



WFP EVALUATION



World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

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

Context

Iraq has a population of 44.5 million. The governance of its territories is divided between the Federal Government and the Kurdish Regional Authority. Oil dominates the economy, accounting for 42 percent of Gross Domestic Product.

Water scarcity and droughts impact the livelihoods of vulnerable communities across the country, posing challenges for agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing.

Overall, food insecurity is relatively low. Despite progress made over the last few years, Iraq's population still faces numerous challenges, including limited access to basic services, governance instability, conflicts, youth unemployment, violence against women and girls and protracted displacement.

Subject and focus of the evaluation

While focusing on emergency assistance to internally displaced people (IDPs), the Transition Interim Country Strategic Plan (T-ICSP) 2018-2019 initiated a shift towards longer-term recovery and livelihood activities. The Country Strategic Plan (CSP) 2020-2024 continued the shift and incorporated crisis response interventions for IDPs and Syrian refugees under Strategic Outcome 1. Support for resilience and livelihoods was consolidated under Strategic Outcome 2. All country capacity strengthening activities, including school feeding, social protection, emergency preparedness and early warning were grouped under Strategic Outcome 3.

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 over 2.3 million beneficiaries in September 2023. By October 2023, 54 percent of the needs-based plan had been funded.

Objectives and users of the evaluation

The evaluation was commissioned by the WFP Office of Evaluation (OEV) to provide evidence for accountability and learning to inform the design of the next CSP for Iraq. The evaluation covered all WFP activities implemented between

2017 and October 2023, exploring WFP's strategic positioning and relevance, WFP's effectiveness in contributing to the strategic outcomes, the efficiency of the implementation and the factors explaining WFP's performance.

The main intended users of the evaluation are WFP (country office, regional bureau and headquarters), the WFP Executive Board, Government of Iraq, donors, members of the United Nations country team, cooperating partners and beneficiaries.

Key evaluation findings

Relevance and strategic positioning

WFP's programmatic objectives were closely aligned with national and regional priorities as well as with UN Country Team priorities. WFP leveraged its comparative advantage in emergency response, food security and digitisation, as well as its operational presence at the community level to build strategic partnerships with a broad range of partners. However, the evaluation found that other actors in Iraq had stronger expertise in rural development and livelihoods.

Contribution to CSP outcomes in Iraq

WFP's **unconditional food assistance** provided an important buffer against shocks for vulnerable IDPs and refugees. However, improvements in food security have partially been offset over time by ongoing shocks and soaring food prices.

WFP's **livelihood and climate adaptation interventions** contributed to improved social cohesion among IDPs, returnees and Iraqi residents through the reestablishment of agricultural activities and the provision of income generation and skills development opportunities. However, linkages to value chains and market opportunities are still limited, and the short duration and limited tailoring of livelihood support risks its sustainability.

Since 2018, WFP successfully implemented the **school feeding programme**. Despite challenges and delays, the programme was successfully handed over to the

August 2024

government at the start of the 2023-2024 school year. Capacity strengthening activities provided to the government in **emergency preparedness** did not progress as expected because of limited funding and turnover within WFP and national ministries.

WFP support to the Iraq **public distribution system and social safety net reform** went beyond modernization and digitalization of systems. WFP and partners were able to support the Government of Iraq to make important steps towards the social protection reform, addressing issues of poor targeting, registration, transparency and effective management of resources.

Under the (T-ICSP), WFP contributed to the effective **coordination of humanitarian support** in Iraq. The handover to the Government was not successful, though this largely related to gaps in Government and United Nations leadership that were beyond WFP's control.

WFP made good progress in mainstreaming equality between men and women, disability inclusion and humanitarian principles across its programmes and systems. However, beneficiaries were not always aware of the availability and potential use of **community feedback mechanisms**.

Efficient use of resources

Coverage was appropriate to reach the most vulnerable IDPs, returnees and host community members, and resilience and livelihoods interventions were implemented in areas of food insecurity and displacement.

The evaluation found a positive evolution in the cost-efficiency of WFP Iraq's activities, with cost savings deriving from the switch in the implementation approach, from cooperating partners to direct implementation.

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.

Factors explaining WFP performance

WFP Iraq's ability to raise sufficient resources varied significantly across years and areas of interventions. Since 2022, predictability and flexibility of funding has declined, while significant efforts were made to diversify the donor base.

The ability to generate and disseminate evidence was a key enabling factor in ensuring the relevance and adaptiveness of WFP's strategy.

Direct implementation allowed WFP to build a diverse network of partnerships across Government, the United Nations, universities, the private sector and local communities.

WFP made some progress in bringing on new skills for development programming, with many staff reskilling on the run and covering a diverse portfolio of projects over a large geographic area.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall Assessment

Despite funding and capacity challenges, WFP Iraq successfully managed major transitions, including a shift in the context from humanitarian to development and an operational shift to make the most of limited funding through direct implementation.

WFP piloted new programmes and capacity initiatives, but a lack of collective vision on Iraq's social protection system combined with the challenges in demonstrating results, undermined sustainability.

Further work is needed to clarify WFP's comparative advantage and its contributions to Iraq's emergency preparedness and social protection systems as the country continues to progress to a middle income development context, while WFP continues assisting highly vulnerable populations who may fall outside of Government established safety net systems.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Focus on supporting capacity for climate resilience, emergency preparedness and response and social safety nets, with clear milestones to transition

Recommendation 2. Integrate cash-based transfers, resilience, social protection and emergency preparedness into Government systems

Recommendation 3. Adjust the size of WFP operations for a low funding profile and develop contingency plans if funding falls below a minimum viable level

Recommendation 4. Diversify funding and ensure multi-year funding for sustainable change

Recommendation 5. Leverage partnerships to ensure the coherent roll out of development interventions and to access niche expertise

Recommendation 6. Embed a gender transformative and disability-inclusive approach into all interventions