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Evaluation Reports

For consideration

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Summary Evaluation Report – Iraq Country Portfolio (2010–2015)

Executive Summary

This country portfolio evaluation covered WFP's portfolio of seven operations in Iraq from 2010 to 2015, and the 2010–2014 country strategy. It assessed WFP's alignment and strategic positioning; factors and quality of strategic decision-making; and the performance and results of the portfolio as a whole.

Iraq is an upper-middle-income country, ranking 121st of 188 countries in the 2015 Human Development Index. However, the sharp drop in global oil prices in 2015 and the ongoing security crisis have had significant repercussions on the national economy and food security. In 2014, an estimated 22.5 percent of Iraq's 35.87 million inhabitants were living below the poverty line.

During the evaluation period, national unity and stability failed to materialize and political tensions and insecurity prevailed. By the end of 2015, 3.2 million people were displaced, with 3 million more living in areas controlled by the terrorist organization known as Daesh. The 2016 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan indicated that nearly one-third of Iraq's population – 10 million people – required humanitarian assistance, of whom 2.5 million required food assistance.

Formulated during a period of peace, the country strategy was appropriately designed to begin the shift in WFP's role from "implementer" to "enabler" through development support to government authorities in strengthening national social protection systems, including reform of the Public Distribution System. The strategy was both relevant to Iraq's humanitarian and development needs at the time and coherent with the Government's national objectives and policies.

With the onset of the recent crisis, and dwindling donor support for development initiatives in Iraq, the country strategy became somewhat redundant. WFP successfully realigned the portfolio to respond to humanitarian needs as part of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Level 3 system-wide emergency response.

The evaluation found a significant gap in the evidence base used to inform decisions on WFP support. To its credit, the country office took the major strategic decisions necessary for scaling up to a Level 3

In line with the Evaluation Policy (2016–2021) (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1), to respect the integrity and independence of evaluation findings some language contained in this report may not be standard WFP terminology; please direct any requests for clarification to the WFP Director of Evaluation.

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emergency response, despite the limited reliable and up-to-date evidence. Targeting of a mobile population, especially an urban one, was a challenge. Considerable staffing shortages, including in core senior positions, high staff turnover and deployment delays during the emergency response had impacts on operational efficiency and contributed to a lack of consistency in approaches and decision-making.

The evaluation found that programme performance was mixed. WFP used its comparative advantage and substantial logistics expertise to support a significant number of internally displaced persons across a broad geographical area, despite access constraints and security issues. It positioned itself strategically alongside its United Nations partners, both responding to the immediate humanitarian needs and introducing more flexible support modalities. WFP was widely appreciated for its recent use of cash-based transfers to support internally displaced persons in a cost-efficient manner and identified opportunities to consolidate its strong position in this sector.

Social safety net activities were less successful, being placed on hold or falling short of targets. This, together with a shortage of funding and lack of government ownership of the necessary reform agenda, contributed to the early curtailment of WFP's capacity development activities.

The evaluation identifies opportunities and challenges and makes seven recommendations focusing on a new country strategy that acknowledges both the protracted nature of the conflict in Iraq and the opportunity for longer-term support for government-led programmes, and is informed by a solid evidence base with improved targeting and programme design.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of “Summary Evaluation Report – Iraq Country Portfolio (2010–2015)” (WFP/EB.2/2016/6-B/Rev.1) and the management response in WFP/EB.2/2016/6-B/Add.1, and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

Introduction

1. This country portfolio evaluation (CPE) covered the WFP Iraq country strategy (CS) 2010–2014 and WFP activities for 2010–2015. The Iraq component of the regional emergency operation (EMOP) 200433 covering Syrian refugees was evaluated in 2015¹ and so was not within the scope of this evaluation.
2. As in all CPEs, the evaluation assessed: i) the alignment and strategic positioning of WFP's country strategy and portfolio; ii) factors and quality of strategic decision-making; and iii) the performance and results of the WFP portfolio. An independent external team undertook the evaluation – in which 305 stakeholders participated² – using mixed methods: review of secondary data and literature;³ review of qualitative and quantitative primary data; and site visits in March and April 2016, including focus group discussions with women and men beneficiaries. Constraints included restricted access to some operational areas and limited institutional memory resulting from staff turnover, which was mitigated by conducting two online surveys.

Context

3. Iraq is classified as an upper-middle-income country,⁴ ranking 121st of 188 countries in the 2015 Human Development Index. However, the sharp drop in global oil prices in 2015 and the ongoing security crisis have had significant repercussions on the national economy and food security. The 2015 Global Hunger Index rated the situation in Iraq as “serious”, ranking the country 58th of 104. Already in 2014, an estimated 22.5 percent of the 35.87 million inhabitants were living below the poverty line.
4. The 2008 comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis (CFSVA) estimated that 930,000 people were food-insecure, with an additional 9.4 percent of the population – 2.8 million people – at risk of food insecurity and dependent on food rations from the Government's Public Distribution System (PDS). Although no comprehensive survey has been conducted since then, a 2015 needs assessment showed that 22 percent of displaced households living in host communities were unable to meet their basic needs.⁵
5. Despite the gradual withdrawal of United States armed forces between 2009 and 2011, national unity and stability failed to materialize. During the evaluation period, political tensions and insecurity prevailed. The presence and impact of the terrorist organization known as Daesh increased, being reversed only recently. A gradual escalation of violence peaked in 2014, causing massive displacements and triggering an abrupt shift in international support to Iraq, from development to humanitarian assistance (Figure 1). Control of large parts of Iraq by Daesh and armed opposition groups displaced 3.2 million people by the end of 2015 with 3 million more people living in Daesh-controlled areas. The 2016 Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan indicated that nearly one-third of Iraq's population – 10 million people – required humanitarian assistance, of whom 2.5 million people required food assistance.⁶

¹ WFP. 2015. Evaluation of WFP's Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis (2011–2014) with Summary Evaluation Report WFP/EB.A/2015/7-C.

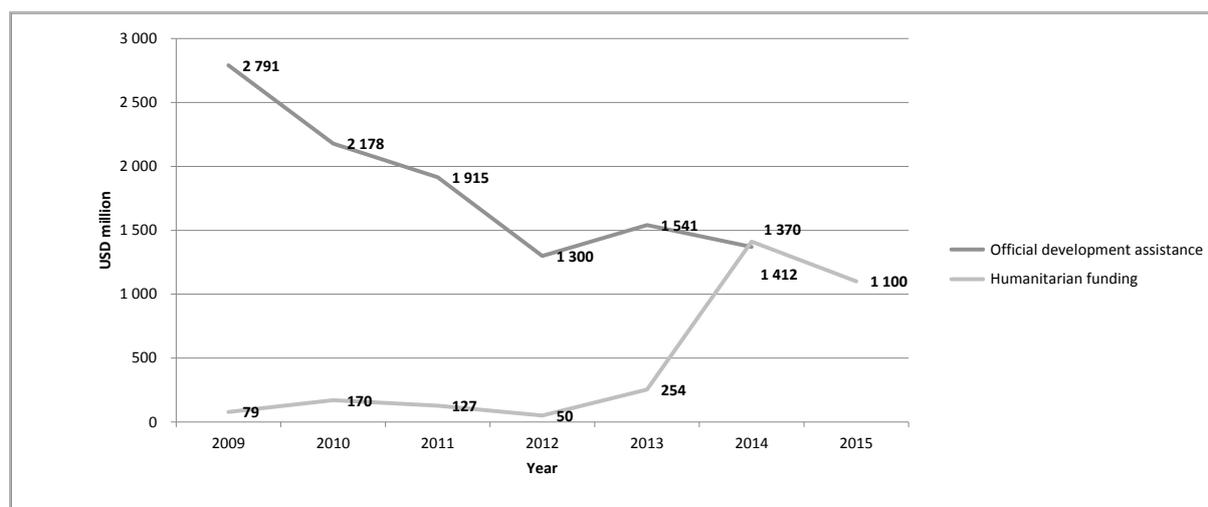
² Of whom 179 were consulted in focus group discussions.

³ Including a brief on the Internal Audit of WFP Operations in Iraq AR/16/08 June 2016.

⁴ <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD>

⁵ REACH Initiative. 2015. Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Outside Camps in Iraq.

⁶ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2016. Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan.

Figure 1: International assistance to Iraq, 2010–2015

No data available for official development assistance in 2014/15.

Sources: <https://fts.unocha.org/> <http://data.worldbank.org/>

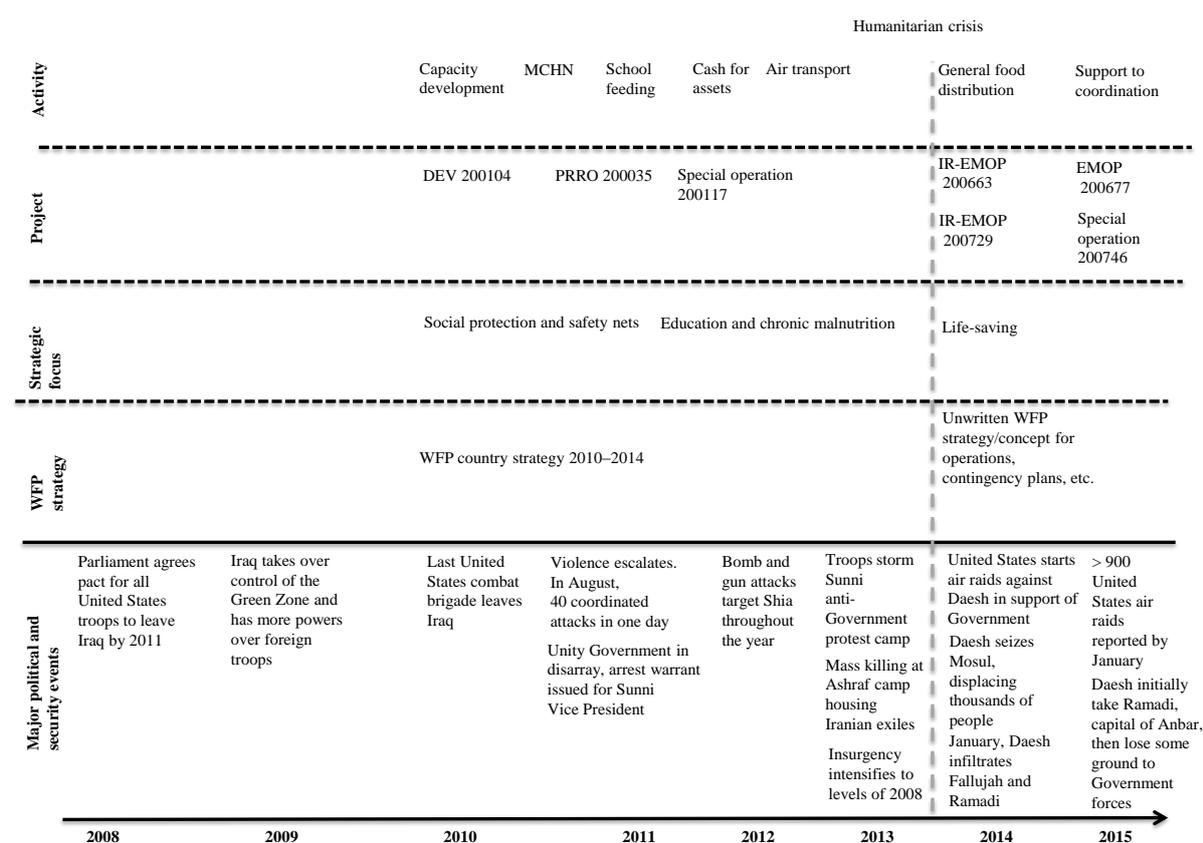
6. In August 2014, given the scale of the humanitarian situation and its links to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee activated a Level 3 system-wide emergency response – the highest-level – in Iraq to scale up aid.⁷
7. Although Iraqi government forces have liberated some areas formerly held by Daesh, and displaced people have been able to return to certain areas, many people are returning to damaged or destroyed homes and potentially booby-trapped and mined areas with few services. Protection issues are paramount as parties to the conflict regularly violate human rights and international humanitarian law. Indiscriminate bombing, mass executions, abduction, rape, looting and expulsion are common in hard-hit areas, and sectarian violence threatens to tear communities apart.⁶
8. Because of the current conflict, economic stagnation and mass displacements, the quality of education in Iraq has deteriorated significantly.⁶ Gender disparity has been identified as one of the major challenges.

WFP Strategy and Portfolio

9. WFP has been present in Iraq since 1964. Between 2010 and 2015, the WFP portfolio in Iraq consisted of seven operations with a total budget of more than USD 375 million, which underwent a major shift in 2014, as illustrated in Figure 2. Between 2010 and 2015 total portfolio expenditure was approximately USD 354 million, of which most – USD 291 million – was spent on emergency operations. Emergency and relief/recovery operations received 74 and 78 percent respectively of their planned budget requirements, while the development project received only 12 percent. Humanitarian response plans provided the common framework for humanitarian response, with more than 33 percent of total funding for these plans in 2015 going to WFP and the clusters it leads.⁸

⁷ The emergency operation in Iraq was categorized as a WFP Level 3 emergency response on 11 August 2014, extended until 28 February 2017.

⁸ The global food security, logistics and emergency telecommunications clusters.

Figure 2: WFP Iraq country portfolio, 2010–2015

DEV = development project; IR-EMOP = immediate-response EMOP; MCHN = mother-and-child health and nutrition; PRRO = protracted relief and recovery operation; SO = special operation.

Source: Evaluation team.

10. Designed during a period of peace, the country strategy (2010–2014) was guided by the principle that, as Iraq was a relatively prosperous middle-income country, WFP's role should be to support the authorities in achieving more effective and transparent use of their resources for solutions to food insecurity. WFP's country office in Iraq initially focused its efforts on development support through two projects⁹ with financial support from the Government of Iraq. The DEV focused on strengthening national social protection systems through reform of the PDS and diversification of social safety nets linked to the productive sector. The long-standing relationship between the PDS and WFP goes back to the "Oil for Food" programme, established by the United Nations in 1995.
11. The PRRO began simultaneously with the DEV in April 2010, and is currently awaiting approval for an extension until December 2016.¹⁰ The main component – school feeding – was suspended in January 2014¹¹ owing to an unresolved dispute over imported high-energy biscuits, which led to the subsequent freezing of government funding transferred to WFP in 2013 to finance a second round of school feeding.¹² Food-assistance-for-assets activities, via cash-based transfers (CBTs), were implemented during 2011–2013, while MCHN activities targeted children aged 6–59 months and pregnant and lactating women.

⁹ DEV 200104 "Capacity Development to Reform the Public Distribution System (PDS) and Strengthen Social Safety Nets for Vulnerable Groups in Iraq" and PRRO 200035 "Support for Vulnerable Groups".

¹⁰ PRRO 200035 was originally planned to cover the two years from April 2010 to March 2012 but has had nine budget revisions. On 19 August 2015 a concept note was endorsed for DEV 200855 to continue WFP's development activities currently implemented through the PRRO.

¹¹ School feeding continued in some locations using food commodities that were carried over from 2013.

¹² This issue was subject to an investigation by the WFP Office of Inspections and Investigations (report not available to the evaluation team) and an internal audit.

12. By 2014, the escalating conflict and displacement triggered the launch of two IR-EMOPs,¹³ later folded into a single operation.¹⁴ Two special operations were also launched to cover the work of the WFP-led logistics and emergency telecommunications clusters.
13. Emergency operations were scaled up to respond to escalating needs, from an initial 240,000 displaced people to 2.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps and host communities, and to populations in accessible conflict zones. Life-saving emergency assistance was distributed in the form of family food parcels (FFPs), and immediate-response rations of ready-to-eat food commodities for displaced people on the move. Subsequently, whenever appropriate, commodity vouchers were distributed for the purchase of food commodities at specified retail outlets.

Evaluation Findings

Alignment and strategic positioning

14. The CS was appropriately designed to begin the shift in WFP's role, towards "enabling" rather than "implementing" (paragraph 10). However, the Government's PDS system was far from fully functional, its school feeding programmes lacked effectiveness, and the latest CFSVA (2008) had identified pockets of food insecurity. The CS was relevant to Iraq's humanitarian and development needs at the time and was also coherent with the Government's national objectives and policies.
15. The evaluation also found that the CS was well-aligned with the WFP Strategic Plan 2008–2013, specifically addressing Strategic Objectives 3, 4 and 5;¹⁵ it remained relevant to the subsequent WFP Strategic Plan 2014–2017, Strategic Objectives 1, 2 and 4.
16. The CS was based on analysis from the 2008 CFSVA, national development policies, and consultations with government representatives from Baghdad and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.
17. Overall, the country office worked in close coherence with a number of government ministries, even though the activities themselves fell short of expectations. In recent years, the PDS, run by the Ministry of Trade, has come under national and international scrutiny, and its need of reform has been accepted, in principle, in government circles. The use of a DEV to improve logistics capacity and the internal efficiency of the PDS was therefore well aligned with official objectives, but – in the absence of the necessary government buy-in – failure was almost inevitable.
18. The PDS still lacks efficiency and transparency in its functioning, and the need for national social protection and safety net programmes remains vital. WFP's recent use of CBTs to support IDPs has been well received by all levels of the Government; responding stakeholders consistently agreed that wherever possible, this modality is the best way forward.
19. With the onset of Daesh-related insecurity, WFP successfully realigned the portfolio to respond to humanitarian needs and increased its engagement with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, responsible for assisting IDPs.
20. In a difficult operating environment, with some United Nations agencies reporting that the United Nations Country Team was not functioning at its maximum potential, WFP managed to organize its own strategic alignments to enable it to function. Through the well-respected Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), WFP teamed up with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and, more recently, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to provide three-day immediate-response rations to recently displaced people. WFP is also working well with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on promoting the adoption of a cash-based response, where appropriate. WFP's recent development of a card for

¹³ IR-EMOP 200663 "Emergency Food Assistance for IDPs in Iraq as a Result of the Fighting in Fallujah and Ramadi"; IR-EMOP 200729 "Emergency Food Assistance for IDPs in Iraq as a Result of the Fighting in Mosul City, Ninewa Governorate".

¹⁴ EMOP 200677 "Emergency Assistance to Populations Affected by the Al-Anbar Crisis".

¹⁵ Strategic Objective 3 – Restore and rebuild lives and livelihoods in post-conflict, post-disaster or transition situations; Strategic Objective 4 – Reduce chronic hunger and undernutrition; and Strategic Objective 5 – Strengthen the capacities of countries to reduce hunger, including through hand-over strategies and local purchase.

the System for Cash Operations (SCOPE), through which transfers from multiple organizations can be made, is an important step in this direction, in line with beneficiary preferences and likely to prove more cost-efficient and flexible.

Driving factors and quality of strategic decision-making

21. With the onset of the recent crisis, and dwindling donor support for development initiatives in Iraq, the CS became somewhat redundant. The country office redirected its focus appropriately, towards emergency operations, making the best use of WFP's comparative advantage in Iraq to meet short-term humanitarian needs. As an organization with proven logistical capabilities, WFP's delivery of food supplies on a large scale across a wide geographical area falls well within its mandate and corporate expertise. Adding to this expertise a network of local and international cooperating partners, and utilizing strategically provisioned warehouses to reach areas to which WFP staff and vehicles had no access improved WFP's coverage considerably.
22. The evaluation found a significant gap in the evidence base used to inform decisions on WFP support: since the start of major displacements in late 2014, neither a comprehensive assessment of national vulnerability nor an in-depth food security or household economic survey of displaced people has been conducted. The gap of eight years between the last CFSVA and the one currently under preparation in conjunction with the Ministry of Health is considered too long, even if understandable given the security constraints and existing government capacity.¹⁶ It would have been expected that at some point, the global Food Security Cluster, led by WFP, would have undertaken an emergency food security assessment.
23. Targeting of a mobile population, especially an urban one, was a challenge. Discontent with the targeting approach adopted by WFP was found among government and cooperating partners. Initially, blanket food assistance was provided based on status, i.e. to all IDPs holding PDS cards. However, in 2015, demographic targeting criteria¹⁷ based on localized assessments, such as a rapid food security assessment conducted by the REACH Initiative,¹⁸ were applied to select the IDPs who were eligible for WFP assistance. Although the approach was refined over time, it did not account for socio-economic differences within IDP communities, cultural aspects regarding women's ability to work outside the household, or regional differences within Iraq itself. While recognizing the challenges, the evaluation considered that a needs-based targeting approach should have been initiated earlier.
24. To its credit, the country office took the necessary major strategic decisions – despite the limited reliable and up-to-date evidence – when scaling up rapidly from relatively small-scale operations to respond to a Level 3 emergency. Inputs were gathered from a range of major stakeholders, and technical advice from Headquarters on targeting was sought and followed. Nevertheless, these processes could have been improved with greater involvement, and therefore ownership, of partners in the decisions being made.

¹⁶ A UNICEF multiple-indicator cluster survey was planned for mid-2014 but the Central Statistics Office reportedly did not have sufficient capacity to undertake a CFSVA at the same time.

¹⁷ Initial eligibility criteria were holders of PDS cards, and households: with no adults of working age – 18–60 years; with one or more mentally or physically handicapped members; headed by a woman, especially a widow; and/or with limited or no access to employment.

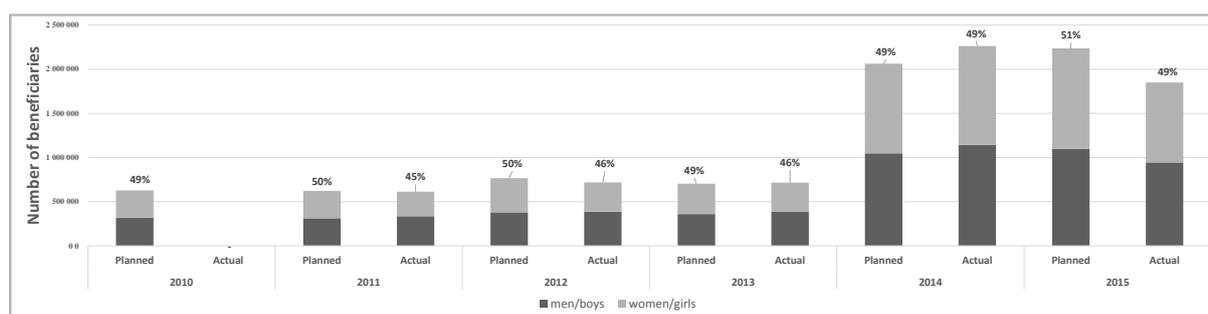
¹⁸ REACH initiative. July 2015. Rapid Food Security Assessment of IDPs and Host Communities – Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

25. Considerable staffing shortages, including in core senior positions,¹⁹ high staff turnover and delays in deployment during the emergency response had impacts on operational efficiency and contributed to a lack of consistency in approaches and decision-making. Of particular importance, a lack of essential staff in vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) positions limited the country office's analytical and monitoring capacity and support to evidence-based decision-making. Third-party monitoring was used as a supplement, especially but not exclusively in inaccessible areas. However, reporting was unsatisfactory in terms of regularity and quality and could not be used to inform programme decisions.²⁰

Portfolio performance and results

26. The performance and results of the portfolio were assessed mainly against output data covering the period 2012–2015, because of inconsistencies and gaps in outcome data, lack of baselines for emergency operations, and an overall lack of reliable data for 2010–2012. Programme performance was mixed (Figure 3). In the early part of the evaluation period, WFP and its partners assisted the Iraqi population in all the governorates with the greatest needs, albeit to a lesser extent than originally planned, because of operational challenges and funding shortfalls.
27. *Emergency operations* generally delivered higher outputs than anticipated, despite constraints in access, and security issues. Owing to delays in setting up an operational system, CBT coverage was lower than planned, reaching 66 percent of planned beneficiaries. In contrast, the coverage of cash-for-work activities in the PRRO exceeded plans, at 118 percent.
28. Towards the end of 2015, WFP began a six-month cash transfer pilot project for 11,000 IDPs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Following the pilot, key informant interviews with all actors and beneficiaries confirmed that cash would be the preferred modality for future responses in Iraq, rather than vouchers or in-kind food distributions.
29. The tonnage of commodities distributed was initially lower than planned, owing to access constraints. This shortfall was rectified in 2015, when special nutritional products for children were added to RRM rations, pushing distributions to exceed planned targets by 40 percent, but reaching fewer beneficiaries.

Figure 3: Total planned versus actual beneficiaries, Iraq portfolio 2010–2015



Sources: 2010–2015 Standard Project Reports (SPRs).

30. As the first line of response for displaced populations on the move, the RRM was highly valued by a broad range of stakeholders for its immediate impact. WFP coordinated its food response with UNICEF, which provided water and hygiene kits, while UNFPA started to provide dignity kits towards the end of the evaluation period.²¹ The distribution of family food parcels (FFPs) was planned to complement the PDS ration. In general, focus group discussions with beneficiaries reported satisfaction with the FFP ration, although there were regular complaints about the quality/type of rice. Third-party monitoring reported, and evaluation interviews with

¹⁹ For example, in Emergency Coordinator, Deputy Country Director, Head of Programme, VAM and M&E positions.

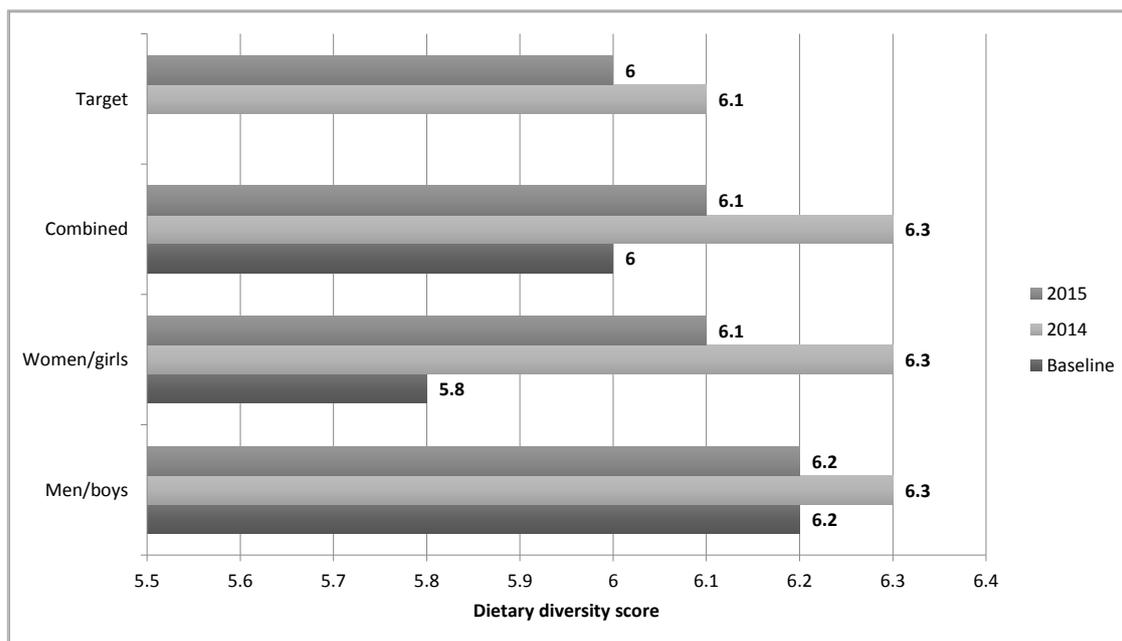
²⁰ It is too early to assess whether investments in the training of third-party monitoring vendors by the country office's M&E officer – an international staff member – will be effective.

²¹ <http://www.save-iraq.info/response-plan/rapid-response-mechanism/>

partners and beneficiaries confirmed, that the distribution process was good and waiting times were acceptable. Beneficiaries particularly appreciated the regularity of the food assistance compared with one-off distributions from other organizations.

31. In 2014 and 2015, IDP dietary diversity scores exceeded targets (Figure 4). Data collected on coping strategies suggested that WFP beneficiaries were less likely to use negative coping strategies,²² indicating – to some extent – the effectiveness of food assistance to IDPs. The percentage of households with poor food consumption scores remained low and within target levels, although this apparently positive outcome masked discrepancies between female- and male-headed households and should also be treated with caution because baseline and monitoring data were not comparable.²³

Figure 4: IDPs' dietary diversity scores, 2014–2015



Sources: 2014 and 2015 SPRs for EMOP 200677.

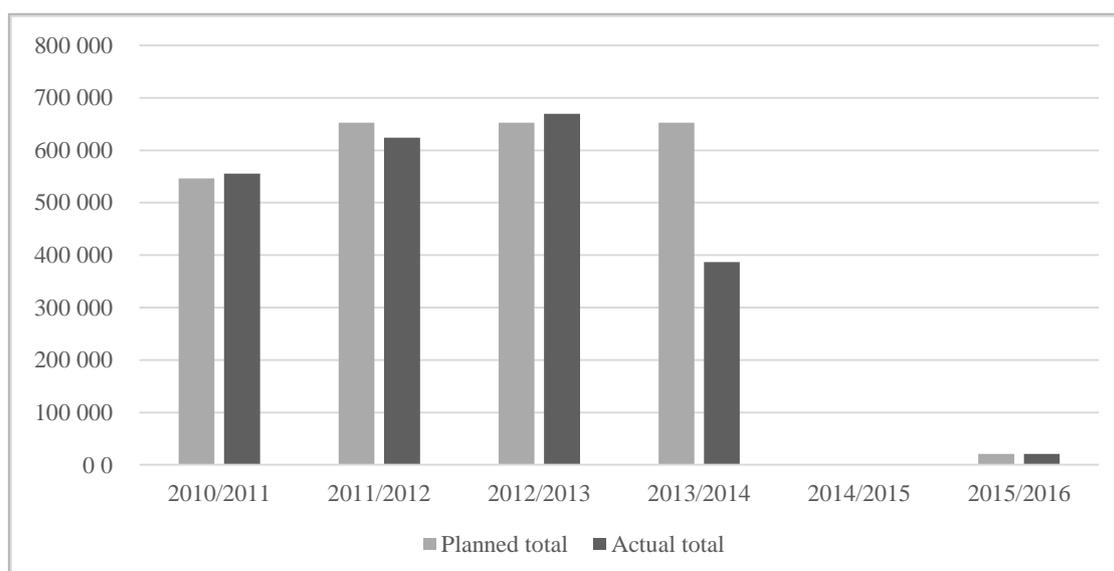
32. *MCHN activities* did not reach expected output or outcome targets. Recovery rates of 70 percent in 2012 and 69 percent in 2013, and default rates of 29 percent in 2012 and 31 percent in 2013 for the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition did not meet Sphere targets.²⁴ Reasons identified for high default rates included poor awareness among mothers and caregivers, difficulty in reaching health centres from remote rural areas, and poor acceptance of Plumpy – the food provided – by children.
33. *School feeding* activities were on track until their suspension in 2014, as shown in Figure 5. In 2011/2012, the increase in school enrolments was higher in WFP-assisted districts than at the national level,²⁵ and anecdotal information collected from teachers during field visits stressed the improved attention and performance of children associated with the consumption of high-energy biscuits. The first phase of a pilot project in early 2015 reached more than 20,000 primary school students in Thi-Qar governorate. Using a locally purchased food basket, the project showed some initial positive effects on school attendance and was well-appreciated by students, parents and the local administration.

²² 2014 SPR for EMOP 200677.

²³ These data cover recipients of FFPs and vouchers.

²⁴ Sphere targets are > 75 percent recovery and < 15 percent default.

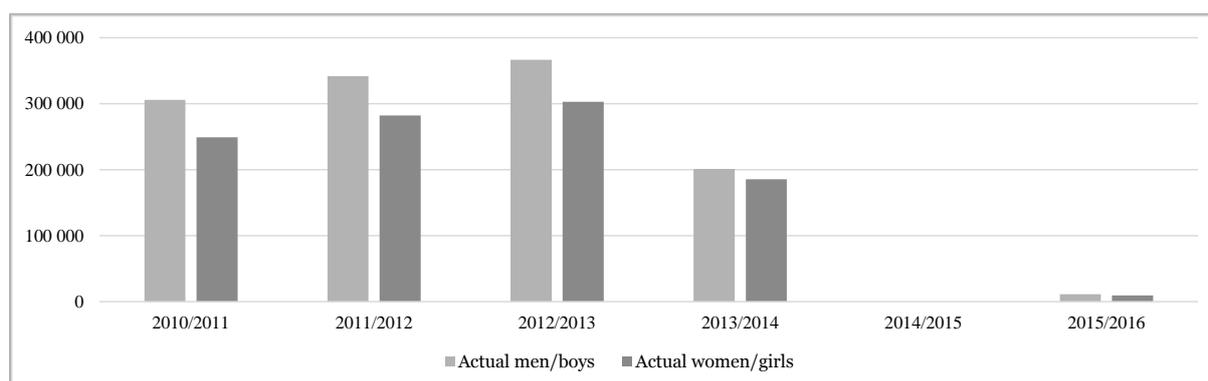
²⁵ 2011/2012 SPRs.

Figure 5: Actual versus planned school feeding beneficiaries, 2010–2015

Sources: SPRs for PRRO 200035.

34. Weak institutional memory and high staff turnover limited the evaluation's ability to assess the efficiency of technical assistance provided through the school feeding programme. However, it was clear that this assistance did not achieve the intended results. Despite many efforts and duly implemented capacity development activities, there was no appropriation of a nationally owned programme by the Ministry of Education, nor was a hand-over strategy developed.
35. Successful *capacity development* requires full government commitment to reform, a detailed work plan, donor support, and the availability of experienced staff with a range of expertise. Interviews with key stakeholders confirmed that none of these were in place for the PDS reform. It is therefore not surprising that the CS objectives, and related efforts to improve the efficiency of supply chain management through training and technology transfer, proved unrealistic and ineffective.
36. In September 2013, on behalf of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, WFP negotiated USD 1.8 million from the Government as a co-financing mechanism to strengthen the authorities' ability to target vulnerable groups better. No outcomes were reported. The Ministry expressed strong interest in the resumption of capacity development activities, particularly in vulnerability analysis to improve the targeting of beneficiaries for vocational training activities. This could be a good opportunity for WFP collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other United Nations agencies with this specific expertise.
37. *Gender*. Earlier programme design, implementation and advocacy lacked gender analysis and failed to address gender gaps, for example, in the attendance of girls in the school feeding programme (Figure 6). From January 2015, however, there was greater focus on gender, with the routing of all documentation through the communication with communities and gender officer²⁶ to ensure that gender, accountability and protection considerations were taken into account.

²⁶ In January 2015 the communication with communities officer started working with beneficiaries to understand information gaps and enhance communication with beneficiaries.

Figure 6: Gender disparity among school feeding beneficiaries, 2010–2015

Sources: 2011–2015 SPRs for PRRO 200035.

38. *Efficiency.* During the period covered by this CPE, the country office procured internationally a total of 191,400 mt²⁷ of food commodities and distributed CBTs for a total value of USD 80,871,893. A high degree of expertise was utilized to achieve a good geographical spread of commodity suppliers, and flexibility in the pricing of commodities, balancing delivery terms – delivery at place – and types of commodity with the need to respond in a timely and efficient manner to demands from the field. However, complaints were received from beneficiaries regarding the distribution of items that had passed their sell-by dates, notably in the immediate-response rations.
39. The overall net cost per ton of food commodities fluctuated between approximately USD 800 and USD 1,000.²⁸ These figures are 30–40 percent above WFP’s corporate average. The large share of more expensive FFPs and immediate-response rations – 82 percent of total tonnage – and the delivery at place trade terms explain the mark up, which the evaluation team found to be justified: without these terms, commodities would not have been deliverable.
40. The decision to switch from pre-packed food parcels for the FFP to a break-bulk formula²⁹ was a positive move, entailing a 15 percent saving. Given the volatile situation prevailing in Iraq from mid-2014, the application of delivery at place trade terms was also prudent, leaving responsibility for delivery of the food consignments with the supplier. The total distribution costs for EMOP 200677 were USD 209.52/mt, close to the WFP corporate average.
41. CBTs proved to be more cost-efficient than food (Table 1). The direct operational costs of distributing a net value of USD 100 of CBTs were between three and seven times lower than the costs of distributing an equal net value of food. CBT distribution costs for EMOP 200677 showed a saving of almost 31 percent – from USD 11.55 to USD 7.84 – compared with similar costs under PRRO 200035. This reduction reflected measures taken by the country office to control costs.

²⁷ Tonnage extracted from the procurement returns recorded by OPS at WFP’s Rome Headquarters. This figure includes consignments on order but not yet delivered, and consignments afloat or in transit, and may therefore differ from the distributed tonnages reported in SPRs.

²⁸ Excluding IR-EMOP 200667, for which only a very small tonnage – 550 mt – was activated, the food cost per ton varied between USD 800 and USD 900 according to WFP procurement extracts.

²⁹ Break-bulk formula refers to the packaging of food in small, separable units.

TABLE 1: COSTING BY OPERATION, 2010–2015				
	PRRO 200035	IR- EMOP 200663	EMOP 200677	IR- EMOP 200729
Food commodities distributed (<i>mt</i>)	13 570	756	151 609	550
Total food cost (<i>USD</i>)	10 780 639	579 965	129 745 028	549 319
Food cost per ton (<i>USD</i>)	794	767	856	999
Total operational cost excluding food cost (<i>USD</i>)	8 428 442	222 062	31 796 361	362 443
Total direct cost per USD 100 net value of food distributed (<i>USD</i>)	78.19	38.29	24.51	65.98
Net value of CBTs distributed (<i>USD</i>)	8 931 430		71 773 978	
Bank and distribution costs (<i>USD</i>)	1 031 270		5 622 499	
Total direct cost per USD 100 net value of CBTs distributed (<i>USD</i>)	11.55		7.84	

Source: Analysis of WFP procurement and COMPAS extracts – SPRs and financial information supplied by WFP Iraq country office.

42. *Humanitarian principles.* WFP operated in accordance with its commitments to the humanitarian principles in providing emergency assistance to all displaced people, irrespective of race, religion or ethnicity. However, reported concerns about unequal access to new PDS cards for an unknown number of IDPs from certain minority groups warrant stronger attention from WFP to ensure that humanitarian principles are upheld. Efforts were made to ensure the safety of beneficiaries when collecting WFP assistance. Operations were implemented in cooperation with government counterparts in Baghdad and the authorities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, while maintaining operational independence, sometimes implementing changes – such as the recent targeting exercise – without the Government’s full agreement. However, access to certain occupied areas was prohibited to humanitarian agencies and their local partners.

Conclusions

43. Overall, WFP interventions during the evaluation period were well aligned with emergency humanitarian needs, and the policies and objectives of the Government of Iraq and donors in addressing ongoing social safety net and development needs. WFP used its comparative advantage and large logistics expertise to support a significant number of IDPs across a broad geographical area. It positioned itself strategically alongside its United Nations counterparts, both responding to immediate humanitarian needs and promoting and introducing more flexible support modalities.
44. Safety net activities were less successful, being placed on hold or falling short of targets. Notably, the suspension of school feeding activities had a negative effect on programme results, and on WFP’s organizational reputation, among both the Government of Iraq and other operational stakeholders. The shift in modality from in-kind support towards cash-based interventions was appreciated by the Government and the United Nations agencies that WFP partnered. Further advances with the SCOPE credit card system need to be pursued to consolidate WFP’s strong position in the cash-based assistance sector.
45. The strategic shift from capacity development activities that were no longer feasible towards Level 3 emergency interventions required that recent decision-making become more operational. In this respect, the country office showed itself to be both flexible and solution-focused. Scaling up from a relatively small country operation to respond to a complex Level 3 humanitarian crisis was not easy. Issues were raised regarding the demographically based targeting process, and the inability to follow up on short-term deployments by appointing long-term staff of the appropriate calibre and experience in a timely manner.

46. Shortage of funding, lack of government ownership of the necessary reform agenda, and suspension of school feeding all contributed to the early curtailment of WFP's capacity development activities, leaving the 2010–2014 CS somewhat redundant. As usual in emergencies, decreasing levels of available funding negatively affected the amount of support provided to affected people. The 2016 CFSVA and the suggested WFP beneficiary assessment should provide a clearer basis for future interventions and help to satisfy donor requirements.

Recommendations

47. **Recommendation 1:** With support from the regional bureau, the country office should start preparing the next CS before the end of 2016. The strategy should acknowledge the protracted nature of the conflict in Iraq and predict displacements over the next three years. It should incorporate a mid-term review process to track progress and ensure relevancy. The following should be included:
- i) a package of activities that includes continuation of WFP's ongoing support to IDPs and emergency life-saving activities – immediate-response rations – and continued management of the WFP-led clusters;
 - ii) reoriented capacity development interventions for targeted safety net programmes in food-insecure areas. Activities should be coordinated with those of other major actors, with a new emphasis on vocational training and cash transfer modalities, through the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The possible regeneration of school feeding and MCHN programmes should be considered, based on the adjustments recommended below;
 - iii) WFP support that is based on national and localized partnerships with government agencies, cooperating partners and United Nations agencies, and initiated only when a robust resource mobilization strategy is in place;
 - iv) a formal hand-over/exit strategy indicating timelines for the transfer of responsibilities in all sectors, including IDP food assistance and long-term social safety net programmes and incorporating an assessment of the constraints and potential benefits of PDS reform for national food security. Any future initiatives need to be funded by the Government with WFP providing enabling support; and
 - v) thorough integration of gender considerations into all programmes through comprehensive gender analysis. For example, gender disparity in terms of girls' attendance at primary school, should be targeted and addressed in any future school feeding interventions, possibly through a combination of in-school feeding support and conditional family take-home rations for girls.
48. **Recommendation 2:** In addition to the planned CFSVA, the country office should undertake, prior to the end of 2016, a detailed gender-disaggregated assessment of beneficiary livelihoods, food security, nutrition and economic status, which will ensure that support goes to the right beneficiaries, and provide:
- i) revised targeting criteria to be incorporated into new programme design, replacing the current IDP targeting criteria; and
 - ii) a basis – when combined with the upcoming 2016 CFSVA – for future evidence-based programming and improved decision-making regarding targeting.
49. **Recommendation 3:** As a matter of utmost urgency, WFP Headquarters needs to resolve issues preventing the resumption of school feeding activities that are currently on hold. If the school feeding programme is reactivated, WFP should strengthen its support to national and local authorities for a government-led programme. This should be based on district-level targeting according to identified areas of food insecurity in inner cities and rural areas, and be implemented using a locally procured variable food basket appropriate to each location. Future school feeding programmes need to be more results-oriented, and incorporate a long-term strategy for attaining programme sustainability.

50. **Recommendation 4:** For reasons of cost-effectiveness and the overwhelming preference of stakeholders, by the end of 2016, with support from the regional bureau and Headquarters, the country office should move from FFPs and vouchers to the use of cash transfers as the transfer modality, wherever feasible. A gender and protection analysis of the move towards cash should be undertaken as a prerequisite. Investments should be made in efforts to establish WFP as a central figure in the cash-based assistance sector, including recruitment of staff with relevant CBT experience, analysis of lessons learned to date, and finalization of technology and support systems for the SCOPE card.
51. **Recommendation 5:** The country office should prioritize the recruitment and placement of national and international staff to fill core positions, including in VAM and M&E, as soon as possible. WFP's Human Resources Division should consider a review of corporate human resources recruitment and deployment practices in a Level 3 environment such as Iraq. The possibility of further fast-tracking of administrative policies and procedures should also be explored.
52. **Recommendation 6:** By the end of 2016, the country office should formulate and implement a more communicative and inclusive participatory approach to partnerships with the Government, cooperating partners and beneficiaries. A quarterly review process should be initiated to ensure that all relevant WFP staff receive and act on beneficiary feedback, particularly on the quality and sell-by dates of commodities provided, and that beneficiary feedback is used to improve programme activities. The management of communications between WFP and different levels of government structures in the field needs to be reviewed and responsibilities clearly defined.
53. **Recommendation 7:** At the corporate level, WFP should ensure that all future Level 3 responses have adequate M&E and VAM capacity in place to ensure the availability of national food security mapping and analysis on which beneficiary targeting and strategic and operational decision-making can be based.
54. With regional bureau support, the country office should ensure consistent and robust internal monitoring capacity that enables more thorough assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of support provided. Building on experience, it should make the most effective use of the expertise of WFP staff, together with third-party monitoring, to ensure continual improvement of programme activities.

Acronyms Used in the Document

CBT	cash-based transfer
CFSVA	comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis
CPE	country portfolio evaluation
CS	country strategy
DEV	development project
EMOP	emergency operation
FFP	family food parcel
IDP	internally displaced person
IR	immediate-response
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MCHN	mother-and-child health and nutrition
PDS	Public Distribution System
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
SCOPE	System for Cash Operations
SPR	Standard Project Report
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAM	vulnerability analysis and mapping