to contribute to the development of national climate policy and land use monitoring, and to pilot innovative approaches to climate mitigation (see section 2.2.2.4).

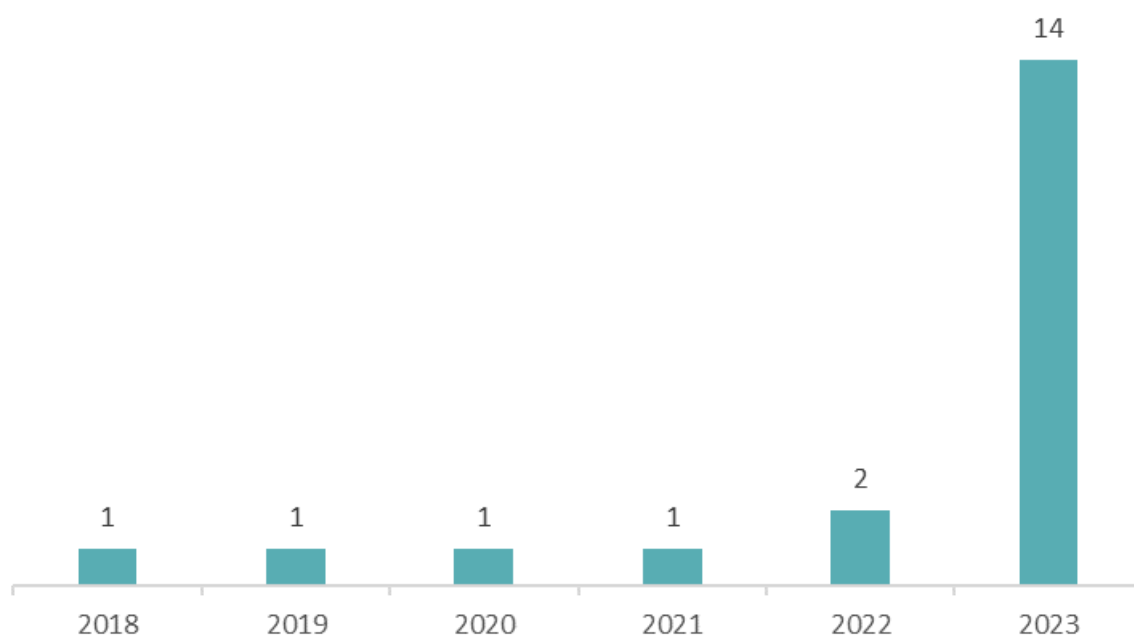
³¹⁷ WFP/WB/IFAD/FAO. *Food Security in Iraq: Impact of COVID-19, June-August 2020*. WB/WFP. Iraq High Frequency Phone Survey. Results from August, September and October 2020 rounds

³¹⁸ WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*

³¹⁹ KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

³²⁰ Evaluation team analysis of WFP Iraq's cooperating Partner dataset from 2018 to 13 December 2023. KIIs with WFP staff and government stakeholders, October 2023. Field visit observations, October 2023

Figure 39 – Agreements signed with government counterparts (2018–2023)



Source: CPs lists 2018–2023.

212. WFP worked closely with GOI counterparts at both national and subnational level, consulting them on the selection of priority activities and including them in the design of programmes. Site visits and KIIs showed that WFP had maintained close collaboration with a broad range of national ministries and directorates, including directorates of agriculture and water resources (livelihoods), education (school feeding), social affairs (vocational training) and higher education (Josour). All government stakeholders interviewed reported being consulted in the design of WFP activities and noted that WFP was responsive to government priorities (see sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.5).³²¹

213. **Lack of communication between the governorates and central ministries is a barrier to scaling up programmes.** Staff in national ministries often had limited visibility of what WFP was doing in partnership with directorates in the governorates, and vice versa. This made it challenging to pilot activities at the local level and then secure funding from central ministries to scale up. Looking ahead, WFP needs to refine its partnership strategy to ensure that its engagement with governorate-level directorates and central ministries is clear to all parties.³²²

214. Despite the overall scale-down in unconditional food assistance (CSP Act. 1), WFP worked in partnership with international actors to extend support for particularly vulnerable groups. This included: (i) a project co-implemented with UN Women prioritizing pregnant or breastfeeding women; (ii) a programme funded by the Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) on multipurpose cash assistance to IDPs and crisis-affected households with missing civil documents; and (iii) ongoing cooperation with UNHCR on protection, targeting, joint needs assessment, and cash and market analysis to support stronger prioritization of vulnerable populations. This coordination was crucial in the context of shrinking resources for emergency response (see section 2.2.1.1).³²³

215. WFP leveraged partnerships with other United Nations and specialist international agencies to contribute to long-term approaches to climate resilience (CSP Act. 2) and social safety nets (CSP Act. 4). In September 2021, WFP signed a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF and ILO to support the reform of social safety nets, resulting in a joint five-year programme to build government capacity.³²⁴ WFP also co-chairs UNSDCF PWG 4 – Climate Change with UNDP and FAO and the working group on social protection

³²¹ KIIs with government stakeholders, October 2023

³²² KIIs with government stakeholders and WFP staff, October 2023

³²³ WFP. 2019. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2018*. WFP/UNHCR. June 2018. *Joint Vulnerability Assessment*

³²⁴ EU–UN Social Protection Program Design Document, November 2023

with UNICEF and ILO.³²⁵ On the margins of COP 28 in Dubai in December 2023, WFP Iraq signed three strategic partnerships with specialist agricultural and environmental agencies to strengthen collaboration on climate resilience work.³²⁶ WFP chaired the Logistics and Emergency Telecommunications clusters and co-chaired the Food Security Cluster with FAO until 2022 (see 2.2.1.8).

216. However, there is **potential to strengthen partnerships between WFP and FAO**. In 2019, WFP signed a country-level memorandum of understanding with FAO aimed at ensuring closer collaboration. However, WFP has struggled to build strong operational partnerships and joint programming. Multiple United Nations partners noted the need for stronger WFP–FAO collaboration moving forward (see section 2.1.3).³²⁷

217. Collaboration with universities allowed WFP to scale up youth skills training, pilot new agricultural approaches such as aquaponics, and pilot climate mitigation projects such as mangrove rehabilitation, though these partnerships require ongoing support to ensure that they can achieve sustainable results (see section 2.2.3).³²⁸

218. **WFP's outreach to the private sector enabled it to pilot innovative new approaches to support youth and smallholder farmers.** In 2022, WFP signed an agreement with Lezzoo to support youth and smallholder farmers with digital supply chain solutions and introduced new pilot approaches such as potato value chains³²⁹ to contribute to rural development and resilience building, with funding from PepsiCo.³³⁰ In December 2023, WFP Iraq signed an agreement with Basra Gas Company to fund support for smallholder farmers.³³¹ WFP staff and United Nations stakeholders suggest there is potential to strengthen links with the private sector to improve youth employment outcomes under vocational training and Josour.³³²

2.4.4 To what extent did the country office have appropriate human resources capacity to deliver on the CSP?

Finding 20. Transitioning to development, while continuing to deliver emergency assistance, has stretched staff capacities. WFP made important steps in bringing on new skills for development programming, but the success of the transition is largely due to strong contributions from motivated staff who reskilled “on the run”. To continue to deliver in a development-focused context, WFP needs to rework its structure to be fit for purpose for a low funding future.

219. Despite scaling up the breadth and complexity of WFP's work since 2022, the number of staff remained steady, averaging between 166 and 175 staff throughout the CSP period (see Figure 42). **WFP has managed the transition from a humanitarian to development focus, and from working through cooperating partners to direct implementation, without a major increase in staffing numbers.** This was possible thanks to strong contributions by motivated staff, with many staff reskilling “on the run” and taking on new areas of responsibility to handle the transition. Staff were often covering a diverse portfolio of projects over a large geographic area.³³³

220. The mid-term review noted that “the CO structure was set up to address humanitarian assistance, its traditional focus”.³³⁴ However, WFP Iraq made significant progress during 2022 and 2023 to realign towards a development agenda.³³⁵ The evaluation team saw progress in bringing on specialist skills,

³²⁵ WFP. 2023. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2022*. EU–UN Social Protection Program Design Document, 7 November 2023

³²⁶ The organizations are: Stockholm Environment Institute, International Centre for Biosaline Agriculture and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). Evaluation Team review of partnership agreements provided by WFP Iraq.

³²⁷ KIIs with WFP staff and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023. FAO. 2019. Support agricultural livelihoods Nineveh Governorate, Iraq. Site observations during visits to Baghdad, Anbar, Basra, Dhi Qar, Erbil, Dohuk and Nineveh

³²⁸ WFP Iraq. May 2023. *Decentralized Evaluation of WFP livelihood support, asset creation and climate adaptation activities in Iraq from January 2020 to December 2021*

³²⁹ The project takes a value chains approach to improve incomes for potato farmers

³³⁰ WFP. 2023. *Iraq Annual Country Report 2022*. KIIs with WFP staff and cooperating partners, October 2023

³³¹ Contribution agreement between the World Food Programme and Basrah Gas Company, 8 December 2023

³³² KIIs with WFP staff and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

³³³ KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

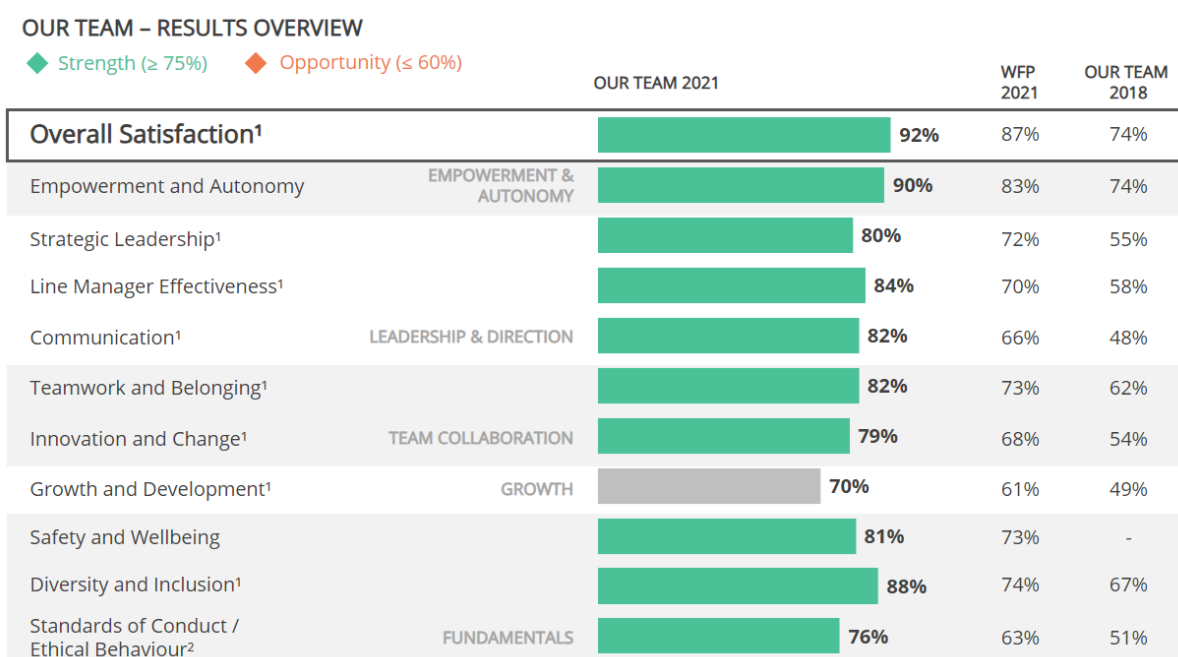
³³⁴ WFP/Antezana, O. June 2023. *WFP Iraq Country Strategy Plan 2020 to 2024: Mid Term Review Report*

³³⁵ Ibid.

including new technical specialists in climate change, value chains and agronomy.³³⁶ WFP staff reported that private recruitment agencies had been a key enabler in helping to bring on new specialist skills and to expand to new governorates, such as in Dhi Qar and Muthanna in the south.³³⁷ However, there is a need to further scale up recruitment of development specialists, particularly in areas such as monitoring and evaluating development impact and social safety nets technical expertise (see section 2.2.1.4).

221. WFP Iraq’s staff are highly motivated, scoring 92 percent overall satisfaction on the 2021 Global Staff Survey (see Figure 40).³³⁸ Nevertheless, **among the key areas covered by the 2021 Global Staff Survey, WFP Iraq scored lowest on the area “growth and development opportunities for staff”** at 70 percent satisfaction, though higher than the global average of 61 percent (see Figure 40).³³⁹ WFP’s Regional Bureau Cairo (RBC) launched a learning needs assessment in June 2023 to address capacity gaps but, as at December 2023, the assessment was still ongoing.³⁴⁰

Figure 40 – Staff satisfaction: WFP Iraq versus WFP globally



Source: WFP. 2021 Global Staff Survey: Our results.

222. **WFP was able to increase the proportion of staff who were on fixed-term contracts.** The percentage of staff who were on a fixed-term contract grew from 40 percent in January 2021 to 52 percent in October 2023, while the proportion of staff on a short-term contract fell from 57 percent to 46 percent over the same period (see Figure 41).

³³⁶ Evaluation team review of WFP Iraq Organization Charts from 2018 to 2023. KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

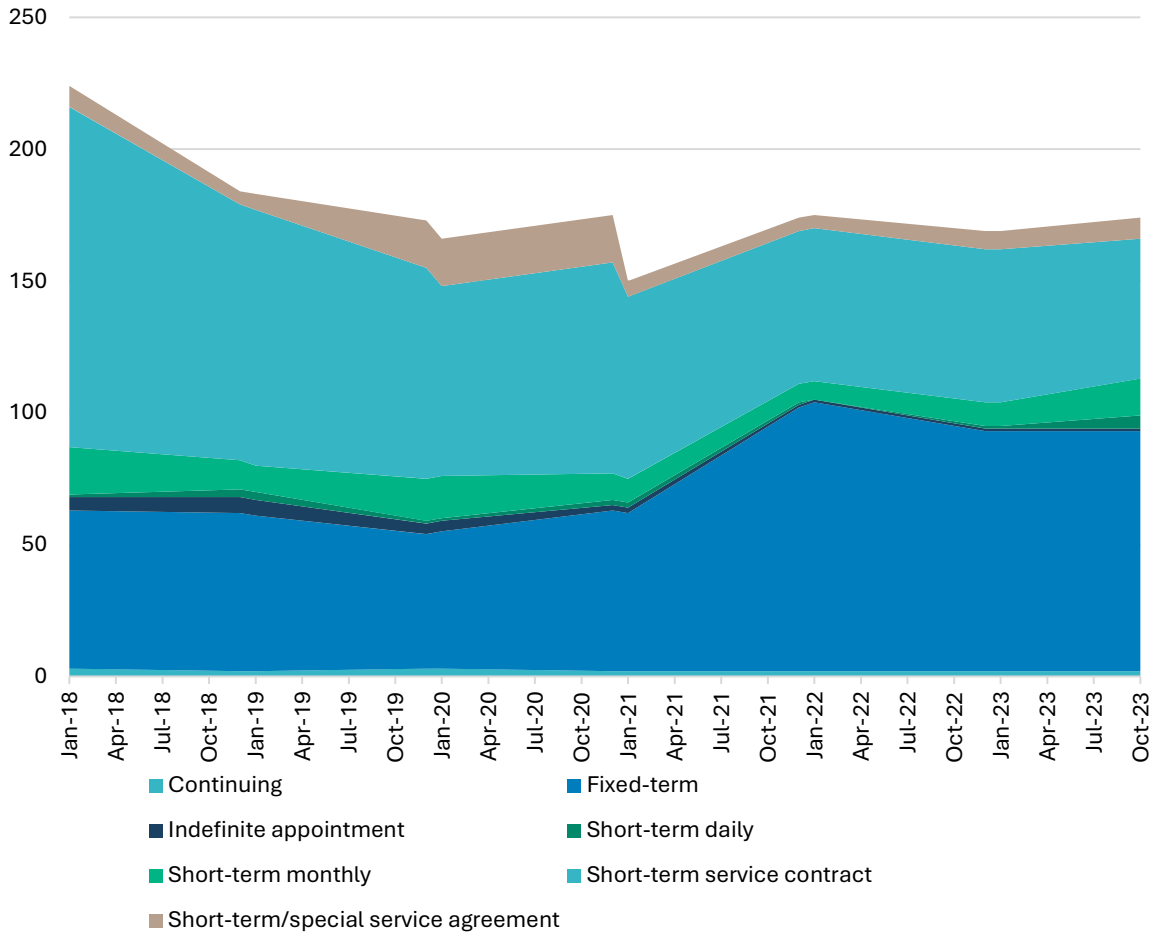
³³⁷ KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

³³⁸ WFP. 2021. *Global Staff Survey: Our results*. KIIs with WFP staff, October 2023

³³⁹ Ibid.

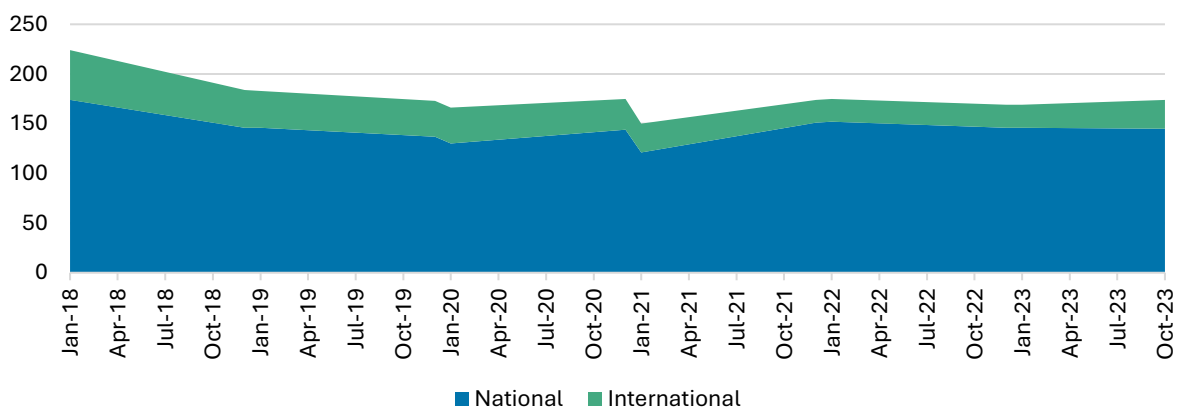
³⁴⁰ WFP Regional Bureau Cairo. June 2023. *Learning Needs Assessment*

Figure 41 – Staffing by contract type (January 2018 to October 2023)



Source: SDR 2018–2020/2020–2023.

Figure 42 – Staffing, national versus international (January 2018 to October 2023)



Source: SDR 2018–2020/2020–2023.

223. WFP Iraq's staff and field presence are a key asset, but it will be difficult to maintain the current human resources arrangements under a low funding future. In FGDs, beneficiaries spoke highly of the support they received from WFP staff.³⁴¹ Donors and United Nations partners named WFP's field presence as a key asset. However, WFP will need to rethink its structure in light of the predicted reduction in funding available for the next CSP and the reluctance of donors to fund activities beyond niche capacity building (see section 2.4.1).³⁴²

³⁴¹ FGDs with beneficiaries, October 2023

³⁴² KIIs with donors and United Nations stakeholders, October 2023

3 Conclusions and recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1: WFP Iraq successfully navigated a period of major transition, including a shift in the context from humanitarian to development and an operational shift to direct implementation, while aiming to reposition itself as an enabler in Iraq. Throughout this transition, WFP continued to address remaining humanitarian needs while putting in place several foundations which could contribute to long-term climate resilience and sustainable approaches to food security. Further work is needed to clarify WFP's comparative advantage as Iraq continues to progress to a middle-income development context, with its own significant oil revenues.

224. WFP has successfully managed several major strategic transitions, both planned and unforeseen, throughout the T-ICSP and CSP periods. It also successfully navigated COVID-19 and periods of governance instability and major protests, adapting programming to support urban livelihoods and job skills, supporting take-home rations under school feeding and adjusting cash assistance in response to economic shocks.

225. WFP's shift in emphasis from food assistance to IDPs and re-establishing livelihoods for returnees (following the conflict with ISIL) towards government support for youth employment, climate-resilient agriculture and improved national social safety nets laid the foundation for a long-term, sustainable approach to address food challenges after the end of international assistance.

226. The shift to direct implementation, including delivering through government, universities and vocational training centres, resulted in considerable savings, and strengthened WFP partnerships, supporting WFP's positioning as an enabler of development outcomes. Direct partnerships with government, universities, communities and United Nations agencies helped to promote resilience and capacity strengthening on sustainable approaches to food security. However, it also stretched staff capacities.

Conclusion 2: WFP's unconditional food assistance helped to reduce food insecurity and negative coping strategies among IDPs and Syrian refugees. Livelihoods assistance contributed to improved food security, job skills, sustainable returns and climate resilience. However, increased food insecurity due to COVID-19 and funding shortages meant that WFP reduced, but was not able to fully eliminate, reliance on negative coping strategies. Short-term assistance and lack of integration into markets undermined sustainability. Capacity strengthening successfully piloted and handed over the national school feeding programme, despite delays, and laid the foundation for future work on social protection.

227. WFP's unconditional food assistance provided an important buffer against shocks for vulnerable IDPs and refugees, helping to stabilize crisis coping strategies and avoiding an even more rapid deterioration in food security. However, the volume of assistance provided was insufficient to fully offset the deterioration of food security outcomes caused by COVID-19, increasing food prices and the overall decrease in international assistance. WFP progressively scaled down its unconditional food assistance as the CSP progressed in line with long-term plans to hand this activity over to the GOI.

228. Livelihoods interventions helped to support IDP returns, improve social cohesion and youth job skills, and laid the foundation for more climate-resilient food systems. However, funding shortfalls, the reliance on one major donor, the need to launch new programmes in response to COVID-19, and the failure to build in sustainable market and value chain approaches meant that the scale and effects of livelihoods and resilience interventions remained lower than planned.

229. Institutional capacity strengthening activities resulted in the successful handover of a national school feeding programme, despite delays and a reduction in the frequency of school meals delivered. However, early warning and preparedness activities did not progress due to a lack of funding, while SBCC activities lost focus as the CSP progressed.

230. WFP introduced an important strategic shift from the development of digital assets to supporting a holistic approach to social protection reform that offers a pathway to safeguard vulnerable Iraqis from food security shocks. However, challenges sourcing appropriate technical capacity (conclusion 6), insufficient focus on ensuring the Government had the capacity to maintain systems, and the lack of a collective vision among government and United Nations partners on the type of social protection system Iraq is building undermined the sustainability of social protection reform (conclusion 4).

Conclusion 3: The T-ICSP and CSP provided a flexible framework for WFP to respond to the specific priorities of the GOI, and its underlying assumptions largely remained valid throughout the period under evaluation. The strategic flexibility inherent in the CSP was crucial in a changing context but made it challenging for WFP to clearly articulate its contribution to long-term sustainable change.

231. The strategic logic of the T-ICSP and CSP provided a coherent pathway towards WFP's role as an enabler rather than an implementer, including supporting government capacity around climate-resilient agriculture and graduation pathways from humanitarian assistance to reformed social safety nets. However, the CSP overestimated the availability of funding to scale up resilience activities and underestimated staff capacity challenges involved in transitioning to direct implementation and the potential delays in the handover of emergency response and capacity strengthening activities to the GOI, requiring multiple budget revisions (conclusion 6).

232. The flexibility and comprehensiveness inherent in the CSP were crucial in allowing WFP to adapt to a fluid context. However, it also made it challenging for WFP to track and articulate its contribution towards long-term impact, especially for country capacity strengthening and social safety net reform. The broad range of activities delivered by WFP, the need to develop new activities in response to changes in the context and governance instability, and the competing demands of reporting on corporate indicators that are more geared towards humanitarian emergencies meant that it was difficult for WFP to develop indicators to measure long-term development outcomes.

Conclusion 4: WFP was a key partner in promoting change across the humanitarian–development nexus. WFP's comparative advantage in emergency response, food security and digitalization supported response to emerging issues throughout the CSP period, and its operational capacity and country-wide reach further positioned it to address the intersection between climate resilience and food security. However, WFP lacked a clearly defined plan to hand over initiatives as Iraq's capacity developed and did not define a clear approach to how it could leverage its expertise in Iraq to support sustainable emergency preparedness tailored to a transitioning middle-income context.

233. WFP leveraged its comparative advantage in emergency response, food security and digitalization to contribute to UNSDCF priorities around climate resilience and capacity strengthening, underpinned by strong partnerships with the GOI and UNCT agencies and a strong presence at the community level across the country. Iraq continues to face real risks, including governance instability, conflicts, climate impacts, youth unemployment and protracted displacement. WFP could have done more to support the GOI and Iraqi civil society³⁴³ to strengthen emergency preparedness and response to address future shocks that impact on food security and social cohesion. Emergency preparedness failed to attract funding and did not receive adequate corporate support, highlighting the limitations on emergency response models for upper-middle-income countries transitioning out of crises.

234. Rural development was an important mechanism to address food insecurity and ensure sustainable returns in the post ISIL conflict period. WFP's expansion into job skills during the COVID-19 crisis was based on a clear need and addressed gaps in early emergency cash for work interventions that were not suitable for women. WFP focused its activities on the subnational level where it had a comparative advantage and is gradually working on a sustainable handover of these activities to government.

235. Although it happened somewhat organically, WFP's shift in strategic focus from development of digital assets to strengthening social protection positioned it to play a key role in building pathways to safeguard and foster people's ability to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs, and to manage the risks and shocks they face after the end of international assistance. WFP took steps to strengthen its own capacity to engage in this complex change process but has not yet articulated with

³⁴³ The evaluation team recognizes that engagement with civil society in a country context like Iraq can be challenging for an organization like WFP, because of real or perceived political affiliation and legal restrictions in areas of operation

partners an overarching vision of what a successful social protection system looks like in Iraq. The GOI does not yet have the capacity to maintain systems without further support.

236. WFP's work to pilot projects that address the intersection between climate and food security (mangrove rehabilitation, reforestation) since 2022, its strong partnerships with GOI at the governorate level, its contribution to climate policy in Iraq and its co-ordination role in the UNSDCF Climate Change Working Group positioned it to play a positive role in addressing the pressing impact of climate change on food security in Iraq.

Conclusion 5: WFP pivoted towards sustainable approaches, but short-term funding, trade-offs in prioritization, internal capacity challenges and late starts in the transition to resilience and capacity strengthening pose risks to the quality and sustainability of development interventions.

237. The proliferation of inflexible, fragmented funding in the latter half of the CSP, combined with country office capacity challenges faced during the transition period, complicated WFP's shift from humanitarian implementer to development enabler and made it more challenging to work towards sustainable outcomes.

238. The trade-off between humanitarian and development prioritization criteria sometimes undermined the quality and sustainability of development results. Beneficiary prioritization ensured the engagement of vulnerable groups and promoted social cohesion, but unintentionally led to inclusion errors by allowing the participation of citizens with low interest in active employment interventions. Many beneficiaries needed longer and deeper support to sustainably restart livelihoods and move from vulnerability to resilience.

239. WFP was late in starting on new areas of work, including country capacity strengthening and major climate change projects, with many of the larger activities in these areas not commencing until 2022. This made it challenging to articulate, measure and demonstrate the achievement of progress towards sustainable development outcomes, despite positive starts in many of these areas.

Conclusion 6: WFP Iraq had mixed success in handing over capacities, which had an impact on sustainability. At times, WFP risked handing over systems in short periods of time without sufficient assessment of partners' technical capacities and clear milestones to responsibly hand over capacities.

240. In line with its transition from implementer to enabler, WFP piloted a number of new programmes and capacities, including a national school feeding pilot, new digital platforms for PDS registration, and innovative approaches to climate-resilient agriculture through mangrove rehabilitation and reforestation. However, more effort is needed to ensure that these capacities can be handed over to partners in a sustainable way. WFP made a promising start on long-term climate resilience and social safety nets activities, but these need continued support over several years to make them sustainable.

241. The handover of school feeding serves as a model for future capacity strengthening approaches, with national funding secured and government stakeholders expressing confidence in their ability to scale up the programme. However, the original timeline for handing over school feeding was overly optimistic, with multiple delays due to COVID-19, governance instability and capacity gaps. WFP risks facing a similar challenge with the handover of digital platforms too early.

242. The digital assets deployed by WFP were not always suitable to the local context. Corporate guidance requesting the implementation of the social protection digitalization project through an international company challenged the intended transfer of skills and capacities to the ministries. This affected the quality of digital products and brought about potential risk of handing over digital assets to partners that do not have the ability to sustain them.

243. Communication challenges between central ministries and governorate-level agencies were a barrier to piloting and handing over projects. Technical staff in central ministries did not always have full visibility of WFP pilot projects in the governorates. WFP did not always engage strategically at all levels of government, including central ministries, the KRI and governorate-level directorates. This may have limited buy-in on governorate pilot projects from central ministries that could fund and take these approaches to scale.

Conclusion 7: WFP's achievement in managing the transition was due to strong efforts by staff. However, WFP's office structure was not always conducive to demonstrating long-term results under a development-focused, low-funding future.

244. WFP made progress in transitioning its structures, systems and capacities to be more fit for purpose to deliver development approaches, while continuing to manage a significant emergency response and responding to shocks such as COVID-19 and governance instability. Donors saw WFP as a credible development partner but are increasingly willing to fund only activities with a realistic pathway to hand over capacities to the GOI.

245. Despite some progress in bringing on new skills, WFP struggled to attract and retain sufficient skill sets linked to climate resilience, capacity building for emergency management, social safety nets and monitoring long-term impact. The need to pilot new projects across a broad number of new geographic and thematic areas, especially since 2022, combined with a lack of relevant corporate guidelines and frameworks tailored to transitioning contexts, made it challenging for staff to focus on delivering and demonstrating long-term development outcomes. The significant transition achieved under the CSP stretched office capacities thinly and was largely achieved through the stand-out efforts of many staff.

246. WFP made significant efforts to diversify funding, including exploring innovative climate finance, multiyear development funding and private sector partnerships. However, a lack of corporate guidance and support on how to engage with the Green Climate Fund made it challenging for WFP to engage with these funding mechanisms. WFP was largely unsuccessful in securing funding for its own costs from the GOI, despite a growing interest in partnering with WFP. Heavy reliance on two donors, including only one main donor funding the scale-up of resilience activities, proved to be a weakness in a challenging transition period.

247. WFP's corporate monitoring systems were not well suited to nexus transition. WFP Iraq struggled to build evidence for longer-term development outcomes while meeting corporate reporting requirements. Gaps in WFP's capacity to monitor and report on the outcomes of resilience and capacity strengthening interventions pose a risk to efforts to secure donor support for its transition.

Conclusion 8: WFP's shift to development, strong community presence and progress in inclusion provides an opportunity for more ambitious approaches to transformative change, including stronger inclusion of marginalized groups, women and girls, and people with disabilities in job markets; social protection; emergency preparedness; and climate mitigation activities.

248. WFP achieved gender parity in its programmes in a country with very low levels of women's participation in formal job markets, and prioritized support for people with disability. However, it did not meet its targets to invest in more transformative approaches and did not systematically implement strategies to address the underlying root causes of women's unequal access and control of resources, access to markets and stereotypical gender norms.

249. Current progress in building gender-responsive programmes, combined with WFP's good understanding of the interaction between its interventions and the context, provides a platform to tackle barriers to change. Addressing transformative change in gender norms can raise protection risks, including exacerbating family violence and push back from the GOI. WFP needs to maintain momentum on training to ensure that it has appropriate levels of expertise on gender, protection and the local context.

250. WFP had appropriate systems and training in place to manage protection risks and PSEA. However, many beneficiaries were not aware of how to make a complaint under WFP's feedback mechanism, which introduced an accountability gap.

3.2 Recommendations

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1. Focus WFP's efforts on supporting Iraq's capacity for climate resilience, emergency preparedness and response and social safety nets, with clear milestones in WFP's transition and exit strategy as Iraq progresses towards upper-middle-income and post-crisis status. Advocate the maintenance of specialist international support for particularly vulnerable people during the transition.		Strategic				
1.1.	In the CSP for 2025–2029 and related strategic documents, clearly articulate and focus efforts on key areas of WFP's comparative advantage, including social safety nets, emergency preparedness and climate resilience. Clearly define success and set measurable milestones for the responsible handover of capacity strengthening activities to the Government and WFP's exit from Iraq as the country continues its progress towards post-conflict, upper-middle-income status supported by significant national revenue sources.		Country office	Regional bureau	High	First quarter of 2025
1.2	Develop a theory of change that sets out plausible pathways for the building, testing and hand-over of capacities, with realistic timelines, clear vectors of change and the identification of relevant assumptions. Ensure that all capacity-building plans are clearly aligned with government priorities and needs.		Country office		High	First quarter of 2025

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1.3	Advocate targeted continuous international support for vulnerable people who are likely to fall outside social safety nets – such as undocumented people, refugees, Iraqis returning from the Syrian Arab Republic and marginalized groups (for example, Yazidis) – while national systems are strengthened or other durable solutions found.		Country office	Regional bureau Headquarters (Partnerships and Innovation Department)	High	Third quarter of 2027
2. Focus country capacity strengthening on strategic approaches for integrating cash-based transfer, resilience, social protection and emergency preparedness initiatives into government systems. Develop a model that can be scaled up in response to a future crisis and that is tailored to Iraq's transition to upper-middle-income status.		Strategic				
2.1.	Develop a clearly articulated vision of the type of social protection system that the Government is building with WFP's support, which will inform collaboration with government and other partners – including United Nations partners – on generating a broadly shared vision for social protection in Iraq.		Country office	Headquarters and regional bureaux (social protection unit) [High	Fourth quarter of 2029
2.2.	Examine WFP's comparative advantage in relation to the reform of the social protection system (including the public distribution system), strengthening and investing in the appropriate capabilities for the organization in Iraq in areas such as social protection, monitoring, communication for development (C4D) and other communications, and capacity strengthening.		Country office	Headquarters (Programme Policy and Guidance Division) and regional bureau (programme unit)	Medium	Fourth quarter of 2029
2.3.	Ensure that digital transformation is integrated into the broader reform agenda. Prioritize local solutions so as to		Country office	Headquarters (Technology Division)	High	Fourth quarter of 2029

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	develop digital assets that partners have the capacity to maintain. Build sustainability and handover plans into all digital asset programmes from the start.			regional bureau (Technology Division) headquarters (Partnerships and Innovation Department) regional bureau (partnership unit)		
2.4.	Develop a model for maintaining contingency emergency response capacity tailored to Iraq's transition to upper-middle-income status. The model should include consideration of the ways in which WFP can link its emergency response capacity to its ongoing work on social protection and emergency preparedness so as to facilitate a rapid and appropriate response in the event of a future crisis in Iraq.		Country office	Headquarters (Partnerships and Innovation Department, Emergencies Coordination Division, Programme Policy and Guidance Division)	Medium	First quarter of 2029
3. Resize and reconceptualize WFP's operations in Iraq to reflect a constrained funding environment and a development-focused future, and develop contingency plans for cases when funding falls below a minimum viable level.		Strategic				
3.1	Focus on fewer interventions in the areas of WFP's core added value – social protection, emergency preparedness and climate change – to allow staff to specialize and to demonstrate sustainable impact. Use pilot projects to test and innovate new approaches in line with, and within the framework of, identified strategies linked to a rigorous plan for taking successful approaches to scale.		Country office		High	First quarter of 2029

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
3.2	Where possible, maintain WFP's presence in the governorates, prioritizing the recruitment and retention of staff with solid development, climate and capacity strengthening expertise. Support WFP staff working in the governorates through a core support team based in Baghdad and Erbil. Implement a comprehensive engagement strategy to ensure that governorate-level pilot projects are understood at the central level and can be funded and scaled up through central ministries.		Country office		Medium	First quarter of 2029
3.3	Move away from humanitarian-focused, "one-size-fits-all" interventions and prioritization strategies. Tailor assistance to beneficiaries' needs and priorities based on an assessment of the size and length of investment needed to move people out of vulnerability, which is likely to take years. Increase investments per person and per intervention to promote sustainable change.		Country office		High	Second quarter of 2025
3.4	Strengthen the capacity of monitoring and evaluation staff in order to increase learning and accountability to donors and partners. Revise corporate monitoring indicators and guidelines with a view to developing approaches to outcome monitoring that are suitable for demonstrating the achievement of long-term development outcomes and are tailored to country offices working in transitional settings.		Country office headquarters (Analysis Planning and Performance Division)	Regional bureau (research, assessment and monitoring unit)	High	Second quarter of 2025
3.5	Identify the minimum viable funding level needed to maintain a country office in Iraq. Develop alternative delivery models in case funding falls below this level, such as the maintenance of programme teams		Regional bureau	Country office headquarters (Programme Policy and Guidance Division)	High	Second quarter of 2025

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	supported remotely by the regional bureau and headquarters or the use of cost sharing for support services.					
4. Diversify funding and ensure multi-year funding for sustainable change.		Operational				
4.1.	Continue to diversify funding, exploring innovative climate finance, multi-year development funding and partnerships with regional donors and the private sector. Advocate funding from the Government of Iraq.		Country office	Regional bureau headquarters (Partnership and Innovation Department)	High	Third quarter of 2025
4.2.	Ensure that long-term climate resilience and capacity strengthening work is underpinned by long-term funding and avoid commencing any new work unless resources are reasonably secure.		Country office	Regional bureau headquarters (Partnership and Innovation Department)	High	Third quarter of 2025
5. Leverage partnerships to ensure the coherent roll-out of development interventions over the long term, and to obtain access to specialist expertise.		Operational				
5.1.	Continue to build and strengthen partnerships with development actors such as other United Nations entities and international financial institutions so as to leverage development expertise that is not traditionally found in WFP, especially expertise related to the responsible handover of livelihood and rural development activities.		Country office	Regional bureau (partnership unit)	Medium	Second quarter of 2025
5.2.	Develop a partnership engagement strategy based on stakeholder and process mapping to ensure that all partners at the national, Kurdish Regional Authority and		Country office	Regional bureau (partnership unit)	Medium	Fourth quarter of 2025

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	governorate levels are aware of, and engage in, WFP interventions in the country.					
5.3.	Explore and strengthen partnerships with universities, civil society and communities with a view to building sustainable approaches to emergency preparedness and response, climate resilience and social protection thereby ensuring ongoing reach into vulnerable communities.		Country office	Regional bureau (partnership unit)	Medium	Third quarter of 2025
6. Embed a gender-transformative and disability-inclusive approach into all interventions going forward, particularly those related to emergency preparedness and social protection.		Strategic				
6.1.	Ensure that transformative change strategies are informed by appropriate gender, inclusion and protection analysis tailored to the cultural and religious environment so as to avoid doing harm.		Country office	Regional bureau (gender, disability inclusion and protection unit) Headquarters (gender, disability inclusion and protection unit)	High	Second quarter of 2025
6.2	Train staff and key partners at the national, Kurdish Regional Authority and governorate levels on gender, inclusion and protection matters to promote transformative approaches to programme implementation.		Country Office	Regional bureau (gender, disability inclusion and protection, and climate units)	Medium	Fourth quarter of 2025

Recommendations and sub-recommendations		Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
6.3	Develop indicators that measure transformative change and are tailored to the Iraqi context.		Country office	Headquarters (Analysis Planning and Performance Division)	Medium	Third quarter of 2025
6.4	Publicize the new accountability and feedback mechanisms to facilitate effective feedback loops that inform the management of risks related to complex change in existing social norms.		Country office	Regional bureau (gender, disability inclusion and protection, and climate units)	High	Fourth quarter of 2025

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