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Management response to the recommendations in the summary report on the evaluation of the transitional interim country strategic plan (2018–2019) and the country strategic plan (2020–2024) for Iraq

Background

This document presents WFP management's response to the recommendations in the summary report on the evaluation of the transitional interim country strategic plan (2018–2019) and country strategic plan (2020–2024) for Iraq. The evaluation was conducted between June 2023 and May 2024 with the main purpose of providing evaluation evidence on WFP's strategic positioning, relevance, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency and the factors explaining its performance in Iraq from 2017 to October 2023. Taking a utilization-focused, consultative approach, the evaluation served the dual purpose of accountability and learning and informed the preparation of a new country strategic plan.

The evaluation made six recommendations, of which four are strategic and two operational. The response presented below indicates whether WFP agrees, partially agrees or disagrees with the recommendations and sub-recommendations and presents the planned (or completed) actions, responsibilities and timelines for their implementation.

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Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Responsible WFP office or division (with supporting offices and divisions in brackets)	Management response	Actions to be taken	Action lead office or division (with supporting offices and divisions in brackets)	Deadline for completion	Implementation status
<p>Priority: High Deadline: Third quarter 2027</p> <p>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.</p>		Agreed				
<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: High</i> (First quarter 2025)</p>	Country office (regional bureau)	Agreed	1. Develop the 2025–2029 country strategic plan (CSP) with an updated vision of the main programmatic areas of intervention for WFP in Iraq (including social protection, emergency preparedness and climate resilience), with a clear justification and results framework.	Country office (regional bureau)	First quarter 2025	Ongoing

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			2. Upon final submission and approval of the CSP, develop a comprehensive livelihoods and resilience strategy based on the outcomes and activities approved under the CSP.	Country office (regional bureau and headquarters)	Second quarter 2025	Not Started
1.2. Develop a theory of change that sets out plausible pathways for the building, testing and handover 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. <i>Priority: High</i> (First quarter 2025)	Country office	Agreed	3. Jointly with the regional bureau, develop a realistic theory of change for the 2025–2029 CSP.	Country office	Third quarter 2024	Completed
			4. Establish standard operating procedures for the design, prioritization and implementation of activities that are in line with the theory of change and are supported by an accurate results framework.	Country office	First quarter 2025	Ongoing
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. <i>Priority: High</i> (Third quarter 2027)	Country office (Regional bureau and headquarters (Partnerships and Innovation Department))	Agreed	5. Develop a comprehensive targeting strategy to guide the identification of people most in need, in line with programme requirements. Advocacy is ongoing with key donors to support the returnees in the Jada'a1 Center and vulnerable Iraqis who lack documentation. WFP leads a technical working group on prioritization of social protection beneficiaries with a focus on the public distribution system, which analyses and utilizes data for advocacy based on the Iraq household socioeconomic survey III.	Country office	Fourth quarter 2025	Ongoing

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<p>Priority: Medium Deadline: Fourth quarter 2029</p> <p>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.</p>		Agreed				
<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: High</i> (Fourth quarter 2029)</p>	Country office (headquarters and regional bureau (social protection unit))	Agreed	<p>1. As part of the comprehensive theory of change, the country office has developed an activity focused on strengthening the Iraqi social protection system for the forthcoming CSP. This activity reflects WFP's comparative advantages, capacity gaps in Iraq and the Government's development priorities.</p> <p>The activity is aligned with WFP's corporate strategy on social protection, which emphasizes increasing access to national social protection systems that safeguard and foster people's ability to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs and to manage risks and shocks.</p>	Country office	Fourth quarter 2029	Ongoing

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			<p>2. Actively engage with other United Nations entities and contribute to the development of the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework for Iraq for 2025–2029 strategic priority on inclusive social development to reflect the importance of increasing access to national social protection systems that safeguard and foster people's ability to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs and to manage risks and shocks. Advocate the inclusion of social protection as a key component under the inclusive social development priority, in alignment with the Government's development priorities</p>	Country office	Fourth quarter 2029	Ongoing

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<p>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 and other communications, and capacity strengthening.</p> <p><i>Priority: Medium</i> (Fourth quarter 2029)</p>	<p>Country office (headquarters Programme Policy and Guidance Division and regional bureau programme unit)</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>3. Identify key thematic areas where WFP is best placed to support the Government's social protection reform agenda, taking into consideration the needs and development priorities of the Government and leveraging the comparative advantage WFP has with respect to other United Nations entities. This includes strengthening government capacity for social protection, the provision of technical and operational support, evidence generation and monitoring and the implementation of pilot projects to gather evidence and advocate for social protection system reform, such as by delineating pathways to economic empowerment that support the transition of social safety net beneficiaries to social security.</p>	<p>Country office</p>	<p>Fourth quarter 2029</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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			4. To effectively undertake these activities the country office will continue to invest in personnel with specialist expertise in social protection and capacity strengthening. Support units in areas such as external relations and research, assessment and monitoring will continue to work alongside programme teams to ensure that social protection activities are adequately monitored, and that advocacy and communications are integrated into programme activities.	Country office	Fourth quarter 2029	Ongoing
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. <i>Priority: High</i> (Fourth quarter 2029)	Country office (headquarters social protection unit, Technology Division and Partnerships and Innovation Department; regional bureau social protection, partnerships and technology units)	Agreed	5. In the forthcoming CSP, digitalization will be part of WFP's broader activity supporting the Government's social protection reform agenda rather than a stand-alone activity, thus ensuring that digitalization is framed as a means of achieving social protection objectives such as reducing poverty, vulnerability, social exclusion, and food insecurity in Iraq.	Country office	Fourth quarter 2029	Ongoing

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			<p>6. The country office will ensure that capacity strengthening, and knowledge transfers are at the core of digitalization efforts designed to enhance the sustainability of the social protection system, thus facilitating gains in the efficiency and effectiveness of the system, and of its key social and food assistance programmes.</p>	Country office	Fourth quarter 2029	Ongoing
			<p>7. WFP supports the Government's leadership in developing a single registry or Integrated Beneficiary Registry, with the organization collaborating closely with both federal and Kurdistan regional government entities. Serving as the secretariat for a technical working committee chaired by the Ministry of Planning, WFP assists in integrating the single registry with the Government's national data centre and linking key databases from the ministries responsible for trade, labour and social affairs. This setup ensures government ownership, sustainability and alignment with national systems. WFP's role centres on offering technical guidance and strengthening local capacities</p>	Country office	Fourth quarter 2029	Ongoing

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			to facilitate the handover to the Iraqi Government of responsibilities in relation to the digitalization of social protection systems.			
<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority : Medium</i> (First quarter 2029)</p>	Country office (headquarters Partnerships and Innovation Department, Emergency Coordination Service and Programme Policy and Guidance Division)	Agreed	<p>8. Develop and strengthen climate information systems to disseminate climate and emergency information and raise awareness at the local level and ensure that accurate and timely information is available for decision making. Focus on anticipatory action plans with pre-agreed threshold triggers and proactive mitigation measures. This approach will enhance the ability of communities to respond effectively to slow and rapid-onset climate events, improving their resilience and adaptive capacity.</p>	Country office (emergency unit regional bureau and headquarters)	First quarter 2029	Ongoing
			<p>9. Strengthen national disaster management and coordination structures to ensure an effective and timely response to extreme climate events and natural disasters. This includes capacity-building initiatives for disaster management agencies, inter-agency coordination and integrating climate risk information into national disaster response frameworks.</p>	Country office (emergency unit regional bureau and headquarters)	First quarter 2029	Ongoing

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			By fostering a robust and coordinated disaster management system, WFP aims to improve the readiness and responsiveness of governmental bodies, ensuring that communities receive the necessary support during climate-induced emergencies.			
			10. In the context of the forthcoming CSP, and through the ongoing joint programme on social protection system reform, the country office will advance a shock-responsive and adaptive social protection agenda that supports capacity strengthening for key government institutions and thus promotes crisis preparedness and contingency planning. Also, climate adaptation and anticipatory action will be linked with social protection system reform efforts under CSP activities 4 and 6.	Country office, regional bureau and headquarters (social protection and climate units)	First quarter 2029	Ongoing

Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Responsible WFP office or division (with supporting offices and divisions in brackets)	Management response	Actions to be taken	Action lead office or division (with supporting offices and divisions in brackets)	Deadline for completion	Implementation status
<p>Priority: Medium Deadline: First quarter 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.</p>		Partially agreed				
<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: High</i> (First quarter 2029)</p>	Country office	Agreed	1. Utilize existing funding to pilot novel programmatic approaches on a small scale initially, leveraging the preliminary results to raise funding for scale-up.	Country office	First quarter 2029	Ongoing
			2. Leverage the experience of previous implementation cycles to assess and select those activities that have been effective and had an impact.	Country office	First quarter 2029	Ongoing

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<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: Medium</i> (First quarter 2029)</p>	Country office	Agreed	<p>3. Recruitment efforts will focus on filling skill gaps identified in the Learning Needs Analysis (LNA), particularly in development, climate and capacity strengthening. Training and development programmes will be designed based on LNA insights, equipping staff with the necessary competencies to succeed in governorate-level projects. In addition, the formation of a core support team in Baghdad and Erbil will be informed by the LNA, ensuring that they are well prepared to provide targeted assistance to field staff.</p>	Country office, with support from the regional bureau	First quarter 2025	Ongoing
			<p>4. Promote cross learning exchanges among the field office and country office teams, including site visits and internal workshops.</p>	Country office	First quarter 2029	Ongoing

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<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: High</i> (Second quarter 2025)</p>	Country office	Agreed	<p>5. Develop a comprehensive targeting strategy to guide the identification of people most in need, in line with programme requirements. The strategy should include targeting approaches and criteria for the various projects, including geographical and category-based targeting.</p>	County office	First quarter 2025	Ongoing
<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: High</i> (Second quarter 2025)</p>	Country office and headquarters Analysis, Planning and Performance Division (regional bureau research, assessment and monitoring unit)	Agreed	<p>6. Update the country office monitoring and evaluation strategy to incorporate outcome indicators and approaches that effectively demonstrate the achievement of long-term development outcomes and that are tailored to the needs of country offices operating in transitional settings. Ensure that the indicators are aligned with corporate goals and are appropriate for measuring progress in transitional environments.</p>	Country office	Second quarter 2025	Not started

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			7. Facilitate the participation of country office monitoring and evaluation staff in a combination of in-person workshops, online courses and on-the-job training tailored to the needs of country offices working in transitional settings.	Country office	Second quarter 2025	Ongoing
			8. Initiate regular consultations with key partners to co-develop and review monitoring and evaluation frameworks, ensuring that they meet both WFP's objectives and partners' expectations.	Country office	Second quarter 2025	Ongoing
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. <i>Priority: High</i> (Second quarter 2025)	Regional bureau (country office and headquarters Programme Policy and Guidance Division)	Partially agreed (secured and projected contributions for the next CSP (2025–2029) amount to 56 percent of the budget. Taking into account aspirational resources, this increases to 85 percent)	9. Base the new CSP on a realistic funding outlook and ensure that project activities and the country team reflect expected funding. Adjust the country office's strategic orientation, targeting and structure according to the level of available resources.	Country office	Second quarter 2025	Ongoing The partnerships resourcing strategy has been drafted and shared with the regional bureau and headquarters for feedback.

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<p>Priority: High Deadline: Fourth quarter 2025 4. Diversify funding and ensure multi-year funding for sustainable change.</p>		Agreed				
<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: High</i> (Second quarter 2025)</p>	Country office (regional bureau and headquarters Partnerships and Innovation Department)	Agreed	1. Continuously engage with donors, and other development partners, private sector entities, the Government and other stakeholders to secure climate and resilience financing.	Country office	Third quarter 2025	Ongoing
			2. Participate in strategic partnerships with other entities, including United Nations entities and international and local NGOs, to strategically align activities and targeting in accordance with Iraq's developmental priorities.	Country office	Third quarter 2025	Ongoing

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<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: High</i> (Third quarter 2025)</p>	<p>Country office (regional bureau and headquarters Partnerships and Innovation Department)</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>3. WFP is partnering with expert bodies and private sector entities to develop a strategic climate and resilience strategy and thus ensure the successful delivery of results in those fields. These partnerships, which include the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture, the International Water Management Institute, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Stockholm Environment Institute, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the United Nations Development Programme and private-sector research entities like CultiVision, will position WFP to put forward successful project proposals.</p>	<p>Country office and regional bureau</p>	<p>First quarter 2025</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Priority: Medium Deadline: Fourth quarter 2025</p> <p>5. Leverage partnerships to ensure the coherent rollout of development interventions over the long term, and to obtain access to specialist expertise.</p>		<p>Agreed</p>				

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<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: Medium</i> (Second quarter 2025)</p>	Country office (regional bureau partnerships unit)	Agreed	<p>1. The country office is already working to strengthen strategic partnerships with private sector, government and other key entities, including international financial institutions, to leverage expertise to strengthen national capacity and community ownership and thus facilitate a sustainable handover of livelihood and rural development activities.</p>	Country office	Fourth quarter 2025	Ongoing
<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: Medium</i> (Fourth quarter 2025)</p>	Country office (Regional bureau partnerships unit)	Agreed	<p>2. The new CSP has a partnerships and resource strategy that includes a comprehensive stakeholder and process analysis aimed at identifying areas of interest and opportunities.</p>	Country office	Fourth quarter 2025	Ongoing

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<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: Medium</i> (Third quarter 2025)</p>	Country office (Regional bureau partnerships unit)	Agreed	3. The country office is already exploring possible partnerships with non-traditional partners and working on strengthening partnerships with traditional partners. Until the next CSP is approved by the Executive Board, the partners resource strategy will remain a living document; it is expected that it will be finalized after the CSP is approved by the Board and then revised periodically.	Country office	Fourth quarter 2025	Ongoing
<p>Priority: Medium Deadline: Fourth quarter 2025</p> <p>6. Embed a gender-transformative and disability-inclusive approach into all interventions going forward, particularly those related to emergency preparedness and social protection.</p>		Agreed				
<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: High</i> (Second quarter 2025)</p>	Country office (Regional bureau gender, disability inclusion and protection unit and headquarters Gender, Protection and Inclusion Service)	Agreed	1. Programmes are designed according to inclusive and enabling approaches. The country office will ask for support from headquarters when country office staff lack the necessary expertise.	Country office	Fourth quarter 2025	Ongoing

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<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: Medium</i> (Fourth quarter 2025)</p>	<p>Country office (Regional bureau gender, disability inclusion and protection unit and climate unit)</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>2. Gender equality, women's empowerment and transformative approaches are embedded within country office programmes as designed in accordance with project proposals.</p> <p>3. Capacity building for country office staff and other stakeholders is conducted and will continue under the next CSP.</p>	<p>Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters</p>	<p>Fourth quarter 2025</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>6.3. Develop indicators that measure transformative change and are tailored to the Iraqi context.</p> <p><i>Priority: Medium</i> (Third quarter 2025)</p>	<p>Country office (headquarters Analysis, Planning and Performance Division)</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>4. Develop new indicators or revise existing ones to make them more outcome-focused, specifically in order to measure transformative change. Ensure that these indicators include clear definitions and measurement guidelines and are tailored to the circumstances of Iraq.</p>	<p>Country office</p>	<p>Third quarter 2025</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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<p>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.</p> <p><i>Priority: High</i> (Fourth quarter 2025)</p>	<p>Country office (regional bureau gender, disability inclusion and protection unit and climate unit)</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>5. An updated information and visibility campaign has begun, with detailed information on a hotline number, working hours and reply times. Weekly updates on closed and pending cases are provided and the focal point network has been updated. Next actions will include the adoption of a corporate tool (click-to-call) to allow calls to be accepted without reliance on national phone companies (a flagged issue).</p>	<p>Country office</p>	<p>First quarter 2025</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>