



Thematic Evaluation of the Social Cohesion Programme

Submitted to
UNDP Iraq

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PROJECT/OUTCOME INFORMATION

Project titles	Iraq Social Cohesion Project Community-Based Reintegration Community-Based Reconciliation Support Social Stability through the Prevention of Violent Extremism	
Project ID	Iraq Social Cohesion Project	00118038
	Community-Based Reintegration	00123587
	Community-Based Reconciliation	00125983
	Support Social Stability through the Prevention of Violent Extremism	00130781
Corporate outcome and output	Outcome 3.2: People in Iraq, civil society and communities, particularly women, have improved capacity to lead, participate in and contribute to the design and delivery of equitable and responsive services, especially for the most vulnerable populations. Output 1.2: Civil society and academia enabled to promote social cohesion, PVE and sustainable development. Output 2.2: Access to livelihood and employment creation opportunities increased in locations affected by and vulnerable to conflict. Output 3.2: National institutions and mechanisms dedicated to promote social cohesion and PVE strengthened	
Country	Iraq	
Region	Arab States	
Date project document signed	Iraq Social Cohesion Project	31 December 2019
	Community-Based Reintegration	28 December 2022
	Community-Based Reconciliation	20 February 2021
	Support Social Stability through the Prevention of Violent Extremism	2 March 2022

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Project	Start	Planned end	Project Budget	Project expenditure at the time of evaluation	Funding Source
Iraq Social Cohesion Project	1 January 2020	31 December 2025	\$1,683,401.08	\$1,153,519.55	Government of Denmark
Community-Based Reintegration	28 December 2022	30 June 2024	\$2,000,000.02	\$1,312,666.54	UNDP Funding Window
Community-Based Reconciliation	1 April 2021	30 September 2022	\$8,100,810	\$ 8,013,608.93	Government of Japan
Support Social Stability through the Prevention of Violent Extremism	1 March 2022	30 September 2023	\$2,526,998.00	\$2,402,587.72	Government of Japan
Implementing party	UNDP				

Evaluation information		
Evaluation type (project/ outcome/thematic/country programme, etc.)	Thematic	
Final/midterm review/ other	Other	
Period under evaluation	Start	End
	1 January 2020	30 August 2024
Evaluators	- Cliff Bernard Nuwakora - Shams Kamal	

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Evaluation dates	Start	Completion
	1 September 2024	20 November 2024

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We are immensely grateful to the UNDP Iraq personnel who supported this evaluation process. Special thanks go to Mr. Ibrahim Al-Taey, MEL Manager; Ms. Sara Malamud, MEL Specialist; Mr. Auke Lootsma, Resident Representative, UNDP Iraq; Ms. Judy Wakahiu, Programme Team Leader; and the entire programme and finance teams whose guidance, logistical support, and provision of key data were invaluable throughout this evaluation. Their dedication ensured the success of this effort.

We are also deeply appreciative of the more than 200 stakeholders who engaged with this evaluation. This includes government counterparts, development partners, civil society representatives, community leaders, and program beneficiaries, who participated in online and in-person interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. Their openness and insights enriched the findings and ensured the evaluation's relevance and depth.

Finally, we acknowledge and express our gratitude to the donors whose ongoing commitment to fostering social cohesion and sustainable development in Iraq made this program possible.

This evaluation is a testament to the collective effort of all involved and aims to serve as a resource for continued progress in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in Iraq.

ACRONYM AND ABBREVIATIONS

C2RI	Community-based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
P/CVE	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
PVE	Prevention of Violent Extremism
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ICRS	Information, Counselling, and Referral System
LPC	Local Peace Committee
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
GEN	Gender Equality Network (used here as part of gender-sensitive or gender-responsive programming)
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
UN	United Nations
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
PSS	Psychosocial Support
GoI	Government of Iraq
IRAQ SCP	Iraq Social Cohesion Programme
SP	Stabilization Programme (as used in UNDP's Stabilization Programme in Iraq)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
CBOs	Community-Based Organizations
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The thematic evaluation of Iraq’s social cohesion and reintegration initiatives encompassed four major projects: the Iraq Social Cohesion Programme, Community-based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI) projects from 2021 and 2023, and the Support Social Stability in Iraq project. These projects, launched under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its partners, addressed complex challenges surrounding post-conflict social cohesion, community resilience, and reintegration of marginalized groups, particularly those perceived to be associated with ISIL. The evaluation focused on assessing the effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, and sustainability of each project, with an emphasis on key lessons, best practices, and strategic recommendations for future programming.

The evaluation found that the program adopted cost-effective strategies to maximize resource utilization, such as leveraging local expertise, integrating multiple sectors within single frameworks, and employing community-based mechanisms. For instance, engaging Local Peace Committees (LPCs) and local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) reduced costs while ensuring local ownership and sustainability. Efforts like vocational training and cash-for-work (CfW) programs minimized capital-intensive investments while creating tangible socio-economic benefits.

Thematic Purpose: This evaluation assessed how individual project components contributed to the broader social cohesion thematic program and evaluated their collective outcomes and synergies. By focusing on thematic integration, the evaluation examined the extent to which the projects worked collaboratively to deliver sustainable, high-impact results that aligned with the overarching goals of peace building, reconciliation, and economic recovery in Iraq.

Key Evaluation Approach and Methods: The evaluation utilized a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the program’s impact. Quantitative surveys were complemented by qualitative methods, including Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and participatory observation. Stakeholders included direct beneficiaries, government officials, UNDP staff, implementing partners, donors, and community-based organizations. This robust methodology ensured representation from diverse perspectives and regions, allowing for in-depth analysis of program outcomes and challenges. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and confidentiality, were rigorously upheld.

Thematic Findings:

Strengthened Policy Frameworks and Governance: The Social Cohesion Programme significantly enhanced institutional capacity at national and sub-national levels. Over 2,300 government officials were trained in conflict resolution, reconciliation, and PVE strategies, leading to localized action plans that addressed community grievances. For example, PVE action plans in Mosul improved governance responses to extremism by integrating localized concerns into broader policy frameworks.

Community Reconciliation and Social Cohesion: Reconciliation mechanisms such as LPCs facilitated over 500 mediated disputes in conflict-affected areas, including property and resource-related conflicts in Anbar. Women and youth groups were instrumental in leading peace dialogues,

fostering inclusive decision-making processes. A participant in Ninewa remarked, "Our dialogues helped bridge divides and rebuild trust, proving that community-led reconciliation is possible."

Economic Recovery and Livelihood Creation: The program supported over 3,500 individuals through vocational training and created 2,200 temporary jobs via CfW initiatives. In Salah al-Din, women-led businesses in food processing not only generated income but also employed other vulnerable women, demonstrating the ripple effect of economic empowerment. A beneficiary noted, "The training allowed me to start a small tailoring business, restoring my financial independence."

Psychosocial Well-Being: More than 1,200 individuals accessed psychosocial support services, addressing trauma and fostering reintegration. Integrated services ensured that beneficiaries overcame emotional barriers to participation in community life and economic activities. A participant shared, "The counseling sessions gave me the confidence to rebuild my life and contribute to my community."

Inclusivity and Leadership: Awareness campaigns reached over 10,000 individuals, challenging harmful social norms and promoting gender equality. Women-led initiatives in Mosul demonstrated their potential as agents of change in reconciliation processes, shifting perceptions about women's roles in peace building. Youth-driven media campaigns in Anbar addressed stigma, promoting narratives of inclusion and resilience.

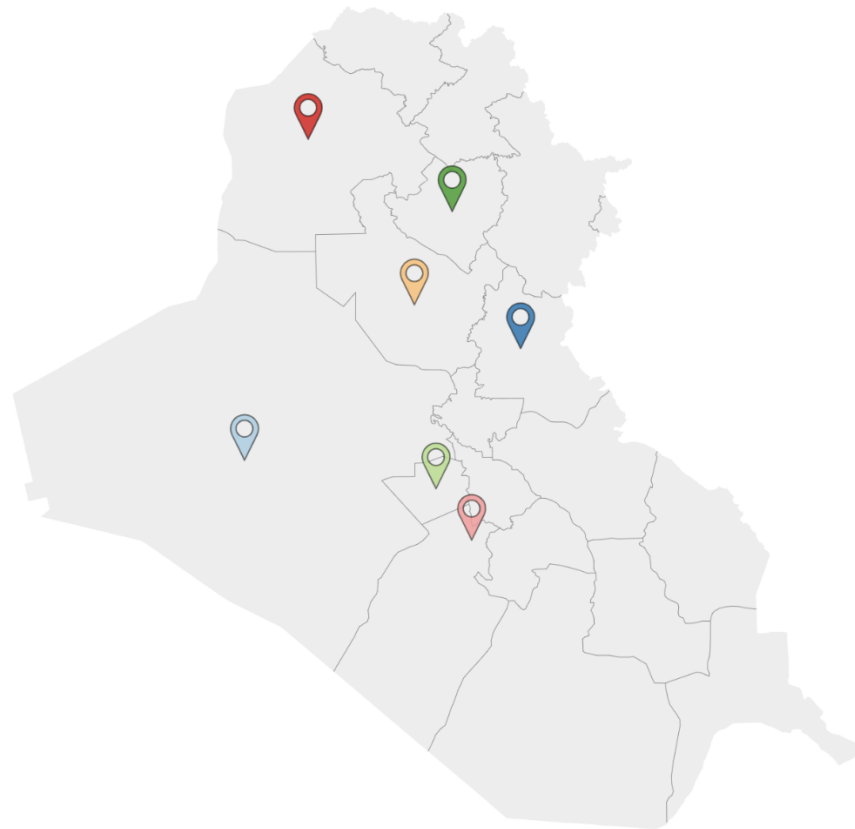
Conclusions and Recommendations

The Social Cohesion Programme delivered substantial thematic outcomes by fostering governance, promoting reconciliation, and driving economic recovery. However, coordination challenges and resource limitations occasionally hindered efficiency. Future programming should prioritize:

1. Strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships, including private sector engagement, to create resilient economic pathways for marginalized groups.
2. Expanding gender-sensitive frameworks to address systemic inequalities.
3. Enhancing coordination mechanisms to bridge gaps between local and national stakeholders.
4. Sustaining funding and support for localized peace initiatives to ensure long-term stability.

Social Cohesion Focus Areas in Iraq

■ Al-Anbar Governorate, Iraq ■ Diyala ■ Karbala ■ Kirkuk ■ Najaf ■ Ninewa ■ Salah al Din



1 EVALUATION BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The Social Cohesion Programme in Iraq represents a strategic and multifaceted response to the country’s post-conflict challenges. As a thematic evaluation, this report examines the collective contributions of four interrelated projects—Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI), Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration, and the overarching Social Cohesion Programme.

The evaluation assesses how these projects have worked synergistically to achieve shared goals of peace building, reconciliation, economic recovery, and social cohesion. By aligning with Iraq’s national priorities, the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and UNDP’s global strategies, the programme aims to address the root causes of instability and foster sustainable peace. This report provides insights into the programme’s relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact, offering lessons learned and recommendations for future interventions.

1.2 Evaluation purpose and objective

This thematic evaluation assessed the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the projects contributing to the social cohesion programme. The evaluation focused on assessing how each component had contributed to the overall social cohesion programme and the extent to which these components worked together to achieve collective results and outcomes, providing a comprehensive assessment at the thematic level.

Evaluation Objectives

Specifically, the social cohesion thematic evaluation focused on addressing the following objectives as required by the ToR:

1. Assess the relevance and strategic positioning of social cohesion programming to the Iraq context and whether the initial assumptions are still relevant.
2. Analyze the progress made towards planned project results, including any unintended results, and capture lessons learned and recommendations for future social cohesion programming in Iraq.
3. Appraise whether the project management arrangements, approaches, and strategies, including monitoring and risk management approaches, are well- conceived and efficient in achieving results.
4. Assess the replicability and scalability of social cohesion projects in Iraq and provide practical recommendations on project sustainability.
5. Analyze the extent to which social cohesion programming enhanced the application of rights-based approaches, gender equality and women’s empowerment, and social and environmental standards and participation of other socially vulnerable groups such as children and the disabled.

1.3 Evaluation Scope

According to the ToR, the scope of the thematic evaluation covered the projects below and their associated implementation periods, all project locations and stages -conceptualization, design, implementation, management, and monitoring and evaluation of results. The evaluation engaged all project stakeholders, beneficiaries, communities/institutions, relevant national institutions, donors, UNDP, UN agencies and CSOs.

Project	Donor	Start Date	End Date	Status
Iraq Social Cohesion Project	Government of Denmark	1 Jan 2020	31 Dec 2025	Ongoing
Community-Based Reintegration	UNDP Funding Window	1 Jan 2023	30 Jun 2024	Closed
Community-Based Reconciliation	Government of Japan	1 Apr 2021	30 Jun 2023	Closed
Support Social Stability through the Prevention of Violent Extremism	Government of Japan	1 Mar 2022	30 Sept 2023	Closed

The social cohesion projects were implemented in the following governorates with some locations to be sampled: Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah al Din, Karbala, and Najaf.

Beneficiaries of projects include host community members, Internally Displaced Persons and Returnees, civil society members and community members with specific inclusion of women and youth.

1.4 Intended Users of the Evaluation

As prescribed by the ToR the end users of this thematic evaluation results include UNDP management, programme and project staff, the stakeholders and partners and the donors.

1.5 Evaluation Criteria

As prescribed by the ToR, the thematic evaluation strictly adhered to the UHNEG norms. It followed the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria that focused on relevance and coherence; impact and effectiveness; efficiency; and sustainability and cross-cutting issues of gender equality and women’s empowerment, conflict sensitivity, disability, human rights and ‘Leave No One Behind’ the project interventions and results; in assessing the results of the programme.

1.6 Evaluation approach and methodology

The evaluation adopted a Consultative Participatory Process and Iterative Approach (CPPIA) involving all key stakeholders (i.e. UNDP management, programme and project staff, and Iraq’s national and sub national stakeholders among others. A participatory mixed methods approach using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection was used to adequately capture information from the different stakeholders to build a consensus about the programmes overall rationale and desired outcomes.

Phases of Work (Desk, field, Synthesis, Dissemination)

Drawing inspiration from the aspects provided in the ToR, the evaluation followed three main phases: (i) preparatory/inception phase (inception report - desk review, finalization of methodology, work plan); (ii) Evaluation phase (draft report- data collection, analysis and consolidation, presentation of

initial results); and (iii) Final phase (incorporating stakeholders` comments and preparation of final evaluation report).

Data Collection Methods

The methodology consisted of several methods with an analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. It will include, but will not be limited to, the following:

Desk Review of relevant documents which include but were not limited to: The 2015 National Security Strategy, the 2019 Strategy to Combat Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism, UNSDCF, UNDP-IQ-CPD 2020/24, UNDP Project Document, Project Annual and Quarterly Progress Reports, Project’s inception report, Annual Project Reports, Project budget revisions, and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

Focus group discussions: The consultant held 10 FGD meetings with *MHPSS beneficiaries, vocational training beneficiaries, and business training/ SME grant beneficiaries) and 7 (3M,4F) UNDP CO members.*

Key Informant interviews and virtual meetings were held in Consultations with the project’s stakeholders; guided by a key informant interview guide which had a set of questions arranged around the evaluation criteria. It was used to facilitate data collection and knowledge sharing. A total of 94 (55M,39F) key informants were interviewed who included but were not limited to UNDP staff, management and programme, Government and State agents at the central and different decentralized level in the different partner ministries, agencies & commissions, Other Partner organizations & donors, Civil based organizations (CBOs), Women and youth groups, LPCs, Mukhtars, journalists, and religious leaders.

Additionally, an on line survey with 95 (74M, 21F) participants conducted.

Data analysis

The data analysis process involved synthesis, consolidation, classification, summarizing and interpretation of the findings and results.

Qualitative data collected especially from literature, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) was typed in Ms. Word to facilitate analysis. The qualitative data was then analysed using thematic content analysis to extract emerging themes. Coding of themes will be done.

Data from different primary sources was triangulated with data obtained from secondary sources to produce a comprehensive report that adequately addresses the assessment and analysis requirements as per the ToR. The data on cross-cutting issues of gender equality & women empowerment, disability, human rights and ‘Leave No One Behind’ will be segregated during analysis. Data will be disaggregated by relevant criteria in order to assess whether benefits and contributions were fairly distributed by the interventions being evaluated.

1.7 Limitation and challenges:

The evaluation of the Social Cohesion Programme encountered several limitations and challenges that influenced the scope, depth, and conclusions of the study.

Firstly, the availability and reliability of data posed significant challenges. While the programme maintained extensive documentation, certain gaps were noted in disaggregated data, particularly for marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities. This limitation impacted the evaluation's ability to comprehensively assess the inclusivity of the interventions and their specific impacts on vulnerable populations.

Secondly, resource and time constraints restricted the breadth of the evaluation. Given the extensive scope of the Social Cohesion Programme, the evaluation was unable to delve deeply into every component and activity, necessitating a focus on representative samples. While this approach ensured a broad understanding of the programme's impact, it may have overlooked nuanced outcomes of smaller-scale or localized interventions.

Additionally, stakeholder availability presented a challenge. Scheduling interviews and focus group discussions with government officials, civil society actors, and community members required significant coordination. In some instances, key informants were unavailable due to competing priorities, leading to gaps in qualitative data collection.

Finally, the complex socio-political context in Iraq, characterized by ongoing tensions and shifting priorities, influenced stakeholder perspectives and introduced biases into some responses. Efforts were made to triangulate data from multiple sources to mitigate this challenge, but the dynamic nature of the operating environment remained a complicating factor.

Despite these challenges, the evaluation successfully captured significant insights into the programme's design, implementation, and outcomes. Addressing these limitations in future evaluations will enhance the robustness and comprehensiveness of findings, ensuring an even deeper understanding of programme impacts and areas for improvement.

2 THE DESCRIPTION AND INTERVENTION LOGIC

Impact Statement: The overarching impact of the Social Cohesion Programme was to promote a peaceful, inclusive, and cohesive Iraqi society where vulnerable populations, particularly women, youth, and those perceived to be associated with ISIL, were reintegrated into resilient communities. This aligned with Iraq's national priorities and UNDP's strategic objectives.

Programme Outputs and Outcomes in Alignment with the Theory of Change: The Social Cohesion Programme—comprising the projects Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI), Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration in the Return Communities in Iraq, and the overarching Social Cohesion Programme—achieved significant outputs and outcomes across governance, reconciliation, socio-economic recovery, and inclusive leadership. Below is a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the programme's results, supported by diverse examples from all four projects.

Description and Intervention Logic: The Social Cohesion Programme addressed critical challenges of reconciliation, governance, and economic recovery in post-conflict Iraq. It targeted marginalized populations, including returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), women, youth, and families perceived to be associated with ISIL. These populations faced acute challenges, including social exclusion, economic vulnerabilities, and psychological trauma, necessitating a multifaceted intervention to foster peace, rebuild trust, and enhance resilience.

The programme sought to deliver transformative outcomes through a results framework grounded in the following pillars:

- i. **Governance and Institutional Capacity:** Strengthening local and national governance structures to promote social cohesion and prevent violent extremism (PVE).
- ii. **Reconciliation and Community Dialogue:** Facilitating reintegration and trust-building through locally driven reconciliation mechanisms.
- iii. **Economic Recovery:** Enhancing livelihoods through vocational training, business grants, and infrastructure rehabilitation.
- iv. **Psychosocial Well-Being:** Addressing trauma and fostering community reintegration through targeted counseling and support services.

Results Framework and Implementation Strategies: The intervention adopted a Theory of Change emphasizing localized, participatory, and inclusive approaches. Key assumptions included the willingness of local communities to engage in reconciliation, the readiness of institutions to adopt inclusive governance frameworks, and the availability of sustained resources to support long-term recovery efforts. Implementation strategies included:

- i. Establishing Local Peace Committees (LPCs) to mediate disputes and foster community-level trust.
- ii. Integrating gender-sensitive approaches to empower women and youth as agents of change.
- iii. Employing cash-for-work (CfW) programs to address immediate economic needs while restoring essential infrastructure.
- iv. Institutionalizing PVE action plans to mitigate radicalization risks and enhance governance responses.

Alignment with National and International Frameworks: The Social Cohesion Programme aligned with Iraq’s National Development Plan (2018–2022), which prioritized rebuilding institutions, fostering inclusive governance, and promoting economic recovery. It also supported the National Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism, focusing on addressing the drivers of radicalization and reintegrating ISIL-affiliated families. Internationally, the programme contributed to UNSDCF priorities by promoting human rights, equality, and sustainable development while aligning with UNDP’s Strategic Plan goals and corporate funding frameworks.

Phase and Adaptations: The programme evolved across multiple phases to address emerging needs and challenges. For instance, initial phases emphasized capacity-building and policy development, while subsequent phases integrated reconciliation mechanisms and economic recovery initiatives. Adjustments, such as incorporating localized PVE strategies in Ninewa and Mosul, ensured relevance and responsiveness to shifting community dynamics.

Key Partners and Stakeholders: The programme’s success was rooted in the collaboration of diverse stakeholders. National and local governments institutionalized policy frameworks and provided oversight. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and community leaders drove grassroots engagement, leading peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives. International donors, including the European Union and Japan, financed critical components such as infrastructure rehabilitation and capacity-building. UNDP acted as the central coordinator, integrating governance, reconciliation, and economic recovery efforts.

Scale of the Intervention: The programme’s scope encompassed 45 Local Peace Committees (LPCs) across conflict-affected areas, vocational training for over 3,500 individuals, and psychosocial support services for more than 1,200 beneficiaries. It reached a broad demographic, including marginalized groups, and integrated cross-cutting themes of gender equality, human rights, and inclusivity. Infrastructure rehabilitation under the CfW initiative improved access to essential services for thousands.

Context and Challenges: Operating within a complex post-conflict landscape, the programme navigated significant socio-political and economic challenges. Tensions between returnees and host communities, coupled with limited institutional capacities, presented barriers to reconciliation. However, opportunities such as community willingness to engage in dialogue and strong donor

support facilitated implementation. Resource constraints occasionally limited the scale of interventions, highlighting the need for sustained funding.

Design Weaknesses: While the programme’s intervention logic was robust, certain aspects required improvement. For example, centralized decision-making processes occasionally delayed field-level activities, and resource limitations restricted the breadth of psychosocial services. Strengthening decentralized coordination mechanisms and ensuring consistent funding remain critical for future programming.

Theory of Change Framework

Theme	Sub-Theme	What Was Done (Activities)	Why (Rationale)	Expected Results (Outcomes)
Strengthened Policy Frameworks	Capacity Building	Built capacity of national and sub-national institutions to develop and implement policies on social cohesion and PVE.	Stronger institutional frameworks were essential for sustained peace and reconciliation efforts.	National and local governance structures were equipped to promote and sustain social cohesion.
		Provided training and tools for conflict analysis, reconciliation, and PVE strategies.	Equipping institutions with technical skills ensured effective implementation and response.	
	Policy Development and Institutionalization	Supported the creation of PVE action plans and monitoring systems.	Ensured that PVE strategies were institutionalized and integrated into broader governance frameworks.	
Empowered Communities	Community Engagement	Established and supported Local Peace Committees (LPCs), Women for Peace Groups, and Youth Peace Groups.	Community-driven reconciliation mechanisms foster trust and local ownership.	Communities resolved conflicts independently and sustainably.

Theme	Sub-Theme	What Was Done (Activities)	Why (Rationale)	Expected Results (Outcomes)
		Facilitated community dialogues, mediation forums, and reconciliation initiatives.	Dialogue fostered understanding, reduced tensions, and strengthened social cohesion at the grassroots level.	
	Inclusion of Marginalized Groups	Actively involved women and youth in peacebuilding efforts and leadership roles.	Inclusion ensured diverse perspectives in decision-making and promoted equitable recovery processes.	Women and youth were recognized as critical actors in reconciliation and social cohesion.
Socioeconomic Reintegration	Economic Empowerment	Delivered vocational training, cash-for-work programs, and business development support for marginalized groups.	Economic empowerment reduced grievances and improved reintegration, fostering peaceful coexistence.	Vulnerable populations accessed sustainable livelihoods and contributed to local economies.
		Linked small businesses to markets and integrated them into local economies.	Strengthened the economic viability and sustainability of businesses established by beneficiaries.	
	Psychosocial Support	Delivered services to address trauma and reintegration challenges.	Addressing psychological needs ensured a holistic approach to recovery.	Beneficiaries experienced improved well-being and readiness to engage in livelihoods and

Theme	Sub-Theme	What Was Done (Activities)	Why (Rationale)	Expected Results (Outcomes)
				community life.
Sustainable Social Norms	Awareness Campaigns	Conducted campaigns on gender equality, inclusion, and reconciliation.	Advocacy shifted harmful social norms, reduced stigma, and promoted inclusive participation.	Marginalized groups, including women and returnees, were integrated into community life.
	Leadership Development	Trained media professionals, community leaders, and CSOs to champion social cohesion.	Local leaders and media shaped narratives that promoted peace and reduced stigma.	Communities developed inclusive leadership driving reconciliation and stability.

3 EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 Relevance and design

3.1.1. Alignment to UNDP Strategy and SDGs

The four projects under review—**Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)**, **Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI)**, **Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration in the Return Communities in Iraq**, and the **Social Cohesion Programme**—all demonstrate strong alignment with both **UNDP’s Strategic Plan** and several **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. Each project addresses critical areas of peace building, social cohesion, economic development, and gender equality, which are fundamental to UNDP’s mission.

3.1.1.1 Alignment with UNDP’s CPD and Global Strategy

The Social Cohesion Programme was strategically aligned with the UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) for Iraq, which prioritizes fostering inclusive governance, economic resilience, and social cohesion to address post-conflict challenges. It also reflected UNDP’s global strategy of promoting inclusive development and preventing violent extremism through peace building and social cohesion initiatives. By adopting a unified Theory of Change, the programme strategically tackled the interconnected challenges of governance, reconciliation, economic recovery, and the inclusion of marginalized groups.

Institutional Capacity Building and Governance Strengthening: The Social Cohesion Programme strengthened Iraq’s governance frameworks, aligning closely with the UNDP CPD’s focus on institutional capacity-building and good governance. Training over **2,300 government officials** in conflict analysis, reconciliation strategies, and PVE action planning was pivotal. For instance, in **Mosul** and **Salah al-Din**, tailored PVE action plans addressed community-specific grievances and enhanced governance responses. These plans provided structured frameworks to mitigate conflicts and foster trust between communities and authorities.

Through the institutionalization of PVE strategies, the programme established localized monitoring systems and action plans, ensuring these efforts were embedded within broader governance structures. In **Anbar**, government officials reported that the training equipped them with tools to mediate disputes effectively. One official noted, *“These tools have given us the capacity to address community grievances before they escalate, ensuring long-term stability.”* This approach supported UNDP’s global strategy to strengthen governance systems as a foundation for social cohesion and conflict prevention.

Community Engagement and Reconciliation; Aligned with the CPD’s emphasis on empowering communities, the programme fostered reconciliation and dialogue through Local Peace Committees (LPCs), Women for Peace Groups, and Youth Peace Groups. LPCs mediated over **500 disputes** in conflict-affected areas, resolving tensions related to land, property, and resource allocation. In **Ninewa**, these committees effectively mediated disputes between returnee families and host communities, reducing tensions and promoting peaceful coexistence.

Women-led reconciliation dialogues were particularly transformative. In **Mosul**, these initiatives challenged traditional norms, enabling women to play pivotal roles in decision-making and reconciliation efforts. A participant shared, *“Through our efforts, women have demonstrated their ability to lead and sustain peace in our communities.”*

The programme also addressed intercommunal tensions by fostering dialogue between different social and ethnic groups. In **Mosul**, LPCs facilitated discussions between Sunni and Shia communities, fostering mutual understanding and reducing historical divisions. This community-driven approach exemplified UNDP’s commitment to inclusive peace building.

Socio-Economic Reintegration and Recovery: Economic resilience was a core component of the programme, aligning with the CPD’s focus on poverty reduction and livelihood development in post-conflict settings. Vocational training was provided to over **3,500 individuals**, equipping them with skills to secure employment or establish small businesses. In **Ninewa**, beneficiaries trained in carpentry and tailoring established sustainable enterprises, boosting local economies and achieving financial independence. A beneficiary remarked, *“This training gave me the skills to start my business and provide for my family, restoring my sense of dignity.”*

Cash-for-work (CfW) initiatives created **2,200 temporary jobs**, rehabilitating critical infrastructure such as schools, roads, and water systems. In **Mosul**, a school renovation project provided employment for **150 youth** and restored access to education for hundreds of children. The programme also prioritized economic inclusion for women. In **Salah al-Din**, women-led food processing businesses generated income while employing other vulnerable women, creating a ripple effect of empowerment.

3.1.1.2 Alignment with SDGs

The Social Cohesion Programme demonstrated robust alignment with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), contributing to Iraq’s recovery and resilience.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: The programme strengthened institutional capacities and governance frameworks, ensuring sustainable mechanisms for conflict resolution and prevention. Local Peace Committees (LPCs) and PVE action plans addressed systemic issues, while government training improved institutional responses to community grievances. In **Anbar**, the resolution of over **500 disputes** exemplified the programme’s contribution to building effective and inclusive institutions.

SDG 5: Gender Equality: Women’s leadership was central to the programme, ensuring their active participation in peacebuilding and economic recovery. Women for Peace Groups facilitated reconciliation dialogues, while vocational training programs equipped women with skills to start businesses. In **Mosul**, women-led reconciliation initiatives fostered community trust and challenged gender norms, creating a pathway for inclusive recovery.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: Economic initiatives such as CfW programs, vocational training, and business grants boosted local economies and created sustainable livelihoods. In **Ninewa**, beneficiaries established businesses that contributed to economic revitalization, while market linkages ensured long-term viability. These activities directly supported Iraq’s economic recovery by reducing unemployment and fostering resilience.

SDG 1: No Poverty: The programme addressed poverty through targeted livelihood support for vulnerable populations. Cash-for-work initiatives provided immediate income, while business grants and vocational training offered pathways to economic independence. Beneficiaries in **Salah al-Din**

transitioned from dependency on aid to self-sufficiency, demonstrating the programme’s impact on poverty reduction.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities: By addressing marginalization and fostering inclusion, the programme reduced social and economic disparities. LPC-facilitated dialogues in **Mosul** bridged divides between Sunni and Shia communities, while awareness campaigns promoted tolerance and understanding. Women and minorities were integrated into decision-making processes, ensuring equitable recovery efforts.

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being: Psychosocial support services addressed trauma and promoted emotional resilience among conflict-affected populations. Over **1,200 individuals** received counseling, enabling them to reintegrate into their communities and engage in economic activities. In **Mosul**, beneficiaries reported improved mental health, allowing them to rebuild their lives.

Conclusively, the Social Cohesion Programme exemplified strategic alignment with the UNDP CPD and global strategy by addressing governance, reconciliation, and socio-economic recovery holistically. Its contributions to SDGs underscore its role in fostering a cohesive, inclusive, and resilient Iraqi society, ensuring both immediate recovery and long-term stability.

3.1.2. Alignment to National Priorities

The Social Cohesion Programme and its associated projects—Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI), Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration, and the Social Cohesion Programme—demonstrated strong alignment with Iraq’s national priorities as outlined in the National Development Plan (2018–2022), the National Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism, and other national frameworks. These priorities emphasize institutional rebuilding, social cohesion, poverty alleviation, reconciliation, and stabilization.

National Development Plan (2018–2022)¹: Iraq’s National Development Plan underscored the importance of rebuilding fractured social relationships and restoring trust among communities. The C2RI and Social Cohesion Programme aligned closely with this priority by facilitating reconciliation and fostering dialogue between divided groups. For example, in Anbar, Local Peace Committees (LPCs) played a pivotal role in mediating disputes between returning families and host communities. Property-related grievances were resolved through structured mediation processes, reducing tensions and rebuilding relationships. This approach directly addressed community divisions, contributing to Iraq’s long-term social stability.

Economic Recovery Strategy: The Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project supported the National Development Plan’s focus on economic revitalization as a foundation for post-conflict recovery. By providing vocational training, cash-for-work programs, and business development support, the project directly contributed to poverty alleviation and job creation. In Ninewa, beneficiaries of vocational training successfully re-established small businesses, contributing to local economic growth and creating sustainable income opportunities for conflict-affected families. These initiatives not only improved household livelihoods but also contributed to broader economic stabilization.

¹ <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/irq214656.pdf>

National Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism²: The National Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism identified economic exclusion, marginalization, and social divisions as key drivers of radicalization. The PVE project aligned strongly with this strategy by adopting a multi-faceted approach that addressed institutional capacity gaps, engaged local actors, and empowered marginalized groups. For instance, in Mosul, youth and women-led civil society organizations (CSOs) designed community-based interventions to address grievances and promote peaceful coexistence. These initiatives reduced vulnerabilities to extremist ideologies while fostering a sense of ownership and agency among local communities.

Institutional Capacity Building: The Social Cohesion Programme prioritized strengthening governance structures at both national and sub-national levels. This aligned with Iraq’s emphasis on improving institutional mechanisms to manage conflicts and grievances effectively. In Salah al-Din, local government officials were trained in conflict analysis and mediation, enhancing their capacity to respond to disputes and sustain local peace building efforts. This approach ensured that governance institutions played a proactive role in maintaining stability and fostering trust in state structures.

National Security Strategy (2016)³: The National Security Strategy emphasized reconciliation, security sector reform, and addressing the root causes of terrorism. The PVE project supported these objectives by building institutional capacity to prevent violent extremism and promoting community-driven reconciliation efforts. By enhancing public trust in state institutions and addressing grievances through localized conflict resolution mechanisms, the PVE project contributed to Iraq’s broader security goals. The focus on reintegration of ISIL-affiliated families through dialogue and economic reintegration aligned with national reconciliation priorities.

Iraq’s Reconstruction and Development Framework (RDF) 2018-2027⁴: The Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project aligned with Iraq’s Reconstruction and Development Framework (RDF), which prioritizes socio-economic recovery in post-conflict areas. By providing vocational training, small business grants, and job placement opportunities, the project addressed critical gaps in economic recovery efforts. For example, in conflict-affected areas of Ninewa and Salah al-Din, the project facilitated the economic reintegration of returnees, including individuals perceived to be affiliated with ISIL. By equipping vulnerable groups with market-relevant skills, the project fostered sustainable livelihoods and contributed to community stabilization.

Iraq’s Social Cohesion and Stabilization Priorities: The C2RI project complemented Iraq’s stabilization priorities by focusing on reconciliation and psychosocial support for vulnerable populations. Donor feedback highlighted gaps in the government’s capacity to address complex reintegration and reconciliation challenges. According to one donor: *“What UNDP is doing aligns quite well with government policies, particularly in completing or resolving the IDP issue. While the government focuses on return policies, UNDP goes further by addressing reconciliation and sustainable reintegration.”* By facilitating community-level reconciliation and reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs), the project addressed critical gaps and ensured a more holistic approach to stabilization.

² <https://www.undp.org/iraq/blog/preventing-violent-extremism-iraq>

³ <https://research.monash.edu/en/publications/national-security-strategy-iraq-copy-edited-internal-document-for>

⁴ <https://www.refworld.org/policy/strategy/natlegbod/2018/en/148214>

Iraq’s Poverty Reduction Strategy (2018-2022)⁵: The Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project aligned with Iraq’s Poverty Reduction Strategy by empowering women, youth, and marginalized groups through income-generating opportunities. By reducing poverty and enhancing economic resilience, the project contributed to Iraq’s goals for inclusive economic development.

National Strategy for Reconciliation and Social Cohesion⁶: The Social Cohesion Programme supported Iraq’s national efforts to promote reconciliation and unity. By fostering dialogue between diverse social, ethnic, and religious groups, the programme addressed deep-rooted grievances and promoted peaceful coexistence. In Mosul, reconciliation initiatives led by women’s groups reduced stigma against ISIL-affiliated families and strengthened inter-community relationships. Similarly, LPCs provided structured mechanisms to address conflicts and grievances at the local level, enhancing Iraq’s capacity for inclusive governance and community stabilization. Source: KII, FGDs, and Project Reports (National Reconciliation Strategy).

By integrating these priorities into its design and implementation, the Social Cohesion Programme reinforced national frameworks and contributed significantly to Iraq’s recovery and stabilization efforts.

3.1.3 Alignment with Beneficiaries’ Needs

The Social Cohesion Programme demonstrated a strong alignment with the needs of its beneficiaries by addressing critical gaps in governance, reconciliation, economic recovery, and psychosocial support. This alignment ensured the programme’s relevance and effectiveness in Iraq’s post-conflict context.

Addressing Governance Gaps: Beneficiaries, particularly in conflict-affected areas, highlighted the need for robust governance mechanisms to manage disputes and prevent escalation. Through the establishment of Local Peace Committees (LPCs) and capacity-building for government officials, the programme provided sustainable solutions for conflict resolution. In Anbar, LPCs mediated over 500 disputes, addressing property rights and resource access, which were identified as primary sources of tension. A beneficiary stated, “The LPCs have given us a trusted platform to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence.”

Responding to Economic Vulnerabilities: Unemployment and economic instability were consistently cited by beneficiaries as significant challenges in post-conflict communities. The programme responded by providing vocational training to over 3,500 individuals and creating 2,200 temporary jobs through cash-for-work initiatives. In Ninewa, beneficiaries trained in tailoring and carpentry reported increased incomes and improved living standards. One participant remarked, “This training gave me the skills to earn a living and support my family, restoring hope for the future.”

By offering business grants and facilitating market linkages, the programme enabled beneficiaries to establish sustainable livelihoods. Women in Salah al-Din used these opportunities to start food processing businesses, employing others in their communities and creating a ripple effect of economic empowerment.

⁵ https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/iraq_prs_summary_en_2018.pdf

⁶ socialwatch.org/sites/default/files/National_Reconciliation_Iraq.pdf

Meeting Psychosocial Needs: Trauma and mental health challenges were prevalent among beneficiaries, particularly returnees and individuals affected by ISIL-related violence. The programme addressed these needs by providing psychosocial support to over 1,200 individuals. Counseling sessions helped beneficiaries overcome trauma, rebuild confidence, and reintegrate into their communities. A participant in Mosul shared, “The support I received helped me heal emotionally and gave me the strength to rebuild my life.”

The integration of psychosocial services with livelihood support ensured a holistic approach to recovery, addressing both emotional and economic dimensions of beneficiaries’ needs.

Promoting Social Inclusion: Marginalization and social tensions were significant barriers to community resilience, as reported by beneficiaries in divided communities. The programme’s efforts to promote reconciliation through community dialogues and awareness campaigns directly addressed these issues. In Mosul, LPCs facilitated intercommunal discussions between Sunni and Shia groups, fostering mutual understanding and trust. A beneficiary noted, “These dialogues helped us see each other as neighbors again, not enemies.”

Women and youth, often excluded from decision-making, were actively involved in peace building efforts. Women for Peace Groups empowered women to lead reconciliation initiatives, while youth groups facilitated dialogues that bridged generational divides. These activities aligned with beneficiaries’ expressed desire for inclusive and equitable recovery processes.

Enhancing Security and Preventing Extremism: Communities affected by ISIL emphasized the need for security and strategies to prevent violent extremism. By strengthening local governance and developing PVE action plans, the programme addressed the underlying drivers of extremism. In Mosul, tailored PVE strategies incorporated community-specific concerns, ensuring relevance and effectiveness. A local leader commented, “The PVE plans give us a roadmap to address the root causes of extremism in our community.”

By focusing on governance, economic empowerment, psychosocial support, and social inclusion, the Social Cohesion Programme directly addressed the multifaceted needs of its beneficiaries. This alignment ensured that interventions were not only relevant but also impactful, laying the foundation for sustainable recovery and resilience.

3.1.4. Linkages between the project with similar interventions

The four projects under review—Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI), Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration in the Return Communities in Iraq, and the Social Cohesion Programme—share numerous linkages with each other and with similar interventions in Iraq. These connections enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the interventions by aligning efforts, avoiding duplication, and building on complementary approaches. Below is an analysis of the key linkages among the four projects and other similar interventions.

3.1.4.1 Linkages Among the Four Projects

Shared Focus on Social Cohesion and Reconciliation: All four projects emphasize **social cohesion** and **reconciliation**, particularly in areas affected by conflict and displacement. These projects share similar objectives in terms of: **Building trust among communities:** Whether through **Local Peace**

Committees, Youth and Women Peace Groups, or reconciliation mechanisms, all projects aim to restore social fabric and reduce tensions between conflicting groups.

Reintegrating marginalized populations: The **PVE**, **C2RI**, and **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** projects focus on reintegrating returnees and individuals perceived to be affiliated with ISIL. The **Social Cohesion Programme** supports this by fostering **dialogue and mediation**, ensuring that returnees are accepted back into their communities.

Supporting community-based mechanisms: Each project builds on the idea that **local communities** play a key role in preventing conflict and promoting reconciliation. By empowering local peace mechanisms and involving civil society, these projects strengthen grassroots peace building efforts.

Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Support: The **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** and **C2RI** projects both offer substantial support for **livelihood creation** and **vocational training**. These efforts are closely linked with the objectives of the **PVE** project, which recognizes the importance of **economic empowerment** in reducing vulnerability to radicalization. Some key synergies include:

Vocational training and business support: Both the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** and **C2RI** projects provide vocational training and small business grants to individuals in conflict-affected areas, helping them rebuild their livelihoods. These initiatives support the **PVE** project by addressing key drivers of extremism, such as poverty and unemployment.

Cash-for-Work (CfW) programs: C2RI and the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** projects both use **Cash-for-Work (CfW)** initiatives to provide immediate income support to vulnerable populations, promoting economic recovery and resilience.

Common Approach to Addressing Marginalized Groups: All four projects aim to reintegrate marginalized groups—particularly returnees and families with perceived ISIL affiliations—into society. This approach is vital for restoring stability, preventing further radicalization, and mitigating conflict. Despite their unique focus areas, the projects share several key methodologies:

Gender-Sensitive Interventions: Each project integrates gender considerations, emphasizing women’s empowerment through vocational training, community participation, and leadership roles in peace building. These interventions not only empower women but also break down traditional gender barriers, particularly in conservative communities. As noted by a governmental representative:

“Previously, if women participated, people would object, but now we have significant female participation in the PVE committees. There are currently eight women in the committee, including doctors and professors, as we focus on experienced and active women. We formed a women’s team, and now we have 22 women in this team. I cannot open registration because we cannot accommodate the number of women who want to join.”

Psychosocial Support (PSS) and Mental Health: The C2RI and Social Cohesion Programme place a strong emphasis on providing psychosocial support (PSS) and mental health services to individuals affected by conflict, particularly returnees and families perceived to have affiliations with ISIL. This focus on mental well-being is also integral to the PVE project, where psychosocial interventions are key strategies for preventing radicalization and fostering community reintegration.

Community-Driven Initiatives: Each project prioritizes community-based decision-making, ensuring that local stakeholders are actively engaged in designing and implementing interventions. This approach fosters local ownership, sustainability, and a stronger sense of communal responsibility. Notably, the Local Peace Committees (LPCs) played a critical role in supporting IDP returns to Anbar,

a process that faced significant challenges, particularly due to the stigma against returnees, especially women. A donor observed:

“The LPCs, supported by religious and security figures, helped facilitate returns and address community issues. While we only visited once and lack comparative data, beneficiaries’ feedback highlighted the effective role of LPCs in resolving conflicts and reducing stigma.”

Empowerment of Women: The projects have had a profound impact on women, particularly in areas where they traditionally had limited participation in the workforce. Training programs have not only provided women with the skills to contribute to household incomes but have also promoted a sense of independence and agency, helping to break down social barriers. These efforts have resulted in increased female participation in peace building activities and committees, illustrating a shift towards more inclusive and empowered communities.

Through these combined methodologies, the projects are not only addressing immediate needs but are also laying the foundation for long-term social stability and cohesion.

3.1.4.2 Linkages with Similar Interventions

UNDP’s Social Cohesion and Stabilization Initiatives: All four projects are closely linked to UNDP’s broader Social Cohesion and Stabilization Programme, which aims to promote reconciliation, peace building, and economic recovery in Iraq. The Social Cohesion Programme provides a foundation for many of the interventions implemented under the PVE, C2RI, and Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration projects, including: Local Peace Committees: which were established under the Social Cohesion Programme, play a key role in the PVE, C2RI, and Livelihoods projects by facilitating dialogue and mediation within conflict-affected communities; and **Women and Youth Peace Groups:** Supported by the Social Cohesion Programme, these groups are integral to the PVE and C2RI projects, ensuring that women and youth play a central role in peace building and reconciliation efforts.

Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration Initiatives (C2RI): The C2RI project shares linkages with the Japan-funded Reconciliation and Reintegration Projects implemented in Iraq, which focus on reintegrating families with perceived ISIL affiliations through community-based peace building and socio-economic reintegration. These projects complement C2RI’s approach by offering integrated support for reconciliation, mental health, and economic development, thereby reducing vulnerabilities to violence and extremism.

UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS): The four projects are also linked with UNDP’s Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), which focuses on stabilizing areas liberated from ISIL control by restoring basic infrastructure, creating jobs, and fostering social cohesion. The FFS programme’s focus on post-conflict stabilization provides an important backdrop for the implementation of the PVE, C2RI, and Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration projects, particularly in liberated governorates like Ninewa, Salahaddin, and Anbar. Together, these efforts address both immediate recovery needs and long-term resilience.

Global Framework for Reintegration of Individuals Returning from Syria and Iraq: Both the PVE and C2RI projects are aligned with the Global Framework for Supporting the Reintegration of Individuals Returning from Syria and Iraq. This framework guides the safe return, rehabilitation, and reintegration of individuals and families perceived to have links with ISIL. By providing psychosocial support, livelihood opportunities, and community reconciliation mechanisms, the projects contribute to the

framework’s goals of ensuring that returnees are reintegrated into society in a way that reduces the risk of re-radicalization.

International Organization for Migration (IOM) Livelihoods and Reintegration Initiatives: The IOM implements several livelihood and reintegration programs in Iraq that are linked with the C2RI and Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration projects. IOM’s focus on cash-based interventions, business development, and vocational training aligns with the economic empowerment goals of these projects, and collaboration between UNDP and IOM ensures that interventions are complementary and avoid duplication.

Japan-Funded Reconciliation and Reintegration Projects: The **Japan-funded reconciliation and reintegration projects** in Iraq focus on **community-based peace building** and the **reintegration of marginalized groups**. These efforts align closely with the C2RI and **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** projects, which share similar goals of promoting reconciliation through **economic empowerment** and **community dialogue**. Some key linkages include: **Community-driven reconciliation:** Both Japan-funded projects and C2RI emphasize the importance of **local ownership** in peace building processes, fostering reconciliation through **community engagement** and **dialogue mechanisms**.

3.1.4.3 Leveraging Best Practices and Lessons Learned

The four projects also benefit from the lessons learned and best practices established in similar interventions in Iraq and other post-conflict settings:

Community Engagement: All projects emphasize the importance of local ownership and community involvement in decision-making. This approach, drawn from successful interventions in Iraq and other post-conflict settings, has proven critical to promoting long-term peace and stability.

Gender-Sensitive Programming: The emphasis on engaging women and addressing gender-specific challenges reflects best practices in post-conflict recovery and peace building. Gender-sensitive approaches are essential for both preventing violent extremism and fostering inclusive reconciliation.

Holistic Support for Returnees: The projects’ focus on providing psychosocial support, livelihood opportunities, and community-based reconciliation represents a best practice for addressing the needs of returnees and families with perceived ISIL affiliations. These comprehensive interventions help to break the cycle of violence and ensure successful reintegration into society.

3.1.5. Contribution of the project to the human rights-based approach, gender equality and women’s empowerment

The four projects—**Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)**, **Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI)**, **Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration in the Return Communities in Iraq**, and the **Social Cohesion Programme**—all adopt a **human rights-based approach (HRBA)** while placing strong emphasis on **gender equality** and **women’s empowerment**. These principles are fundamental to the projects’ design and implementation, ensuring that vulnerable and marginalized groups are included in the recovery and peace building process.

Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)

The HRBA ensures that all interventions across the four projects prioritize the protection and promotion of human rights. This approach focuses on empowering individuals, particularly marginalized groups, to claim their rights, and obliging institutions to fulfill their responsibilities.

Protection of Vulnerable Populations: All four projects focus on supporting **vulnerable populations**, including **internally displaced persons (IDPs)**, **returnees**, and families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL. These populations are often stigmatized and marginalized, making them more vulnerable to violence, discrimination, and exclusion.

The projects address these issues by: ensuring the **safe and dignified reintegration** of returnees and displaced populations through community-based initiatives; and addressing **human rights violations** associated with displacement, particularly the stigmatization and discrimination faced by families with perceived ISIL affiliations. As well as providing **mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)** to individuals affected by conflict, thereby promoting their **right to health** and well-being.

Right to Participation and Inclusion: The HRBA is evident in the projects' commitment to ensuring the **active participation** of all stakeholders, including vulnerable groups, in the design and implementation of interventions. Some key aspects include: **Community-driven approaches:** By engaging local peace committees, civil society organizations (CSOs), and community leaders, the projects ensure that beneficiaries have a voice in decision-making processes that affect them; and **inclusive decision-making:** Special efforts are made to include marginalized populations, such as **women, youth, and minorities**, in the projects' activities, ensuring that their voices are heard in peace building and reconciliation efforts.

Accountability of Institutions: The projects strengthen the **institutional capacities** of national and local governments to uphold human rights, particularly in relation to: **Preventing violent extremism (PVE)** through inclusive policies that respect human rights; and promoting **justice, reconciliation, and social cohesion** in post-conflict areas, ensuring that human rights are protected and that individuals and communities can rebuild their lives free from violence and discrimination.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Gender equality and women's empowerment were cross-cutting themes across the Social Cohesion Programme, ensuring that women were not only beneficiaries but also central actors in peace building, economic recovery, and reconciliation. The programme integrated gender-sensitive approaches into all its components, achieving significant results. Key contributions include:

Women's Participation in Peace building and Conflict Resolution: The projects actively promote women's leadership in peace building processes, reflecting the importance of women's involvement in achieving sustainable peace. Over 40% of Local Peace Committee members were women, actively participating in conflict resolution and reconciliation processes. Women-led dialogue initiatives in Mosul and Anbar played crucial roles in reducing stigma against returnees and fostering community acceptance. A participant stated, *"Our dialogues have transformed perceptions and empowered women to lead in rebuilding trust."*

Women for Peace Groups which were supported under the PVE and Social Cohesion Programme to engage women in dialogue, mediation, and community-led peace initiatives as well as gender-sensitive reconciliation mechanisms used under the C2RI and Social Cohesion Programme; ensured that gender perspectives were included in conflict resolution efforts, and that women's unique experiences and needs were considered in post-conflict reconciliation processes.

Economic Empowerment of Women: Women’s economic empowerment is a key priority across all four projects, contributing to both SDG 5 (Gender Equality) **and** SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). These for instance included vocational training and business grants under the Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration **and** C2RI projects which ensured that 50% of beneficiaries are women, providing them with vocational skills, business training, and access to business grants. These interventions helped women gain financial independence and contributed to the economic recovery of their communities. Secondly, the Cash-for-Work programs under the C2RI and Livelihoods projects provided temporary employment opportunities to women through Cash-for-Work (CfW) programs, giving them immediate income support while contributing to community rehabilitation. For instance, in Ninewa, women trained in tailoring and food processing established small businesses, contributing to household income and local economic revitalization. One participant remarked, *“The training has not only improved my skills but also given me financial independence.”*

Addressing Gender-Specific Needs and Challenges: The projects adopt gender-sensitive approaches that address the unique challenges faced by women in conflict and post-conflict settings, such as Gender-based violence (GBV) awareness-raising and support services for affected women under the PVE and Social Cohesion Programme. Additionally, **psychosocial support for women** and girls affected by conflict, particularly those who have experienced trauma or violence, were provided through the **C2RI and Social Cohesion Programme**.

The programme provided psychosocial support to over 800 women survivors of GBV, helping them regain confidence and reintegrate into their communities. GBV awareness sessions reached thousands, raising community awareness and fostering preventive measures. These programs educated communities on the negative impacts of GBV and provided support to women survivors which helped women cope with trauma and reintegrate into society.

Key Contributions to Women’s Empowerment

Empowering Women as Leaders in their communities: The projects promoted women’s leadership by encouraging them to take active roles in peace building, conflict resolution, and economic recovery efforts. Women’s Groups under the Social Cohesion Programme reached over 10,000 individuals through awareness campaigns on gender equality and inclusion. By supporting women’s participation in local governance, the projects contribute to building a more inclusive society where women’s voices are heard and valued. These campaigns challenged traditional norms and promoted women’s leadership in decision-making processes. In Mosul, women-led advocacy initiatives influenced local governance structures to adopt more inclusive policies.

Improving Women’s Access to Economic Opportunities: Through vocational training, business development programs, and community-driven initiatives, the projects enhance women’s access to sustainable livelihoods. This contributes to reducing poverty among women, improving their social and economic status, and enhancing their resilience to future shocks.

Promoting Gender Equality in Governance and Decision-Making: The projects work to increase the representation of women in governance structures and decision-making processes. This includes ensuring that women are included in Local Peace Committees, Youth and Women Peace Groups, and other community-based organizations that influence local policy and development.

The four projects—**Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI), Supporting**

Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration, and the **Social Cohesion Programme**—make significant contributions to the **human rights-based approach**, **gender equality**, and **women’s empowerment**. By addressing the rights and needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations, promoting women’s leadership in peace building, and empowering women economically, the projects help build a more inclusive and resilient society in Iraq. These interventions are critical for ensuring that post-conflict recovery is **inclusive**, **equitable**, and **sustainable**, and that all individuals, regardless of gender or background, have access to **human rights**, **justice**, and **economic opportunities**.

3.2. Coherence

The four projects—**Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)**, **Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI)**, **Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration in the Return Communities in Iraq**, and the **Social Cohesion Programme**—demonstrate a well-structured internal alignment of components as well as external coherence with other programs, frameworks, and national priorities. Below is an analysis of both **internal coherence** (the alignment of objectives, outputs, and activities within each project) and **external coherence** (alignment with national policies, international frameworks, and coordination with other initiatives).

3.2.1. Internal coherence of project components

Alignment of Objectives with Outputs and Activities

Each of the four projects had a clear and logical internal structure, ensuring that objectives, outputs, and activities are aligned to achieve the intended outcomes. This alignment strengthens the internal coherence of the projects. **For instance**, the Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI), Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration in Return Communities in Iraq, and the Social Cohesion Programme, shared common objectives aimed at fostering long-term stability, social cohesion, and the reintegration of marginalized communities. Each project’s activities, outputs, and objectives were carefully designed to ensure strong coherence, with a clear focus on preventing violent extremism, promoting reconciliation, and supporting socio-economic recovery.

For **Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)**, the objective was to build institutional and community capacity to prevent violent extremism. This was achieved through the development of PVE action plans, the training of local stakeholders, and the establishment of community-led initiatives. Activities such as training national and local actors, promoting inclusive governance, and creating community-based mechanisms directly contributed to the overall objective of preventing violent extremism. The strong internal coherence of this project was evident, as the activities (training, community dialogue, and awareness programs) aligned seamlessly with its goal of enhancing social stability and preventing extremism.

Similarly, **Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI)** aimed to reconcile and reintegrate families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL into their communities. The project’s outputs included support for reconciliation mechanisms, vocational training, psychosocial support, and community-driven initiatives. The project combined community dialogue, psychosocial services, and livelihood creation to facilitate the reintegration of marginalized groups. C2RI demonstrated robust internal coherence, as its activities, such as reconciliation forums and vocational

training, directly supported the reintegration of vulnerable individuals, contributing to the overarching goal of reconciliation and social cohesion.

The **Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration in Return Communities in Iraq** project focused on supporting the socio-economic reintegration of returnees and other vulnerable populations. It aimed to create livelihood opportunities through vocational training, business grants, and Cash-for-Work programs. The activities included offering vocational training, income generation initiatives, and business development to ensure that returnees could rebuild their livelihoods. This project's focus on economic empowerment and income generation strongly aligned with its goal of socio-economic reintegration, ensuring coherence between project components that addressed both economic recovery and social stability.

The **Social Cohesion Programme** worked to foster reconciliation, peace building, and social cohesion in conflict-affected areas. Key outputs included the establishment of Local Peace Committees, Women for Peace Groups, and Youth Peace Groups. The project emphasized community dialogue, mediation, and peace building initiatives, aiming to address deep-seated grievances, reduce tensions, and foster trust among conflicting groups. The project's alignment with its objective was clear, as the emphasis on local peace mechanisms and conflict mediation supported its overall goal of promoting social cohesion and reconciliation.

Across all these projects, cross-cutting themes and synergies enhanced their coherence and effectiveness. **Gender equality** was integrated into all activities, ensuring women's participation in peace building, economic empowerment, and decision-making. This approach not only strengthened the coherence of each project but also supported the broader aim of addressing gender-specific needs and promoting women's roles in post-conflict recovery. Furthermore, a **human rights-based approach** ensured that the projects protected the rights of vulnerable populations, including returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL. By prioritizing justice, inclusion, and dignity for all beneficiaries, these projects worked cohesively to promote sustainable and equitable post-conflict recovery.

Overall, the projects were well-aligned with their overarching objectives and demonstrated strong internal coherence. The shared themes of gender equality, human rights, and social stability across the projects ensured that they complemented one another, amplifying their collective impact on peace building, reintegration, and socio-economic recovery in Iraq.

Alignment with the CPD

The Social Cohesion Programme demonstrated strong internal coherence with the UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) for Iraq. The CPD emphasizes inclusive governance, socio-economic resilience, and social cohesion as critical pillars for Iraq's post-conflict recovery. The programme's focus on capacity building, reconciliation, and livelihood support addressed these pillars directly.

For instance, the capacity-building initiatives for over **2,300 government officials** aligned with the CPD's goal of strengthening institutional frameworks to sustain peace. In **Anbar**, localized governance systems were established to mediate disputes, directly contributing to inclusive governance structures envisioned by the CPD. Similarly, the economic recovery components, such as vocational training and business grants, were consistent with the CPD's emphasis on fostering economic resilience among vulnerable populations.

Alignment with the UNSDCF

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Iraq prioritizes human rights, equality, and sustainable development. The Social Cohesion Programme aligned closely with these priorities by adopting a human rights-based approach that empowered marginalized groups, including women, youth, and returnees.

The programme's initiatives to address gender-based violence (GBV) and promote women's leadership aligned with the UNSDCF's focus on reducing inequalities. In **Ninewa**, women-led food processing businesses not only provided economic opportunities but also enhanced women's social standing, reflecting the UNSDCF's goal of inclusive economic development. Furthermore, the psychosocial support services provided to over **1,200 individuals** demonstrated the programme's commitment to ensuring well-being and dignity for all beneficiaries, a core principle of the UNSDCF.

Integration Across Projects

Internally, the programme's components complemented each other, creating a holistic approach to addressing Iraq's challenges. For example, all four projects reinforced each other's objectives, creating a unified framework for achieving sustainable peace. For instance, the PVE project addressed drivers of radicalization through community-based dialogue, which complemented the reconciliation mechanisms established under the Social Cohesion Programme. Similarly, the C2RI project's focus on reintegrating ISIL-affiliated families strengthened LPC-led reconciliation processes, while the Livelihoods project addressed economic vulnerabilities that often fuel tensions. This integrated approach ensured that that peace building efforts addressed both structural and social determinants of instability while fostering social stability and economic resilience. In **Mosul**, LPCs mediated disputes while CfW projects rehabilitated schools, creating both immediate employment opportunities and long-term community assets. This synergy exemplifies the programme's internal coherence, as governance, social cohesion, and economic recovery were seamlessly interlinked.

Shared Platforms and Mechanisms:

Platforms like LPCs, Women's Groups, and Youth Peace Groups served as common foundations for implementing reconciliation, economic recovery, and PVE initiatives. These platforms facilitated community ownership and provided consistent channels for resolving conflicts, ensuring that interventions were locally relevant and sustainable.

Cross-Sectoral Alignment

The programme's design also demonstrated cross-sectoral alignment with broader UNDP strategies and frameworks. By addressing governance, economic recovery, and social inclusion simultaneously, the programme contributed to multiple strategic outcomes. The integration of PVE action plans into local governance systems, alongside reconciliation and livelihood support, showcased this alignment. Additionally, the programme's alignment with the SDGs, particularly **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)**, **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)**, and **SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)**, underscores its comprehensive approach to development.

The Social Cohesion Programme's internal coherence was evident in its alignment with the CPD, UNSDCF, and broader UNDP strategies. By integrating governance, socio-economic recovery, and social cohesion, the programme created a cohesive framework that addressed the multifaceted challenges faced by Iraq's conflict-affected communities. This alignment not only enhanced the programme's relevance but also ensured its effectiveness in fostering a peaceful and resilient Iraqi society.

3.2.2. External coherence of project components

External coherence refers to the alignment of the projects with **national priorities, international frameworks, and other programmatic interventions**. Each project demonstrates strong external coherence by aligning with Iraq’s national strategies and international commitments, as well as with similar programs implemented by UNDP and other international actors.

Alignment with National Policies and Priorities

The projects are well-aligned with Iraq’s national policies and development frameworks, ensuring that interventions contribute to broader national goals.

National Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism (2019): The **PVE project** is directly aligned with Iraq’s **National Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism**, which prioritizes prevention, reintegration, and fostering **peaceful coexistence**. The project’s activities, such as **community outreach** and **institutional capacity-building**, support Iraq’s efforts to counter terrorism by addressing the underlying causes of radicalization.

National Development Plan (2018–2022): The **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** and **C2RI** projects are closely aligned with Iraq’s **National Development Plan**, which emphasizes **economic recovery, poverty reduction, and social inclusion** in post-conflict regions. These projects contribute to national goals by providing **livelihood opportunities** and supporting the reintegration of vulnerable populations into the labor market.

Reconstruction and Development Framework (RDF): The projects align with the **Reconstruction and Development Framework**, which guides Iraq’s post-ISIL recovery. The focus on **restoring livelihoods, promoting social cohesion, and strengthening local governance** is critical to achieving national stabilization and reconstruction goals.

Alignment with International Frameworks

The projects also align with international frameworks and global commitments, ensuring coherence with **UNDP’s global strategy** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**:

The **Social Cohesion Programme** and **PVE** project contribute to **SDG 16-Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions** by promoting **peace building**, strengthening **local institutions**, and fostering **inclusive governance**.

All projects contribute to **SDG 5-Gender Equality** by promoting **women’s empowerment**, increasing women’s participation in peace building and economic recovery, and addressing gender-specific challenges.

The **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** and **C2RI** projects align with **SDG 8-Decent Work and Economic Growth** by supporting **job creation, vocational training, and business development** for returnees and vulnerable populations.

Synergies with Other Programmatic Interventions

The projects demonstrate external coherence by coordinating with other initiatives implemented by UNDP, international organizations, and national actors:

UNDP’s Social Cohesion and Stabilization Initiatives: The **Social Cohesion Programme** provides a foundation for the PVE and C2RI projects by establishing **Local Peace Committees** and

other mechanisms for community dialogue. These initiatives ensure that interventions are **locally driven** and align with broader peace building efforts.

UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS): The **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** project complements FFS efforts by addressing long-term stabilization needs through **livelihood creation** and **economic recovery**. Similarly, the **C2RI** project supports stabilization by facilitating the reintegration of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, contributing to community stability.

International Organization for Migration (IOM): Coordination with **IOM's livelihoods and reintegration programs** ensures that beneficiaries receive **comprehensive support**, including **vocational training, business grants, and psychosocial services**. This collaboration enhances external coherence by aligning resources and avoiding duplication of efforts.

The four projects—**PVE, C2RI, Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration**, and the **Social Cohesion Programme**—demonstrate strong internal coherence, with well-aligned objectives, outputs, and activities that support their respective goals of preventing extremism, promoting reconciliation, and fostering economic recovery. The projects also show strong external coherence by aligning with Iraq's national policies, international frameworks such as the SDGs, and complementary initiatives by UNDP and other organizations. This coherence maximizes the impact of the projects, ensuring that they contribute to **long-term peace, stability, and development** in Iraq.

3.2.3 Opportunities for Future Partnerships

Future programming can expand partnerships with:

1. **Private Sector:** To enhance economic opportunities for marginalized groups through job creation and entrepreneurship initiatives.
2. **Local Governments:** To deepen alignment with national policies and leverage local networks for broader impact.
3. **International Organizations:** To harmonize psychosocial and economic recovery interventions.
4. **Community-Based Organizations:** To ensure culturally sensitive and locally driven interventions.

3.3. Efficiency

3.3.1. Cost Effectiveness of the Project Implementation Strategy

Use of Local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): A significant driver of cost-effectiveness was the projects' reliance on **local CSOs** to implement activities at the grassroots level. This approach reduced the need for **expensive international consultants** and allowed for lower operational costs while maximizing local ownership. For instance, in the **C2RI project**, local CSOs led reconciliation efforts, which significantly reduced costs compared to externally driven reconciliation programs.

A key factor driving cost-effectiveness in the projects was their reliance on local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to implement activities at the grassroots level. This approach minimized the need for expensive international consultants, resulting in lower operational costs while maximizing local ownership and engagement. For example, in the C2RI project, local CSOs took the lead in reconciliation efforts, significantly reducing costs compared to externally driven reconciliation programs. Additionally, this approach had a broader impact, as highlighted by a project manager at a local CSO: *"Since I write project proposals, the techniques I learned helped me in project writing to represent women's voices. It benefited me both personally and institutionally."*

This emphasis on local capacity not only contributed to cost savings but also strengthened the institutional skills of local actors, ensuring the sustainability of efforts and the active inclusion of marginalized groups, particularly women.

Community-Based Peace Mechanisms: In both the Social Cohesion Programme and the PVE project, the establishment of Local Peace Committees (LPCs), Women for Peace Groups, and Youth Peace Groups proved to be a cost-effective strategy for promoting peace and social cohesion. These groups were trained to mediate conflicts and lead community dialogues, requiring minimal financial investment while yielding significant social returns, such as improved trust and reconciliation. The reliance on local volunteers in these committees further contributed to the projects' low implementation costs.

The effectiveness of this approach is exemplified in Ramadi, where LPCs played a pivotal role in supporting the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from camps. As noted by an LPC member and a governmental representative:

"We served as a reconciliation and support committee for returning IDPs from camps. Ramadi has been a leading example in community cohesion, hosting around 11,000 individuals formerly affiliated with ISIS who returned without a single revenge crime due to the local government's efforts, UNDP's support, and peace committees."

This model highlights the power of locally driven initiatives in fostering social cohesion and addressing the challenges of post-conflict reintegration.

Minimizing Expatriate and International Consultant Costs: The projects prioritized the use of **local expertise** over international consultants. By training local staff and engaging community leaders, the projects minimized the need for costly external experts. This approach was particularly evident in the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project**, where local trainers and business mentors were hired to support vocational training and entrepreneurship programs, significantly reducing overhead costs.

Engaging Local Governments: The projects worked closely with **local governments** to implement activities, which reduced the need for large project management teams. By integrating project activities

into local government structures—such as governorate-level **PVE committees**—the **PVE project** achieved its objectives without incurring additional administrative costs for setting up parallel systems.

Combining Livelihoods, Psychosocial Support, and Peace building: A key element of cost-effectiveness was the projects' ability to integrate multiple sectors—**livelihoods, psychosocial support, and peace building**—into a single program framework. This **multi-sectoral approach** allowed for the efficient use of resources across different project components, reducing the need for separate funding streams for each sector. For example, in the **C2RI project**, the same resources were used to provide **psychosocial support** to returnees, facilitate **economic reintegration**, and promote **community reconciliation**, optimizing resource allocation.

Cash-for-Work (CfW) Programs: The **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project** employed **cash-for-work (CfW) programs**, which were cost-effective as they addressed both **immediate income needs** and **community infrastructure recovery**. The CfW programs allowed participants to earn a wage while rebuilding schools, roads, and other public infrastructure, delivering dual benefits at a relatively low cost compared to more capital-intensive recovery programs.

Low-Cost Vocational Training: The vocational training programs implemented by the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project** were designed to be cost-effective by focusing on **industries with immediate local demand**, such as agriculture, carpentry, and tailoring. The project utilized **existing training centers** and local trainers, reducing the need for external training infrastructure. By equipping participants with practical skills that could be quickly monetized, the project achieved high economic returns at relatively low costs.

Small Business Grants: The provision of **small business grants** to trained beneficiaries was another cost-effective strategy. Rather than investing in large-scale economic infrastructure, the project empowered individuals to start **micro-enterprises**, such as small farms or tailoring shops. This approach reduced the need for significant capital investment while stimulating local economies through **entrepreneurship**.

Leveraging Donor Resources: The projects efficiently managed **multi-donor funding**, which allowed them to share costs across different donors. For example, the **Social Cohesion Programme** and **PVE project** received funding from a range of international donors, including **UN agencies, Japan, and USAID**, allowing them to pool resources and ensure that all activities were sufficiently funded without over-relying on a single donor. This **cost-sharing** approach reduced the financial burden on each individual donor while ensuring that the projects had sufficient funds to meet their objectives.

Efficient Fund Allocation: Donor resources were allocated efficiently across project activities, with priority given to **low-cost, high-impact interventions**. For example, the **PVE project** prioritized **community awareness campaigns** and **youth-led PVE initiatives**, which required relatively low investment but had a broad reach in terms of impact on community resilience to violent extremism.

Adaptability in Resource Allocation: The projects demonstrated **flexibility** in reallocating resources based on emerging needs and challenges. For instance, when security conditions deteriorated in certain governorates, the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project** adjusted its resource allocation to focus on safer areas while continuing to support beneficiaries remotely. This

flexibility allowed the project to **optimize resources** and avoid the cost of suspended or delayed activities.

Efficient Procurement Practices: The projects adopted **competitive procurement processes**, particularly for vocational training materials, business grants, and cash-for-work programs. By engaging local suppliers and using **competitive bidding**, the projects ensured that goods and services were procured at **competitive rates**, reducing overall project costs.

Capacity Building for Local Actors: A key element of the projects' cost-effectiveness was their focus on **capacity building** for local actors, ensuring that project activities could be sustained after the project ended. For example, in the **PVE project**, the investment in training **local government officials** and **CSOs** to implement and monitor PVE action plans meant that these activities could continue independently, reducing the need for ongoing external support. This approach maximized long-term impact while minimizing future costs.

Sustainable Livelihoods for Beneficiaries: The **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project** focused on creating **sustainable livelihoods** by providing vocational training and business development support. By helping beneficiaries establish **income-generating activities**, the project ensured that participants could continue to earn an income long after the project ended, creating **long-term economic benefits** from relatively small upfront investments.

Measurable Social Impact: The **Social Cohesion Programme** achieved significant results in terms of **peace building, reconciliation, and community resilience** at a relatively low cost. The use of community-based peace mechanisms, such as **Local Peace Committees** and **Women and Youth Peace Groups**, delivered a high **return on investment (ROI)** in terms of reducing community tensions and fostering trust. For example, in regions like **Ninewa** and **Salaheddin**, the investment in **community dialogues** and **awareness campaigns** led to a significant reduction in local conflicts, demonstrating that small investments in social cohesion can yield substantial social and economic returns.

Uneven Capacity Across Regions: One of the challenges to achieving cost-effectiveness was the **uneven capacity** of local partners, particularly in certain governorates. In some regions, local CSOs and government institutions lacked the capacity to implement activities efficiently, leading to higher costs in terms of **capacity building** and **oversight**. For example, in **Salaheddin**, the need for additional training and monitoring increased project costs in comparison to more established regions like **Kirkuk**.

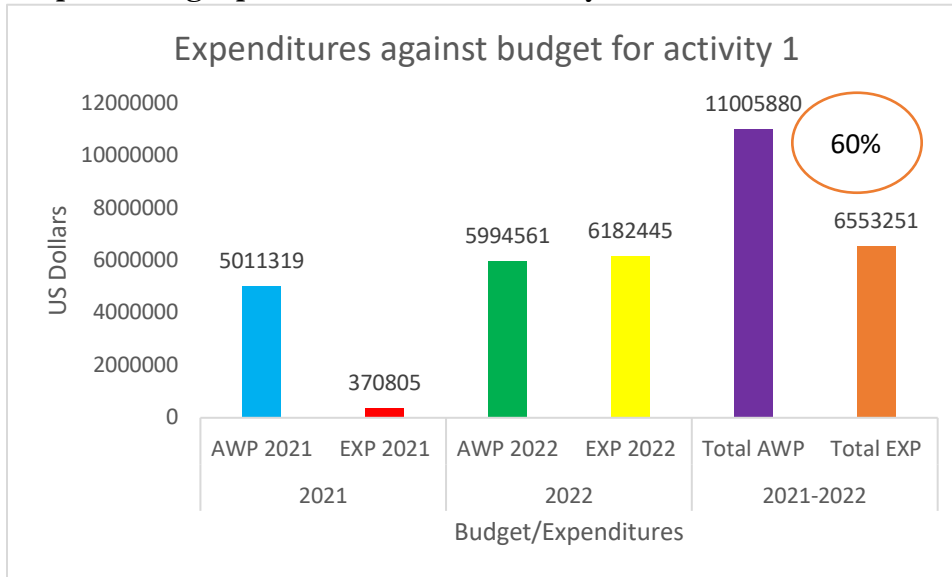
Follow-Up and Sustainability Gaps: While the projects were cost-effective in their initial implementation, there were challenges in providing **long-term follow-up support** for beneficiaries, particularly in the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project**. Some participants in vocational training programs lacked the resources or business acumen to sustain their small businesses over time, suggesting that additional investments in **business development support** and **post-project monitoring** might have been needed to ensure the sustainability of economic outcomes.

3.3.2. Financial and Human Resource Management
Data analysis on Social Cohesion JBS - 00125983

Financial analysis on planned and actual expenditures for social cohesion in 2021 and 2022.

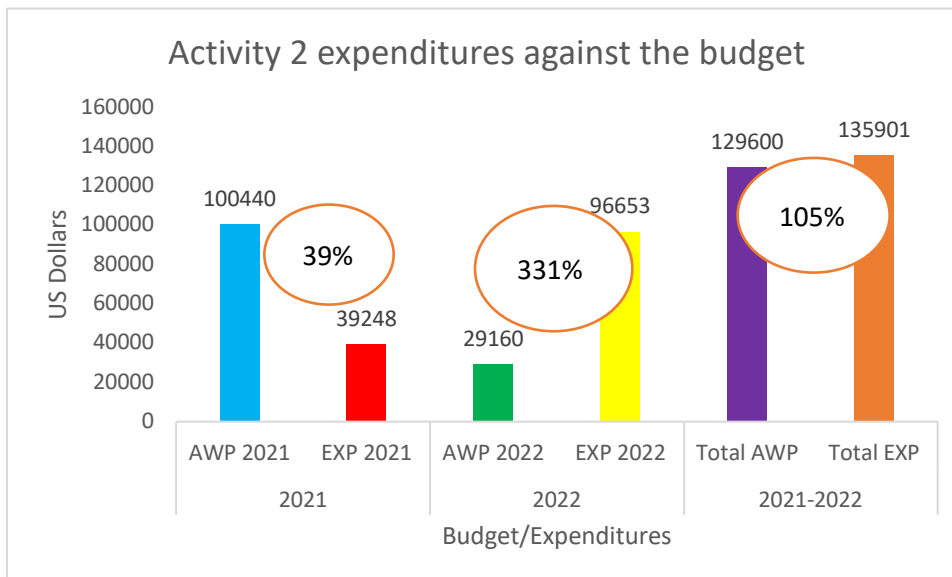
Activity 1

Graph 1: Budget performance under activity 1



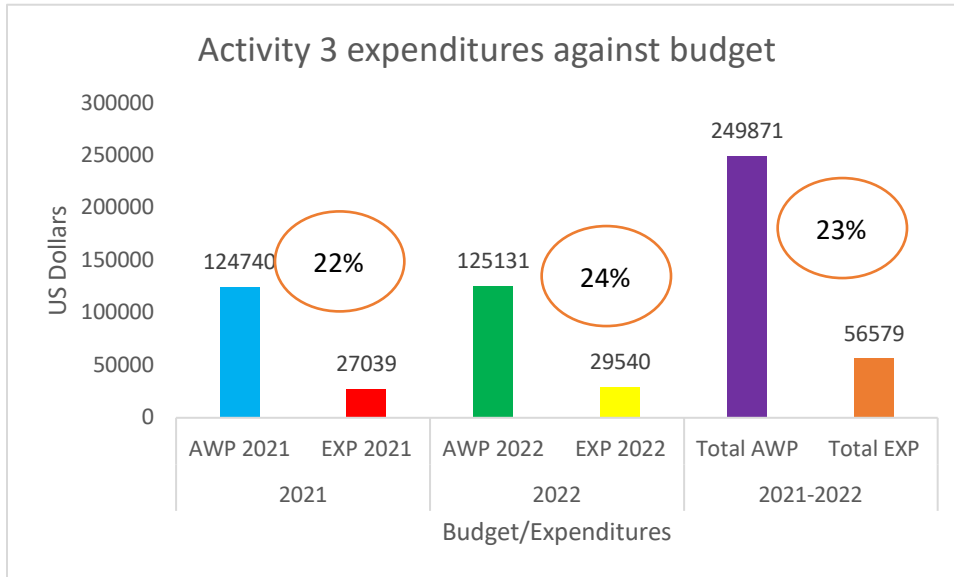
The project utilized only 7% of the activity budget in 2021 while in 2022, there was an overspent of 3%. The overall burn rate for the two years was 60%.

Activity 2



Graph 2: Expenditure versus activity 2 budget
 In 2021, 39% of the activity 2 budget was utilized. In 2022, there was an overspent of the activity budget by 231%. The overall burn rate for the activity 2 budget was 105%, which is over and above by 5% of the total activity budget for two years.

Activity 3

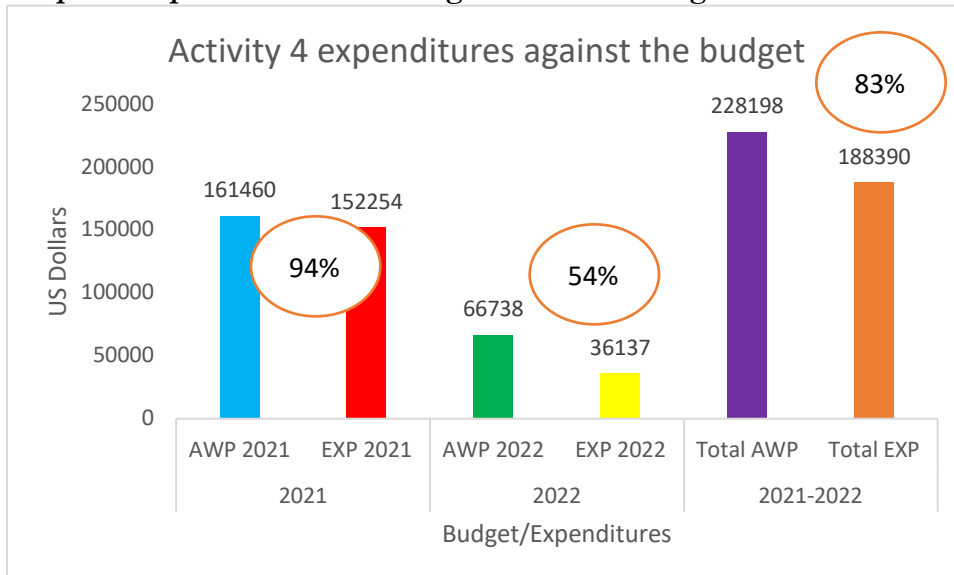


Graph 3: Expenditures incurred against budget for activity 3

The expenditures on activity 3 was at 22% and 24% in 2021 and 2022 respectively. In the two years, there was burn rate of 23%. This shows gross under-spend on this activity.

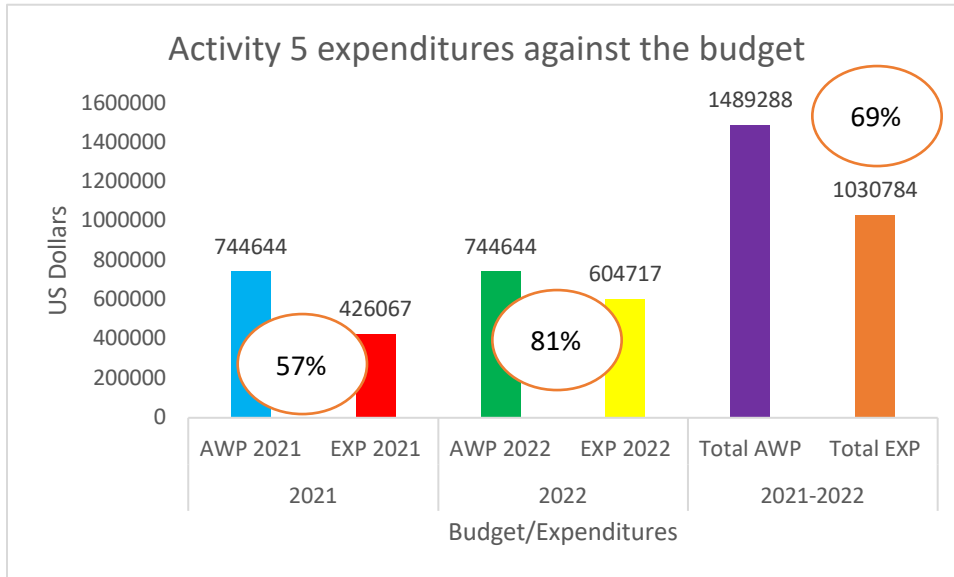
Activity 4

Graph 4: Expenditure incurred against annual budget for the activities 4



The burn rate of 94% was registered in 2021 and 54% in 2022 on this activity line. The overall burn rate for both years was 83% which is relatively good compared to the previous activities.

Activity 5



Graph 5: Funds spent on activity 5 vis-à-vis the budget allocation

On activity 5, 57% of the activity line budget was spent in 2021. In 2022, 81% of the year’s activity line budget was utilized, with overall burn rate of 69%.

General annual budget performance

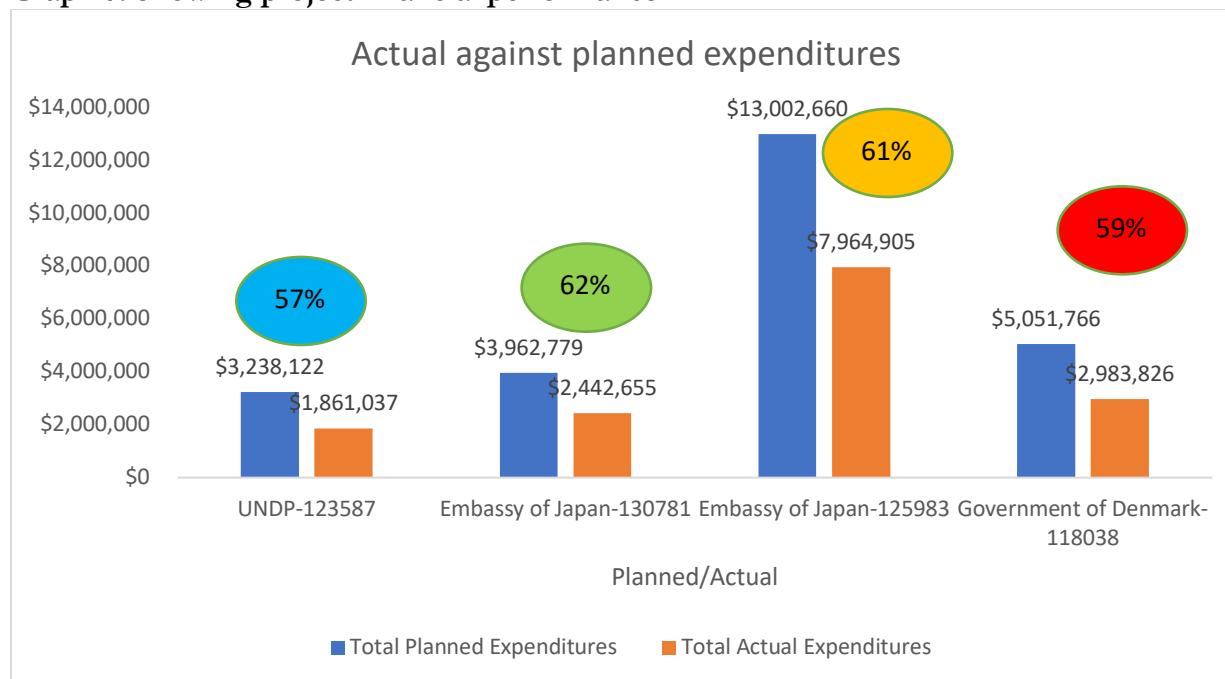
The overall budget performance across the five activities implemented over the two years is 69%. The budget utilization per year stands at 16.5% and 99.8% for 2021 and 2022 respectively. The fiscal year 2021 had very poor performance while in 2022, almost all the funds were absorbed.

Analysis of the financial report according to annual work plan (AWP) of different donors

The five-year program, funded by various donors—namely UNDP (project code 123587), the Embassy of Japan (project codes 130781 and 125983), and the Government of Denmark (project code 118038)—includes several distinct projects. In 2021, only the Embassy of Japan funded a project under code 125983, which was implemented through 2022, meaning the program consisted of just one project in its initial year.

Three of the four projects were designed with a two-year lifespan, with the exception of the project funded by the Government of Denmark, which began in 2022 and remains ongoing. Across all four projects, the annual burn rates for the different fiscal years were 17% for 2021, 76% for 2022, 61% for 2023, 85% for 2024, and 100% for 2025.

Graph 7: Showing project financial performance



Graph 7, based on re-calculated totals, shows project financial performance at 57% for UNDP-123587, 62% for Embassy of Japan-130781, 61% for Embassy of Japan-125983, and 59% for Government of Denmark-118038. The overall program financial performance across all projects and periods stands at 60%. It is important to note, however, that fiscal year 2025 is only four months underway.

General summary

Analysis of the financial report according to annual work plan (AWP) of different donors

The five-year program, funded by various donors—namely UNDP (project code 123587), the Embassy of Japan (project codes 130781 and 125983), and the Government of Denmark (project code 118038)—includes several distinct projects. In 2021, only the Embassy of Japan funded a project under code 125983, which was implemented through 2022, meaning the program consisted of just one project in its initial year.

Three of the four projects were designed with a two-year lifespan, with the exception of the project funded by the Government of Denmark, which began in 2022 and remains ongoing. Across all four projects, the annual burn rates for the different fiscal years were 17% for 2021, 76% for 2022, 61% for 2023, 85% for 2024, and 100% for 2025.

Across the three activities in the annual work plan (AWP), the data revealed that 92% of the budget was spent in 2023 with some minor adjustment of less than 1% (USD -6033.85 of 2067819.51 total budget) in 2024. The overall burn rate 92% could have been higher if implementation in 2024 completed 12 calendar months since the data analysis covered up to September.

3.3.3. Organisation Management, Partnership and coordination

Effective **organization management, partnership building, and coordination** have been central to the success of the four projects. These elements play a critical role in ensuring that project activities are aligned with national priorities, that resources are mobilized efficiently, and that there is sustained collaboration between key stakeholders such as the government, civil society, local communities, and international donors. Below is a detailed review and analysis of the **organization management, partnership, and coordination** strategies used in these projects.

Organization Management

Well-Defined Management Structures: Each of the four projects established clear management structures that allowed for effective oversight and implementation. The **Support Social Stability in Iraq through PVE** project, for example, developed a **multi-tiered management system** that included a **central project management unit, governorate-level teams, and local field coordinators**. This ensured that the project could operate across multiple governance levels while maintaining strong oversight at the central level.

Project Teams with Specialized Expertise: The projects ensured that their management teams included individuals with the necessary **technical expertise** in key areas such as **peace building, psychosocial support, economic recovery, and gender equality**. For instance, the **C2RI project** included experts in **psychosocial support and conflict resolution**, enabling the project to address the complex needs of returnees, especially families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL.

Flexibility in Response to Challenges: The projects displayed **adaptive management** in response to changing circumstances, particularly in conflict-affected regions where security conditions often fluctuated. For example, in **Ninewa**, the **Social Cohesion Programme** had to delay certain activities due to security concerns but adjusted its approach by providing **remote support** to community-led initiatives, demonstrating flexibility and resilience in management.

Regular Monitoring and Adaptation: Each project instituted **regular management reviews** that allowed the project teams to assess progress and adjust activities as needed. The **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project**, for instance, conducted quarterly management reviews to assess the effectiveness of vocational training programs and adjust course offerings based on labor market needs.

Partnerships

Engagement with National and Local Governments: All four projects were built on strong partnerships with **national and sub-national government institutions**. The **PVE project** worked closely with the **Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA)** and other key ministries to align project activities with Iraq's **National Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism**. This alignment ensured that the project contributed to national objectives and received political support.

Capacity Building for Government Stakeholders: In addition to engaging government institutions as partners, the projects focused on **capacity-building** for government officials to ensure that local authorities had the tools and expertise to sustain project outcomes. In the **C2RI project**, for example, training was provided to local authorities in conflict-affected areas, allowing them to take the lead in **reconciliation and reintegration efforts**. This built **ownership** and contributed to the sustainability of the project.

Engagement of Local CSOs: Local **civil society organizations (CSOs)** played a crucial role in implementing community-level activities across all four projects. In the **Social Cohesion Programme**, local CSOs were key partners in establishing **Local Peace Committees** and leading community dialogues. By partnering with CSOs, the projects ensured that interventions were **locally driven** and that there was strong community participation.

Women and Youth-Led CSOs: The projects also made a concerted effort to partner with **women-led** and **youth-led CSOs**. This was particularly evident in the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project**, where **women’s cooperatives** were established to lead **vocational training** and **business development** for vulnerable women. These partnerships ensured that the projects contributed to **gender equality** and **youth empowerment**.

Multi-Donor Funding and Coordination: Each project was funded by multiple international donors, including the **United Nations, Japan, USAID**, and other bilateral partners. Strong relationships with international donors allowed the projects to secure the necessary resources and provided the flexibility to **scale up** or **adapt** activities as needed. The **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project**, for example, received funding from various international partners, which enabled it to expand its vocational training programs to additional governorates.

Collaboration with International Agencies: The projects also partnered with international agencies, such as the **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** and **UNICEF**, to implement complementary activities. For instance, the **C2RI project** worked closely with IOM on providing **mental health services** to returnees, leveraging IOM’s expertise in displacement issues to provide holistic support to vulnerable populations.

Coordination Mechanisms

National-Local Coordination Structures: The projects established coordination mechanisms that ensured strong communication and alignment between **national** and **local authorities**. In the **PVE project**, **national-level PVE committees** were formed to provide strategic oversight, while **governorate-level committees** ensured that local contexts were considered in the implementation of PVE strategies. This ensured that **national policies** were adapted to local needs and that there was coherence across governance levels.

Decentralization of Project Activities: The **Social Cohesion Programme** employed a decentralized approach to ensure that local communities had **decision-making power** in project implementation. Local **governance structures**, such as **Local Peace Committees**, were established to coordinate peace building efforts at the community level, while national stakeholders provided oversight and resources. This decentralized approach ensured that the project could respond to local needs while maintaining strategic coherence.

Coordination Across Sectors: The projects employed a **multi-sectoral approach** to ensure that interventions were holistic and addressed the interconnected challenges facing post-conflict communities. For example, the **C2RI project** coordinated between sectors such as **psychosocial support, livelihoods**, and **education**, ensuring that returnees received comprehensive support. Similarly, the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project** coordinated with local **health services** to provide health checks for beneficiaries enrolled in vocational training programs, ensuring that economic and social needs were addressed simultaneously.

Harmonizing Donor Efforts: To avoid duplication and maximize resources, the projects facilitated **donor coordination meetings**, particularly in regions where multiple donors were involved. The **PVE project** hosted regular **coordination meetings** between its primary donors and other international organizations to ensure that there was alignment in **funding priorities** and that donor efforts complemented each other.

Joint Programming with Other UN Agencies: The projects were designed to complement the work of other UN agencies operating in Iraq. For example, the **Social Cohesion Programme** coordinated with **UNICEF** and **UNFPA** to ensure that gender-sensitive approaches were integrated into peace building activities. This coordination allowed for more **comprehensive interventions** that addressed the needs of **women and children** in post-conflict areas.

3.3.4. Strengths and Weaknesses of Management, Partnership and Coordination

Management, partnership, and coordination play pivotal roles in determining the success and sustainability of development projects. For the four projects—**Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)**, **Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI)**, **Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration in the Return Communities in Iraq**, and the **Social Cohesion Programme**—both strengths and weaknesses have shaped their outcomes. Below is a comprehensive review of the **strengths** and **weaknesses** in these three critical areas.

Strengths of Management, Partnership, and Coordination

Clear Roles and Responsibilities: The projects maintained well-defined **management structures** that outlined roles and responsibilities at the **national, governorate, and community levels**. This hierarchical structure ensured smooth **implementation, oversight, and decision-making**. The **PVE project**, for instance, had a strong central management team and field coordinators who worked closely with local stakeholders.

Adaptive Management: One of the strengths across the projects was the ability to **adapt** to evolving security, political, and social conditions. The management teams were able to respond to **challenges**—such as delays in implementation due to security risks in **Ninewa**—by adjusting project timelines and finding **alternative approaches** (e.g., remote support). The **Social Cohesion Programme** showed adaptability by tailoring its approach to fit the specific needs of each region while maintaining core project objectives.

Emphasis on Capacity Building: A key strength in management was the heavy emphasis on **capacity building** for local actors, particularly government officials and civil society organizations (CSOs). This approach enhanced **local ownership** and ensured that local partners had the necessary skills to sustain the projects' results beyond the implementation period. For example, the **C2RI project** provided extensive training to local peace committees and government officials, ensuring that reconciliation efforts could continue independently.

Government Engagement: The projects demonstrated strong partnerships with both **national and local government institutions**, which was crucial for **policy alignment** and sustainability. The **PVE project** was well-coordinated with the Iraqi government's **National Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism**, ensuring that the project supported national objectives. Moreover, engaging **local governance structures** allowed for smooth implementation and facilitated government **buy-in** at different levels.

Community Ownership: Another strength was the active engagement of **local communities**, particularly through **community-driven initiatives**. The **Social Cohesion Programme** and **C2RI** projects empowered **Local Peace Committees** and **Women and Youth Peace Groups** to take ownership of peace building and reconciliation efforts. This grassroots approach fostered greater community commitment and trust in the projects, which is critical for **long-term sustainability**.

Effective Partnerships with CSOs: The projects built strong partnerships with **local CSOs**, many of which were critical in implementing activities at the grassroots level. These partnerships ensured that projects were **locally driven** and **inclusive**, particularly in reaching **marginalized groups**, such as women and youth. For example, the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project** worked closely with **women's cooperatives** to implement vocational training and entrepreneurship programs, leading to **improved economic resilience** for vulnerable populations.

Multi-Stakeholder Coordination: The projects exhibited strong **multi-stakeholder coordination** mechanisms, particularly in their collaboration with **international donors**, **UN agencies**, **local government**, and **CSOs**. For example, the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project** coordinated effectively with **international donors** and **UN agencies** to ensure that vocational training and grant programs were well-funded and reached the most vulnerable communities.

Donor and Partner Collaboration: The projects maintained **regular coordination meetings** with donors and implementing partners, facilitating better alignment of **funding priorities** and **avoiding duplication of efforts**. The **C2RI project**, for instance, held quarterly coordination meetings with donors to review project progress and make any necessary adjustments to ensure alignment with changing ground realities.

Cross-Sectoral Integration: The projects' coordination across sectors (e.g., livelihoods, reconciliation, psychosocial support) ensured that interventions were **holistic** and addressed the **multi-dimensional needs** of beneficiaries. For example, the **Social Cohesion Programme** coordinated with health services to integrate **mental health** into community peace building efforts, ensuring that the social and psychological needs of beneficiaries were not overlooked.

Weaknesses of Management, Partnership, and Coordination

Bureaucratic Delays: One of the weaknesses encountered in the management of the projects was the **bureaucratic delays** in decision-making, particularly in the coordination between national and local governments. In some cases, the approval process for activities, such as the development of PVE action plans or the disbursement of business grants, was slow due to **protracted negotiations** between ministries and local authorities. This affected the timely implementation of certain activities.

Over-Centralization in Initial Phases: While decentralization was a strength in the later phases, some projects experienced **over-centralization of decision-making** during the initial stages, which slowed down the responsiveness to local needs. For example, in the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project**, some early decisions on resource allocation were made at the central level without sufficient consultation with **local stakeholders**, resulting in misalignment between national goals and local priorities.

Capacity Constraints of Local CSOs: While the partnerships with local CSOs were a strength, there were instances where **capacity gaps** within certain CSOs affected the quality of project

implementation. For example, in **Salaheddin**, some CSOs lacked the experience to handle large-scale reconciliation and reintegration programs, which required the project management team to provide additional **capacity-building support**. This added strain on project resources and slowed down the pace of implementation.

Varying Levels of Government Commitment: While government partnerships were generally effective, **commitment levels varied** between regions. In certain governorates, **local authorities** were more engaged and willing to support project activities, while in others, **political fragmentation** or **lack of local capacity** hindered cooperation. For example, in **Kirkuk**, political divisions between different ethnic groups sometimes created barriers to government support for the **Social Cohesion Programme**.

Challenges in Inter-Sectoral Coordination: While cross-sectoral integration was a goal, there were occasions when **coordination between different sectors** (e.g., economic recovery, mental health services, and peace building) was insufficient. For example, in the **C2RI project**, there were gaps in the coordination between **livelihood support** and **mental health services**, which meant that some returnees did not receive the comprehensive care that was intended. This gap in inter-sectoral coordination reduced the **holistic impact** of the project in certain regions.

Lack of Standardized Data Sharing: In some cases, there was **inconsistent data sharing** between project teams, government bodies, and donor agencies. This led to challenges in **monitoring and evaluation**, as different stakeholders used **different reporting systems**. The **PVE project** experienced challenges in gathering standardized data across governorates, as local authorities used varied formats for reporting on PVE outcomes.

3.3.5. Visibility and Communications Strategy

The Social Cohesion Programme employed a robust visibility and communications strategy to enhance awareness, foster transparency, and promote the programme's successes among stakeholders, beneficiaries, and the broader public.

Branding and Public Outreach: The projects were clearly branded under the UNDP Social Cohesion Programme, ensuring consistent messaging and visual identity. Key activities included distributing branded materials such as brochures, posters, and banners at community events, workshops, and training sessions. Additionally, media campaigns featured stories of beneficiaries, promoting the programme's impact and its alignment with Iraq's national priorities.

Engaging Traditional and Digital Media: Traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers were leveraged to amplify the programme's reach. For instance, local television stations aired stories showcasing successful reintegration efforts under the C2RI project, while radio programs in Ninewa and Salah al-Din broadcast messages promoting reconciliation and inclusivity. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter were used to share updates, success stories, and calls to action, reaching a broader audience, particularly youth. A campaign highlighting the role of women in peace building reached over 500,000 views on Facebook, demonstrating the effectiveness of digital outreach.

Community Engagement: The programme prioritized direct engagement with beneficiaries through community dialogues, workshops, and town hall meetings. These forums provided opportunities for local communities to learn about the programme, share feedback, and celebrate milestones. For example, events marking the establishment of Local Peace Committees in Anbar included testimonies from beneficiaries, fostering trust and community ownership.

Partnerships for Communication: Collaboration with local media outlets and community organizations strengthened the programme’s communication efforts. Training sessions for over 100 journalists on conflict-sensitive reporting ensured accurate and constructive coverage of programme activities. Additionally, partnerships with civil society organizations enhanced grassroots outreach, particularly in marginalized communities.

The visibility and communications strategy significantly enhanced the programme’s reach and impact. By showcasing success stories, promoting inclusive narratives, and engaging diverse stakeholders, the strategy not only increased awareness but also built public confidence in the programme’s objectives. It also strengthened accountability and transparency, ensuring that the programme remained responsive to the needs of its beneficiaries.

3.3.6. Robustness of the M&E Systems

The four projects implemented **M&E systems** to track progress, evaluate impact, and ensure that resources are being used effectively. This review and analysis assess the **robustness** of these M&E systems, focusing on their design, implementation, data collection, reporting mechanisms, and challenges.

Strengths of the M&E Systems

Alignment with Project Objectives: Each project had a **well-structured M&E framework** that was aligned with the project’s overall goals, outputs, and outcomes. The **PVE project**, for instance, developed an **M&E framework** that tracked key indicators such as community resilience to radicalization, capacity-building for local authorities, and the effectiveness of awareness campaigns. The **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project** had similar frameworks focusing on vocational training outcomes, employment rates, and business success metrics.

Multi-Tiered Approach: The M&E systems were designed to operate at **multiple levels**—national, governorate, and community levels—ensuring that data collection and reporting could capture both **macro-level outcomes** and **micro-level impacts**. This was particularly important for the **Social Cohesion Programme**, where **community-level outcomes** like peace building, reconciliation, and trust-building needed to be tracked in addition to overall project goals.

Integration Across Project Components: The M&E systems in the four projects were designed to capture data across various **project components**, including peace building, psychosocial support, economic recovery, and social cohesion. For instance, in the **C2RI project**, the M&E system tracked both **psychosocial indicators** (e.g., mental health outcomes for returnees) and **economic indicators** (e.g., livelihoods restoration and income generation), ensuring a holistic view of project success.

Structured Data Collection: The M&E systems established **regular data collection processes** to track progress against project indicators. In the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project**, field staff were trained to collect data on **vocational training completion rates**, **employment outcomes**, and **business sustainability** through structured **surveys** and **follow-up assessments**.

Similarly, the **C2RI project** used **psychosocial assessments** to track the mental health and social integration of returnees over time.

Frequent Monitoring and Review Meetings: The M&E systems included **regular review meetings** where data was analyzed, and performance was evaluated. The **PVE project** held quarterly meetings at the national and governorate levels to review progress and make necessary adjustments. These meetings provided opportunities for **course correction** and **adaptive management** based on real-time data, ensuring that the project could respond effectively to emerging challenges.

Training for M&E Staff: The projects placed a strong emphasis on **capacity building** for local staff involved in M&E. Field coordinators, local government officials, and CSO partners received training on **data collection techniques**, **impact assessment**, and **monitoring tools**. This approach ensured that the **quality of data collection** was consistent across different regions and stakeholder groups. The **Social Cohesion Programme**, for instance, trained **community peace committees** on how to collect data on local reconciliation efforts, enabling **community-driven monitoring**.

Use of Digital Tools: Some projects incorporated **digital M&E tools** to improve data collection efficiency. The **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project** used **mobile data collection tools** to gather real-time information on the progress of beneficiaries in vocational training programs. This reduced manual errors and ensured that data was collected systematically and stored in a **centralized database** for further analysis.

Outcome Tracking: The M&E systems were designed not only to track **outputs** (e.g., number of people trained, number of peace building events) but also to evaluate the **longer-term outcomes** and **impacts** of the projects. For example, the **C2RI project** monitored both the number of returnees reintegrated into their communities and the **community attitudes** towards these returnees over time, using **perception surveys** to gauge changes in social cohesion.

Impact Evaluation Mechanisms: In addition to tracking short-term results, the projects included mechanisms for **long-term impact evaluation**. The **PVE project** conducted **community resilience assessments** at the start and end of the project to measure the project's impact on reducing violent extremism and increasing community resilience. This approach ensured that the projects could assess **lasting impacts** beyond the immediate project activities.

Weaknesses and Challenges in the M&E Systems

Inconsistent Data Quality: One of the challenges faced in the M&E systems was the **inconsistency in data quality** across different regions and implementing partners. In some governorates, **local capacity constraints** led to **inaccurate data collection** or **incomplete reporting**. For example, in **Salaheddin**, the lack of M&E expertise among local CSOs affected the quality of data collected on returnee reintegration, requiring additional training and oversight from the project management team.

Fragmented Reporting Formats: Another weakness was the use of **different reporting formats** by various implementing partners, which created challenges in **data aggregation** and **comparative analysis**. In the **PVE project**, some local government entities and CSOs used different templates for reporting on community outreach activities, which complicated the process of consolidating and analyzing data at the national level.

Weak Baseline Assessments: While the projects conducted initial **needs assessments** and conflict analyses, in some cases, the use of **baseline data** was limited. For instance, in the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project**, baseline data on **pre-project employment levels** and **business income** was not always systematically collected, making it more difficult to assess the project’s impact on income generation over time.

Lack of Control Groups for Impact Evaluation: The absence of **control groups** in some of the impact evaluation methodologies weakened the ability to make **causal inferences** about the project’s effects. Without control groups, it was more challenging to determine whether observed changes in outcomes (e.g., reduced extremism or improved livelihoods) were directly attributable to the project or other external factors. The **C2RI project** would have benefited from control groups to better measure the direct impact of reconciliation efforts on social cohesion.

Overreliance on Quantitative Metrics: While the M&E systems were robust in tracking **quantitative indicators**, such as the number of beneficiaries trained or the number of peace building events held, there was sometimes a lack of emphasis on **qualitative data**. Qualitative insights—such as **in-depth interviews**, **focus group discussions**, and **case studies**—could have provided a richer understanding of the **social dynamics** and **psychosocial impacts** of the projects. For example, in the **PVE project**, more qualitative data on the **perceptions** of radicalization among youth could have enhanced the analysis of the project’s effectiveness in preventing extremism.

Challenges in Long-Term Tracking: While the projects incorporated impact evaluations at the end of the project cycle, **long-term monitoring mechanisms** were less developed. For instance, tracking beneficiaries’ progress after the project ended—particularly in **vocational training** and **business development programs**—was limited in the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project**. Without follow-up monitoring one or two years after the project, it was difficult to assess whether the beneficiaries were able to sustain their livelihoods over the long term.

Dependence on External Funding for M&E: In some cases, the sustainability of the M&E systems was dependent on continued donor funding. If external funding was reduced or ended, **local stakeholders** (particularly government and CSOs) had limited capacity to maintain the M&E frameworks independently. This created a risk that post-project monitoring and evaluation would not be sustained, undermining the ability to track the **long-term impact** of the interventions.

3.4. Effectiveness

3.4.1. Achievement of Programme outcomes and targets

The Social Cohesion Programme—comprising the projects Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI), Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration in the Return Communities in Iraq, and the overarching Social Cohesion Programme—achieved significant outputs and outcomes across governance, reconciliation, socio-economic recovery, and inclusive leadership. Below is a detailed analysis of the programme’s results.

Outcome 1: Strengthened National and Local Governance Structures to Promote and Sustain Social Cohesion

The programme made substantial progress in enhancing governance structures, equipping institutions with the tools to sustain peace and address community grievances effectively. Through targeted

capacity-building initiatives, over 2,300 national and local government officials were trained in conflict analysis, mediation, and reconciliation strategies.

In Salah al-Din, structured workshops on conflict analysis and reconciliation strategies resulted in improved governance responses. For example, local authorities successfully mediated disputes over water rights that previously caused significant community tensions. A government official noted, *“We now have the skills to analyze conflicts and implement solutions that bring communities together.”*

The institutionalization of PVE strategies provided a sustainable framework for addressing violent extremism. In Ninewa, localized PVE action plans developed with input from community leaders enabled the identification and mitigation of radicalization risks. This participatory approach fostered trust and ownership among stakeholders.

Additionally, the programme integrated social cohesion policies into national governance frameworks, ensuring alignment with Iraq’s development priorities. In Anbar, enhanced governance capacities allowed local authorities to respond swiftly to disputes, demonstrating the long-term benefits of strengthened institutional mechanisms.

Outcome 2: Reintegration of Individuals and Families into Cohesive, Peaceful Communities

The programme facilitated the reintegration of vulnerable populations, particularly families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, into cohesive communities. 45 Local Peace Committees (LPCs) were established to provide platforms for reconciliation and conflict resolution.

In Anbar, LPCs mediated over 320 disputes related to land ownership and community grievances, significantly reducing tensions between returnees and host communities. A participant shared, *“These committees have become a trusted avenue for resolving conflicts without resorting to violence.”*

Complementing LPCs, women’s and youth-led peace initiatives promoted inclusivity in reconciliation processes. For instance, in Mosul, Women for Peace Groups facilitated dialogues that bridged divides between returnees and host communities, reducing stigma and fostering collaboration. One participant noted, *“Our dialogues have brought acceptance and unity in our community.”*

Youth Peace Groups in Ninewa engaged in community outreach, addressing grievances and promoting social cohesion. Their efforts included organizing workshops that involved over 200 youth, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration between generations.

Outcome 3: Improved Access to Livelihoods and Psychosocial Well-Being for Vulnerable Populations

Economic recovery and psychosocial support were central to the programme, addressing both financial vulnerabilities and trauma. Over 3,500 beneficiaries received vocational training aligned with local market demands.

In Ninewa, participants trained in carpentry and tailoring established small businesses, revitalizing local economies. One participant stated, *“The vocational training provided me with the skills to open my own workshop, supporting my family and contributing to the community’s recovery.”*

Cash-for-work (CfW) initiatives created 2,200 temporary jobs, rehabilitating critical infrastructure such as schools, roads, and water systems. In Mosul, a CfW project employed over 150 youth to renovate

a local school, enhancing educational opportunities for children and providing income for workers. Similarly, in Salah al-Din, CfW programs repaired water distribution systems, ensuring access to clean water for thousands.

Psychosocial support services reached over 1,200 individuals, helping beneficiaries overcome trauma and regain stability. In Anbar, counseling sessions for returnees addressed the psychological impact of displacement, fostering emotional resilience and reintegration. A participant shared, *“The counseling sessions gave me the strength to rebuild my life and reconnect with my community”*

Outcome 4: Inclusive Leadership Driving Sustainable Peace and Reconciliation

The programme successfully promoted inclusive leadership, empowering women, youth, and marginalized groups to lead reconciliation and peace building efforts. Awareness campaigns on gender equality and inclusion reached over 10,000 community members, challenging traditional norms and fostering inclusive decision-making.

In Mosul, women-led reconciliation dialogues brought divided groups together, reducing stigmatization and promoting collaboration. A women’s group leader remarked, *“These initiatives have shown that women can lead efforts to rebuild trust and create lasting peace.”*

Youth leaders in Ninewa organized community events to promote dialogue and unity, engaging over 500 participants in activities that fostered shared understanding and cooperation. Media professionals were also trained in conflict-sensitive reporting, with over 100 journalists covering stories that highlighted successful reintegration and peace building efforts.

Outcome 5: Strengthened Community Resilience through Social and Economic Infrastructure Development.

The programme enhanced community resilience by addressing immediate needs and long-term development goals. Infrastructure rehabilitation projects under the CfW initiative restored essential services while creating economic opportunities.

In Mosul, CfW projects rebuilt schools and markets, enabling children to return to education and small businesses to resume operations. Similarly, in Salah al-Din, the rehabilitation of irrigation systems supported agricultural livelihoods, improving food security for local communities.

These infrastructure improvements not only addressed critical gaps but also fostered a sense of ownership and pride among community members, contributing to sustainable development.

Outcome 6: Enhanced Capacity to Prevent Violent Extremism at Multiple Levels

The PVE initiatives under the programme addressed the root causes of extremism by strengthening governance, fostering trust, and promoting community-led solutions. Localized PVE action plans developed in partnership with authorities in **Ninewa** and **Anbar** ensured targeted interventions that addressed specific drivers of radicalization. A government official stated, *“The PVE framework has empowered us to tackle challenges before they escalate, ensuring stability in our communities.”*

Through training and community engagement, the programme cultivated local ownership of PVE efforts, ensuring sustainability and alignment with broader social cohesion goals. In Mosul, community leaders were trained to identify early signs of radicalization, enabling timely interventions. A participant

from the local government stated, *“The PVE training has empowered us to take proactive measures in safeguarding our community.”*

The Social Cohesion Programme delivered substantial results across all intended outcomes, addressing critical drivers of conflict and social fragmentation. By strengthening governance structures, reintegrating individuals and families, improving access to livelihoods, promoting inclusive leadership, enhancing community resilience, and preventing violent extremism, the programme demonstrated its effectiveness in fostering a more peaceful, resilient, and cohesive Iraqi society.

Tangible outputs such as the establishment of **45 LPCs**, training of over **3,500 beneficiaries** in vocational skills, creation of **2,200 temporary jobs**, rehabilitation of critical infrastructure, and provision of psychosocial support to **1,200 individuals** underscore the programme’s significant impact. These efforts, underpinned by inclusive awareness campaigns and media engagement, have created lasting pathways for peace and stability in Iraq.

3.4.2. Project Management

Below is a comprehensive review and analysis of how project management practices have contributed to the achievements of these projects, as well as areas that could be further strengthened.

Alignment with National Strategies: The projects have been well-aligned with **Iraq’s national development priorities**, particularly in areas of **peace building, economic recovery, social cohesion, and prevention of violent extremism (PVE)**. For instance, the **PVE project** aligns closely with the **Iraq National Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism (2019)** and Iraq’s broader national security strategy. This alignment ensured **government buy-in** from the start and facilitated **partnerships with local authorities**.

Further still, the projects also ensured **the integration of projects with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. Each project was designed with a clear connection to the **SDGs**, particularly **SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)**, **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)**, and **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)**. This provided a strategic framework for international support and ensured that the projects contributed to Iraq’s global development commitments. This was well evidenced in an in-depth interview with an Assistant Governor noted that, *“UNDP’s support, particularly in assisting the formulation of the 2023 plan for Nineveh, was significant. The projects implemented under this plan—including green spaces and libraries to combat violent extremism—showcase UNDP’s commitment to aligning with local priorities and ensuring a long-term impact. Their work with local NGOs has been impactful, with most projects successfully completed.”*

Community Engagement in Project Design: In the initial planning phases, the projects employed a **participatory approach**, involving **local stakeholders**, including community leaders, **civil society organizations (CSOs)**, and **government representatives**, to ensure that the design was tailored to local needs. For example, in the **C2RI project**, extensive consultations with communities and **tribal leaders** ensured that reconciliation processes were culturally sensitive and locally owned.

Relatedly, the projects also undertook **Needs Assessment and Conflict Analysis** at the start. Prior to the design of the projects, **comprehensive needs assessments** and **conflict analyses** were conducted to understand the root causes of violence, extremism, and economic challenges in Iraq. These assessments helped ensure that the project design was grounded in the local context, particularly in conflict-affected regions like **Ninewa** and **Salaheddin**.

UN and Donor Engagement: The projects were successful in securing **multi-donor funding**, which allowed for comprehensive implementation. For example, the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** project was funded by multiple international donors, including the **UN, Japan**, and other bilateral partners. This diversified funding base enhanced the project's financial resilience and allowed for flexibility in expanding or adjusting project components based on local needs.

Resource Allocation for Capacity Building: A significant portion of resources was allocated toward **capacity building** for both government institutions and communities, ensuring that these groups could sustain project outcomes. For instance, the **PVE project** invested in building the capacity of local governance structures to implement **monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks**, which ensured better oversight of PVE strategies at the local level.

Cost-Effective Program Delivery: The projects utilized **cash-for-work (CfW)** programs and **vocational training** as cost-effective ways to deliver immediate income support and sustainable skills development. The **C2RI project** combined economic support with **psychosocial services**, ensuring that returnees could access both economic and mental health services without duplicating costs across different service providers.

Government Engagement at National and Sub-National Levels: All four projects established strong partnerships with **Iraq's central government** as well as **local authorities** in conflict-affected regions. This government engagement ensured that project interventions were aligned with national policies and that local authorities were empowered to take ownership of the initiatives. For example, the **Social Cohesion Programme** worked closely with local councils in **Kirkuk** and **Anbar**, integrating peace building efforts into local governance structures. This was well elaborated in a KII with one of the District Governors who reported that, *"The Community Cohesion Program played an effective role in solving most issues it addressed, particularly the issue of returning families from Jada Camp. Ramadi has been a leading example in community cohesion, hosting around 11,000 individuals formerly affiliated with ISIS who returned without a single revenge crime. This success is largely due to the local government's efforts, UNDP's support, and peace committees. Their approach exemplifies professionalism and focus, addressing both the immediate needs and the broader social dynamics."*

Correspondingly, the data revealed that the projects particularly the **PVE project**, established **national and governorate-level PVE committees** ensured that the government was directly involved in the **implementation** and **monitoring** of project activities. This facilitated stronger coordination between national policy frameworks and local execution.

Involvement of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): The projects partnered with local CSOs to implement community-level activities, particularly in areas related to **social cohesion, peace building**, and **economic recovery**. This collaboration enhanced **local ownership** and **trust-building** within communities. For instance, the **C2RI project** partnered with **women-led CSOs** to facilitate the reintegration of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, ensuring that women's specific needs were addressed in the process.

Additionally, the projects particularly the **Social Cohesion Programme** successfully established **Local Peace Committees and Community Groups** such as the **Women and Youth Peace Groups** which were instrumental in leading community dialogues, mediating conflicts, and fostering

reconciliation. The community-based approach not only enhanced trust but also ensured that **project interventions** were tailored to local contexts.

Conflict-Sensitive Design: Given the **volatile security situation** in Iraq, particularly in **ISIL-liberated areas**, the projects incorporated **conflict-sensitive approaches** to minimize risks. The **C2RI project**, for example, anticipated potential backlash against ISIL-affiliated families and designed its reconciliation activities to include **community mediation** and **dialogue forums**, which significantly reduced tensions in return communities.

Mitigating Political Instability Risks: The projects took into account Iraq’s **political instability** and developed strategies to manage these risks. By decentralizing project management and ensuring that local governance structures had significant roles in implementation, the projects were less vulnerable to national-level political changes. For instance, in **Salaheddin**, local councils took on a leading role in managing **PVE and reconciliation efforts**, insulating the project from national political disruptions.

Adaptive Management: The projects adopted **flexible implementation strategies**, allowing for adjustments based on the changing political and security landscape. In **Ninewa**, when security conditions deteriorated, the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project** adapted by shifting some activities to safer regions, while continuing to support communities through **remote capacity-building** and **monitoring systems**. This was evidenced in an interview with a UNDP staff who reported that, *"In one project, we initially offered small grants for business startups followed by cash-for-work programs. However, we faced dissatisfaction from community members who received lower cash-for-work payments compared to those granted startup funds. The community's frustration highlighted the importance of setting clear expectations. We responded by adapting the strategy to offer cash-for-work opportunities first, followed by grants, to reduce tensions and ensure equitable participation. This approach has proven more harmonious and has strengthened community trust."*

Continuous Monitoring of Conflict Dynamics: The **PVE** and **Social Cohesion** projects continuously monitored local conflict dynamics through **community-level feedback mechanisms**, ensuring that they could quickly adapt activities to changing conditions on the ground. For example, in **Anbar**, the project adjusted its approach to community engagement after receiving feedback that initial outreach strategies were not inclusive enough for minority groups.

M&E Frameworks at National and Local Levels: The projects developed **comprehensive M&E frameworks** that allowed for continuous tracking of progress against project goals. The **PVE project** established **M&E systems** in four pilot governorates, ensuring that **local government officials** could assess the effectiveness of PVE interventions. This contributed to a data-driven approach in improving project performance.

Relatedly, the projects implemented robust **data collection** mechanisms, using both **qualitative** and **quantitative** indicators to measure impact. For example, the **C2RI project** regularly collected data on **returnee reintegration** outcomes, including social acceptance levels, livelihood improvements, and mental health indicators, allowing the project team to refine psychosocial support activities as needed.

Learning from Field Experience: The projects promoted **learning and adaptation** based on experiences in the field. Regular **review meetings** with field teams, government counterparts, and local CSOs allowed for **cross-learning** and the identification of best practices. For instance, lessons

learned from the **Social Cohesion Programme** in **Kirkuk** were applied in **Anbar**, improving community engagement strategies.

Documentation of Best Practices: The projects made a concerted effort to document and share best practices across **peace building** and **economic recovery** initiatives. For example, the **C2RI project** published reports on effective community-based reconciliation strategies that could be used as a reference for similar interventions in other conflict-affected regions.

However, there were noted challenges in project management which among others included; **complex coordination structures** between National and Local Actors: While partnerships with government and civil society were strong, there were challenges in **coordinating activities between national and local actors**. In some cases, the involvement of multiple stakeholders led to **delays in decision-making** and **implementation bottlenecks**. For instance, in the **PVE project**, coordination between the central government and governorate-level authorities occasionally slowed the rollout of PVE action plans; and

Security Threats: The volatile security environment in Iraq posed challenges to project implementation, particularly in **ISIL-liberated areas**. Some activities had to be postponed or adjusted due to **security threats**. For example, in **Ninewa**, community outreach events under the **Social Cohesion Programme** were delayed due to the resurgence of armed groups.

3.4.3. Results Framework: Quality and Design

The results framework of the Social Cohesion Programme was meticulously crafted to guide implementation, monitor progress, and ensure alignment with intended outcomes. The design demonstrated strong clarity by linking programme activities to measurable outputs and outcomes that addressed the structural and social determinants of conflict. For example, the establishment of Local Peace Committees (LPCs) was a key output aimed at mediating disputes and fostering community trust. This output directly contributed to the broader outcome of enhanced social cohesion.

A notable strength of the framework was its integration of cross-cutting themes such as gender equality, inclusion, and human rights. Each component of the programme explicitly addressed these themes, ensuring that interventions benefited all demographic groups, particularly marginalized populations. Furthermore, the framework was flexible, allowing for real-time adjustments to address emerging challenges such as heightened tensions in certain regions or the evolving needs of returnees and IDPs. The alignment of the results framework with Iraq's National Development Plan, UNSDCF priorities, and UNDP's strategic goals reinforced its relevance and applicability to the local context.

However, some areas required improvement. Data collection systems needed enhancements to capture detailed, disaggregated information, particularly for vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities. Additionally, resource constraints occasionally limited the scale and reach of certain interventions, highlighting the need for sustained funding to ensure the framework's full implementation.

To enhance the robustness of the results framework, future iterations should focus on strengthening data collection systems to capture disaggregated information on vulnerable groups. Expanding funding and resources will be essential to address gaps in service delivery, ensuring broader coverage of vocational training and psychosocial support. Additionally, integrating real-time monitoring tools will enable dynamic adjustments to interventions, further improving their relevance and effectiveness.

3.5. Impact

This section discussed project impacts, intended and unintended effects (What real difference have the activities made to the lives of beneficiaries taking into account gender considerations, such as focus on women- headed households, as well).

The four projects have had significant impacts on the lives of beneficiaries. These impacts encompass **intended effects**, aligned with project goals, and **unintended effects**, both positive and negative. The projects have focused on fostering **peace building, economic recovery, social cohesion, and gender inclusion**, particularly addressing the needs of **women-headed households, youth, and marginalized groups**. Below is a detailed analysis of the **real difference** the projects have made in the lives of beneficiaries, with a special focus on **gender considerations**.

3.5.1 Intended Impacts

Improved Livelihoods for Vulnerable Groups: One of the core intended impacts of the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project** was to provide vulnerable individuals, particularly **women-headed households** and **youth**, with vocational training and small business grants to foster economic recovery. The project successfully helped over **4,500 beneficiaries**, with a significant portion of these being **women-headed households** who lacked formal employment opportunities. By providing **business grants** and **skills development** in areas like **tailoring, farming, and carpentry**, the project empowered these women to become economically self-reliant. Many participants reported increased **household incomes**, improved **food security**, and greater **economic stability**. This was well evidenced in in-depth interviews that were collected and revealed what. It was noted that; *“The support allowed me to open a shop for clothing and abayas, and it’s been a success. I feel optimistic about its future and hope for a chance to expand further.”*—business owner and mother of eight.

Another respondent reported that, “I opened a small shop near my home selling women’s clothing, and I’m thankful to say it’s sustainable. This project has truly made a difference for my family.”—shop owner and mother of five

Another respondent also revealed that, “I had no job before, and now this project has become a steady source of income for me. Although it’s ongoing, I do need additional support to expand.”—unemployed mother of two before the project

Sustainable Business Development: The **small business grants** provided through the project enabled beneficiaries to establish micro-enterprises, such as **small farms, bakeries, and tailoring shops**, which not only improved their livelihoods but also contributed to local economies. For example, in **Kirkuk**, women who received training in **agriculture** and **business management** reported that their businesses grew by **50% in income** within the first year, allowing them to reinvest in their enterprises and employ other community members. This was evidenced in in-depth interviews where the key informants noted that,

“The Support Social Stability project connected returnees with market opportunities, helping them start businesses that addressed both personal livelihoods and local community needs. These sustainable enterprises are a cornerstone of long-term stability.” a coordinator for Violent Extremism Prevention

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"With the grant I received, I opened a clothing and abaya shop. This project has not only provided a livelihood for my family but has also brought a sense of pride and stability. I look forward to expanding it further." Beneficiary in Nineveh

"By integrating sustainable business development into peace building efforts, this project enabled participants to move from dependence to economic self-sufficiency. These businesses not only support families but also reinforce the community's economic resilience." a district Governor

"The livelihood programs under C2RI 2021 laid the foundation for sustainable economic growth in Nineveh. From tailoring shops to small-scale farming, these businesses have created job opportunities and reduced reliance on external aid." an Assistant Governor

"C2RI 2023 empowered women and youth to start businesses that are deeply rooted in their communities. These sustainable enterprises have not only provided stable incomes but have also contributed to breaking cycles of dependency and marginalization." an advisor on Women's Affairs

Reduction in Community Tensions: A key intended impact of the **Social Cohesion Programme** and **C2RI project** was to reduce tensions between returnees (including those perceived to be affiliated with ISIL) and host communities. By establishing **Local Peace Committees**, facilitating **community dialogues**, and promoting **reconciliation activities**, the projects successfully fostered **trust** and **social harmony** in conflict-affected regions. In **Ninewa** and **Salaheddin**, the return of over **3,000 families** was facilitated by these peace building activities, which significantly reduced the risk of retaliation ag-ainst returnees and led to **long-term social reintegration**. This was further evidenced in interviews with key informants who reported that,

"The Iraq Social Cohesion Programme has been instrumental in diffusing tensions between host communities and returnees. Through the establishment of peace committees and UNDP's continuous support, we managed to reintegrate over 11,000 individuals affiliated with ISIS into Ramadi without a single incident of revenge, creating a safer and more cohesive community." _ A District Governor

"The program reduced tensions in areas where mistrust was rampant. The work done in schools, water access projects, and community dialogues helped people see each other as allies rather than adversaries, healing the divisions created by years of conflict." _ A coordinator for Violent Extremism Prevention

"Support Social Stability in Iraq combined livelihood projects with peace building, which helped address the root causes of mistrust. By improving the quality of life through infrastructure upgrades and community-led initiatives, we saw a marked reduction in tensions among our residents." A District Governor

"The project's focus on tangible outcomes like clean water access and school renovations helped communities shift focus from division to progress. These efforts not only improved living conditions but also brought people together, reducing tensions and building trust." A coordinator for Violent Extremism Prevention

"In Nineveh, C2RI 2021's initiatives, such as the rehabilitation of public spaces and vocational training programs, created common ground for returnees and host communities to interact. These efforts significantly eased tensions, fostering trust and reducing hostility." An assistant Governor

"The community dialogue sessions supported by C2RI 2021 addressed deep-seated grievances and broke down barriers. By focusing on shared goals, such as youth empowerment and local infrastructure, tensions within communities were visibly reduced." An Engineer

Empowerment of Women in Peace building: The projects made a deliberate effort to include **women’s voices** in peace building efforts through the establishment of **Women for Peace Groups**. In many communities, these women-led groups took the lead in mediating conflicts, resolving local disputes, and advocating for social cohesion. In **Ninewa**, for instance, women leaders successfully mediated a land dispute between returnees and host community members, preventing potential violence and fostering **long-term reconciliation**. This was further elaborated in interviews with key informants who reported that,

"The Iraq Social Cohesion Programme gave women the tools to become active participants in community peace building. Through training and leadership initiatives, women were able to mediate local conflicts and advocate for the inclusion of marginalized groups, fundamentally changing their role in society." An advisor on Women’s Affairs

"Women’s participation in the peace committees has been transformative. Their perspectives and leadership helped address sensitive issues that male leaders often overlooked, creating more inclusive and lasting solutions to community tensions."
A District Governor

"C2RI 2023 was a turning point for women in peace building. Women-led projects not only fostered dialogue but also created opportunities for economic empowerment, which strengthened their role as key contributors to community stability and resilience." An advisor on Women’s Affairs

"Women played a central role in the success of C2RI 2023. By participating in training and leading peace committees, they became trusted mediators, helping resolve disputes and bridge divides in ways that were previously unimaginable."
A coordinator for Violent Extremism Prevention

Increased Community Resilience to Extremism: Through the **PVE project**, significant efforts were made to increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism, particularly among **youth** and **marginalized groups**. **Community awareness campaigns**, youth-focused PVE initiatives, and **capacity building** for local authorities led to measurable improvements in community resilience. In regions like **Kirkuk** and **Anbar**, local communities reported a reduction in youth engagement with extremist groups, as young people were instead provided with **vocational training**, **educational opportunities**, and **leadership roles** in local PVE efforts.

Youth Engagement in PVE Initiatives: The project empowered young people to lead **PVE activities** through **youth peace groups** and **community outreach campaigns**. In **Karbala**, youth groups implemented a series of anti-extremism workshops in local schools and community centers, reaching over **5,000 young people** and raising awareness of the dangers of radicalization. These youth-led initiatives helped shift community norms around extremism and contributed to a **safer environment** for vulnerable populations. For instance, a key informant noted that,

"Involving youth in PVE programs helped channel their energy into positive actions. Many became leaders in their communities, spearheading campaigns that promoted tolerance and discouraged violence, proving their critical role in preventing extremism." A coordinator for Violent Extremism Prevention

An assistant Governor agreed and noted that, *"Under C2RI 2021, youth were engaged in vocational training and dialogue sessions, empowering them to resist extremist recruitment. These initiatives helped young people see their potential as contributors to their community’s stability and economic recovery."*

Another key informant also reported that, *"Youth-led peace dialogues under C2RI 2021 were particularly impactful. They brought diverse groups together and provided a platform for young voices to influence decisions, fostering an environment of understanding and collaboration."* Engineer

A coordinator for Violent Extremism Prevention noted that, *"Youth-focused PVE programs provided young people with alternatives to violence, equipping them with skills and opportunities to rebuild their lives. This approach has been critical in reducing the vulnerability of at-risk groups to extremist influences."*

3.5.2 Unintended Impacts

Positive Unintended Impacts

Increased Social Mobility for Women: While the projects aimed to economically empower women through vocational training and business grants, an unintended effect was the increased **social mobility** and **leadership roles** that women gained as a result. In some regions, women who started small businesses became **community leaders** and role models, further **challenging traditional gender roles**. For instance, women in **Kirkuk** who had started small farms were later elected as members of local **agricultural cooperatives**, providing them with greater **decision-making power** in their communities. This was further evidenced in interviews with key informants who reported that, *"Through the Iraq Social Cohesion Programme, women have gained opportunities to move beyond traditional roles. Whether through leadership in peace committees or entrepreneurship, they now have a stronger presence in community decision-making, paving the way for social and economic mobility."* Advisor on Women's Affairs

Another reported that, *"The inclusion of women in peace building and entrepreneurship initiatives under C2RI 2023 has transformed their social standing. Many now hold influential roles within their communities, contributing to decisions that shape the future."* a coordinator for Violent Extremism Prevention

"The Support Social Stability project created pathways for women to gain financial independence and leadership roles. Their increased mobility has not only benefited their families but has also enhanced their influence within their communities." Official for Violent Extremism Prevention.

"The program has empowered women to step into public roles, breaking barriers that limited their participation in community and economic activities. Their increased involvement has significantly contributed to the reintegration and stabilization of our communities." A District Governor

Enhanced Trust in Local Governance: Another positive unintended impact was the improvement in **trust between communities and local governments**. The projects' focus on building the capacity of local government officials to lead reconciliation and PVE efforts contributed to a **rebuilding of trust** in areas where communities had previously been skeptical of government interventions. In **Ninewa**, for example, local authorities played a key role in facilitating the reintegration of ISIL-affiliated families, which improved their relationship with communities that had historically viewed the government as ineffective or corrupt. This was further elaborated in interviews where a key informant reported that, *"By addressing immediate community needs such as education and infrastructure, the Support Social Stability project has restored confidence in our local governance. The transparent delivery of services has hown the public that their government is working to meet their needs."* A coordinator for Violent Extremism Prevention

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An Advisor on Women’s Affairs added that, *"C2RI 2023's focus on inclusivity, particularly for women and marginalized groups, has strengthened trust in local governance. When people see their concerns addressed and their participation valued, they are more likely to trust the government and its initiatives."*

An Assistant Governor noted that, *"C2RI 2021 has been a bridge for building trust between the local authorities and the communities we serve. By directly involving community members in the reintegration process, we have seen a shift in how people view their local government—more supportive and engaged."*

Expanded Reach of Peace building Initiatives: The **Social Cohesion Programme** and **C2RI project** unexpectedly expanded their reach beyond the initial target communities. Due to the success of community dialogues and reconciliation forums, neighboring regions requested similar interventions, leading to the **replication of peace building efforts** in adjacent communities. This demonstrated the **spillover effect** of successful social cohesion efforts, contributing to broader regional stability.

A District Governor, agreed and reported that, *"The Iraq Social Cohesion Programme has significantly expanded the reach of peace building initiatives. By establishing local peace committees and fostering dialogue, it brought communities together in ways we hadn't seen before. This model now serves as a blueprint for other regions in need of reconciliation."*

An Advisor on Women’s Affairs, also added that, *"C2RI 2023 expanded peace building initiatives by actively involving women and youth in leadership roles. Their participation has not only widened the reach of these efforts but also deepened their impact on community cohesion and stability."*

Negative Unintended Impacts

Increased Tensions in Some Return Communities: In a few cases, the reintegration of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL led to **unintended negative consequences**, particularly in communities where **tensions remained high**. Despite reconciliation efforts, some returnees faced **continued stigmatization** and **hostility** from host communities, which led to **social isolation** and, in some instances, increased **community divisions**. In **Salaheddin**, for example, certain families were reluctant to fully integrate, and **youth returnees** expressed frustration at being excluded from local employment opportunities, exacerbating social tensions. For instance,

A Coordinator for Violent Extremism Prevention said that, *"Increased tensions in return communities underscore the importance of dialogue. Under C2RI 2023, we facilitated discussions between returnees and host communities, but more must be done to address root causes like economic insecurity and social stigmas."*

A Coordinator for Violent Extremism Prevention, also added that, *"The return of displaced families has, in some cases, reignited tensions in communities struggling with their own challenges. The Support Social Stability project has made strides in addressing these issues, but persistent gaps remain in addressing the needs of all community members equally."*

An Assistant Governor reported that, *"In certain return communities, the influx of displaced families strained existing infrastructure, sparking tensions among residents. More comprehensive planning and resources are essential to mitigate these conflicts."*

Overburdening of Local Authorities: The reliance on **local governments** and **CSOs** to implement project activities led to some unintended consequences in regions where local institutions were already

overstretched. In regions like **Kirkuk** and **Anbar**, the additional responsibility placed on local authorities to manage PVE activities, reconciliation forums, and economic recovery programs led to **overburdening** and **resource constraints**, which limited the effectiveness of certain project components. This highlighted the need for greater capacity-building and **resource allocation** for local institutions in future interventions. For instance,

A District Governor agreed and reported that, "As local authorities, we are the first responders to the needs of our communities, but the sheer volume of demands—ranging from reintegration to infrastructure rebuilding—has stretched us beyond capacity. Without sufficient resources and support, it feels like we are constantly firefighting, unable to address long-term solutions effectively. The support from programs like UNDP's has been invaluable, but the burden on local governance remains overwhelming."

Gender Dynamics and Social Resistance: While the focus on **women's empowerment** in peace building and economic activities was largely successful, in certain conservative regions, there was **social resistance** to women taking on more visible public roles. Some women who participated in **leadership roles** in peace committees faced **backlash from male community members** and were subjected to **social scrutiny**. In **Karbala**, for instance, a few women leaders faced challenges when their public engagement was perceived as inappropriate in highly traditional communities, leading to **social isolation** for those women. In this regard, an Advisor on Women's Affairs reported that, *"Challenging gender norms in conflict-affected areas is not just about empowering women; it's about shifting deeply rooted societal mindsets. While women have stepped into leadership roles and contributed significantly to peace building, their progress is often met with resistance from traditional power structures. Overcoming this requires not only training and resources for women but also community-wide efforts to address biases and foster acceptance of women's evolving roles in society."*

3.5.3 Gender Considerations and Focus on Women-Headed Households

Direct Economic Benefits for Women-Headed Households: The projects placed a special focus on supporting **women-headed households**, particularly through **livelihoods and economic reintegration activities**. These households, many of which were displaced by conflict or had lost male breadwinners, benefited significantly from **vocational training** and **small business grants**. Women-headed households reported improved **household income**, increased **food security**, and a greater ability to **provide for their children**. In **Kirkuk**, women who participated in tailoring and agriculture training reported that their **household incomes doubled**, allowing them to pay for schooling and healthcare.

Women's Leadership in Peace building: A significant gender impact of the projects was the increased participation of women in **public and political life**, particularly through **Women for Peace Groups** and **community leadership roles**. In **Ninewa**, women-led peace initiatives contributed to **local conflict resolution** and **reconciliation efforts**, where women mediated between returnees and host communities. This not only improved social cohesion but also **empowered women** to take on **leadership roles** traditionally held by men, marking a significant shift in gender dynamics.

Economic Independence and Social Mobility: By providing **vocational training** and **business development support** to women-headed households, the projects contributed to women's **economic independence** and **social mobility**. Women who started small businesses gained **greater autonomy** in decision-making, both within their households and their communities, challenging traditional gender norms and **increasing their influence**

3.6. Sustainability of the Project

3.6.1. Sustainability of Programme interventions

To ensure that the benefits and impacts of the Social Cohesion Programme persist beyond its implementation, the projects utilized strategies emphasizing local ownership, capacity-building, economic empowerment, and institutional strengthening. Below is a comprehensive analysis of these sustainability strategies, presented as programme-wide arguments with examples drawn from the various project activities.

Local Ownership and Capacity-Building

Local ownership was a cornerstone of sustainability efforts across all programme interventions. By empowering community leaders, civil society organizations (CSOs), and government institutions, the programme ensured that stakeholders were equipped to sustain peace building, reconciliation, and recovery efforts independently.

For example, the **Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)** component strengthened the capacity of national and local institutions by training over **2,300 government officials** in conflict analysis, PVE action planning, and mediation techniques. These efforts enabled officials to proactively address community grievances, with one official in **Anbar** noting, *“We now have the tools to analyze conflicts and resolve them locally.”* Similarly, the **Social Cohesion Programme** established Local Peace Committees (LPCs) in **Ninewa** and **Mosul**, ensuring that communities could independently mediate disputes and sustain reconciliation processes. The active involvement of women and youth in all projects fostered local ownership of peace building initiatives. Also, women for Peace Groups led reconciliation dialogues, while Youth Peace Groups facilitated community discussions, ensuring diverse representation in decision-making. These grassroots efforts were particularly impactful in **Salah al-Din**, where community-led mediation resolved over **300 disputes**.

Institutionalization of Key Practices

A critical strategy for sustainability was embedding programme practices into institutional frameworks. The development of localized PVE action plans and monitoring systems provided a sustainable framework for ongoing efforts. These plans were integrated into broader governance strategies, ensuring alignment with national priorities.

For instance, the **PVE component** institutionalized anti-extremism strategies at both national and sub-national levels, creating a unified framework for countering violent extremism. In **Mosul**, the incorporation of these strategies into local governance structures ensured continuity, with local committees actively updating and implementing the plans.

Similarly, the **Social Cohesion Programme** strengthened local governance structures by integrating social cohesion strategies into policy frameworks. This institutional support was evident in **Salah al-Din**, where local authorities adopted reconciliation mechanisms developed under the programme, embedding these practices into their governance models.

Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Sustainability

Economic empowerment initiatives were designed to foster long-term resilience among vulnerable populations. The programme prioritized vocational training, business grants, and market linkages to ensure sustainable income generation and reduced dependency on aid.

Under the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project**, over **3,500 individuals** received vocational training, equipping them with skills to establish businesses or secure employment. In **Ninewa**, participants trained in tailoring and carpentry reported significant income improvements, with many opening small businesses that contributed to local economies.

Cash-for-work (CfW) initiatives created **2,200 temporary jobs** while rehabilitating critical infrastructure such as schools and roads. For example, in **Mosul**, a school renovation project provided employment for **150 youth** and improved access to education for hundreds of children. These activities not only addressed immediate economic needs but also laid the groundwork for long-term community development. Small business grants supported women-led enterprises, promoting gender equality and financial independence. In **Salah al-Din**, women’s cooperatives in food processing employed other vulnerable women, creating a ripple effect of economic empowerment and contributing to **SDG 5: Gender Equality**.

Long-Term Peace building and Social Cohesion

The programme’s focus on fostering dialogue and reconciliation ensured that peace building efforts would persist. LPCs, Youth Peace Groups, and Women for Peace Groups were equipped to manage conflicts and promote social cohesion independently.

In **Ninewa**, LPCs mediated land disputes between returnees and host communities, fostering trust and reducing tensions. Meanwhile, in **Mosul**, women-led reconciliation dialogues challenged social norms and promoted inclusion, with one participant stating, *“We are no longer seen as victims but as leaders in rebuilding our communities.”*

Training provided to local committees in conflict resolution and mediation created sustainable mechanisms for maintaining peace. In **Salah al-Din**, these committees resolved disputes without external intervention, demonstrating their capacity to sustain peace building processes.

Inclusive Development and Social Empowerment

By ensuring the participation of marginalized groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and returnees, the programme fostered an inclusive recovery process. This focus on inclusivity strengthened social cohesion and created a resilient society. The **C2RI project** addressed the psychological and economic needs of returnees, integrating them into their communities through psychosocial support and livelihood opportunities. Over **1,200 individuals** received counseling to address trauma, while vocational training equipped returnees with skills to achieve financial independence. In **Anbar**, these efforts reduced stigmatization and promoted community acceptance. Awareness campaigns on gender equality and reconciliation further supported inclusivity. In **Mosul**, these campaigns reached over **10,000 individuals**, promoting tolerance and understanding. Women's leadership in reconciliation efforts, particularly in Women for Peace Groups, ensured that recovery processes were equitable and representative of all community members.

The Social Cohesion Programme effectively embedded sustainability into its interventions by emphasizing local ownership, institutionalizing key practices, promoting economic empowerment, and fostering inclusive development. These strategies ensured that the programme's impacts would persist, creating a strong foundation for resilient and cohesive communities across Iraq.

3.6.2. Possible Social and Political risks likely to affect sustainability of project results.

While the four projects—**Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)**, **Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI)**, **Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration in the Return Communities in Iraq**, and the **Social Cohesion Programme**—are designed with sustainability in mind, there are several potential **social** and **political risks** that could undermine the long-term success of the interventions. These risks stem from Iraq's complex and evolving political landscape, ongoing social challenges, and the post-conflict context in which the projects operate.

The *weak governance structures and capacity* especially at the sub-national level, which remain weak in many areas due to years of conflict, corruption, and political instability. The **lack of effective local governance** could undermine the sustainability of project interventions, particularly those related to capacity-building of local institutions for peace building, economic recovery, and social cohesion. This could hinder the implementation of **PVE action plans, reconciliation efforts, and economic reintegration programs**. It could also result in a lack of accountability, transparency, and continuity in supporting the results achieved by the projects.

However, ongoing **institutional strengthening**, continuous **engagement with government partners**, and ensuring that **local civil society organizations (CSOs)** take an active role could help mitigate the risks associated with weak governance.

Secondly, *the political fragmentation and sectarian divisions* could undermine efforts to foster **national unity** and sustain peace and reconciliation efforts. Political factions may resist certain aspects of the projects, especially those related to the **reintegration of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL**; leading to **policy reversals, inconsistent implementation, or lack of political will** to continue supporting interventions, especially those related to **PVE, reconciliation, and social cohesion**.

Nevertheless, project efforts to mitigate this risk, should maintain **non-partisan engagement** and foster inclusive dialogues that involve all political actors. Strengthening **local ownership** and engaging **community leaders** can also help buffer political disruptions at the national level.

Additionally, Although Iraq has made significant progress in stabilizing areas formerly under ISIL control, there is still a risk of a *resurgence of violent extremism*. **Sleeper cells** or **extremist groups** could re-emerge in unstable regions, particularly if underlying social, economic, and political grievances are not addressed. This could undo progress made by the **PVE**, **C2RI**, and **Social Cohesion** projects, leading to **further displacement**, **social fragmentation**, and **breakdown of reconciliation efforts**. It could also make it difficult to continue supporting returnees and marginalized groups.

Project activities focused on strengthening community resilience, enhancing the capacity of **security forces**, and fostering **economic opportunities** are crucial in mitigating the risks of extremism. Continued focus on **addressing root causes** of extremism, such as poverty, marginalization, and lack of opportunities, will also help to reduce this risk.

Also, the ongoing *local conflicts and unresolved grievances* over land, resources, and political power could undermine the sustainability of reconciliation and peace building efforts. In areas where **tribal tensions** or **ethnic conflicts** persist, there may be resistance to reintegrating returnees, especially those with perceived ISIL affiliations. This could potentially halt reconciliation efforts, stall economic recovery, and prevent sustainable reintegration of marginalized groups. It could also deepen **social divisions** and **undermine trust** between communities and state institutions.

However, efforts to continue investing in local peace mechanisms—such as **Local Peace Committees**, **dialogue forums**, and **community mediation**—can help to manage and resolve local conflicts. Engaging **traditional and religious leaders** in reconciliation processes is also important for addressing deep-seated grievances.

Despite the focus on **reconciliation** and **reintegration**, *stigma* and *marginalization* of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL remain significant social barriers. **Communities** may be reluctant to accept these individuals, which could lead to their social exclusion and increase the risk of further radicalization. This continued social resistance to the reintegration of these individuals could undermine the sustainability of both the **C2RI** and **PVE** projects. Returnees may struggle to access **economic opportunities**, **social services**, and community acceptance, leading to **recidivism** or renewed extremism. On the other hand, sustained efforts to **raise awareness** within communities about the importance of reconciliation, coupled with **long-term psychosocial support** for returnees and their families, will be essential in reducing stigma and ensuring successful reintegration. Additionally, fostering **community-based reconciliation mechanisms** and encouraging **inclusive dialogue** are critical.

Further still, high levels of *social inequality* and *economic disparities*—particularly among youth, women, and displaced populations—could lead to feelings of *marginalization* and dissatisfaction with government and development interventions. If not adequately addressed, these disparities could lead to social unrest and conflict. The economic exclusion and rising inequality could undermine the sustainability of the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** project by increasing **discontent** and leading to renewed instability. This could prevent returnees and marginalized populations from sustaining the economic gains made through the project. **Therefore**, ensuring that **economic opportunities** created by the projects are **inclusive** and **equitable** is critical. Continued focus on **inclusive development** that prioritizes women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups will help reduce disparities and build social cohesion.

Cultural and societal norms in Iraq, particularly in rural and conservative communities, may resist efforts to promote **gender equality** and **women’s empowerment**. Despite the projects’ focus on **women’s**

leadership and **economic empowerment**, there may be social resistance to women’s active participation in public life, economic activities, and decision-making. As a result, the resistance to women’s empowerment could undermine the sustainability of efforts to promote **gender-sensitive development**, particularly within the **Livelihoods** and **Social Cohesion** projects. It could also limit the long-term impact of interventions designed to enhance women’s economic independence and leadership roles in peace building. As such activities to ensure the meaningful engagement of **male community leaders, religious authorities, and family networks** in discussions on gender equality can help mitigate cultural resistance. Tailored approaches that respect cultural sensitivities while promoting gender equality are also key to ensuring the sustainability of women’s empowerment efforts.

In some communities, there may be cultural resistance to *psychosocial support* and *mental health services*, which are often seen as stigmatized or misunderstood. This could affect the uptake of services by individuals who need mental health care, particularly returnees and individuals affected by trauma.

If individuals do not seek or receive adequate psychosocial support, the **long-term reintegration** and **mental health** of beneficiaries may be compromised, leading to **social exclusion, recidivism**, or further marginalization. The continued **awareness-raising campaigns** and **community education** on the importance of mental health and psychosocial support can help reduce cultural barriers to accessing these services. Ensuring that services are delivered in culturally sensitive ways is also crucial.

3.6.3. Social, environmental, political risks

The four projects—**Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)**, **Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI)**, **Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration in the Return Communities in Iraq**, and the **Social Cohesion Programme**—operate in a complex environment shaped by Iraq’s post-conflict dynamics, social challenges, and environmental vulnerabilities. Below is an analysis of the **social, environmental, and political risks** that could impact the successful implementation and sustainability of these projects.

Marginalized groups, such as **returnees, families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs)**, may continue to face *social exclusion* and *discrimination*. This exclusion could undermine the impact of reconciliation and reintegration effort. As such returnees and marginalized individuals could remain socially isolated, increasing the risk of radicalization and conflict. This would directly affect the outcomes of the **C2RI, PVE, and Social Cohesion** projects, which depend on community acceptance and inclusion. However, continued focus on **community awareness-raising, dialogue, and inclusive decision-making** is essential to reducing social exclusion. Supporting **local peace mechanisms** and promoting **inclusive economic opportunities** for marginalized groups can further mitigate this risk.

Also, the cultural norms and societal attitudes in Iraq, especially in rural and conservative areas, may resist efforts to promote *gender equality* and *women’s empowerment*. Social resistance to women’s participation in public life, decision-making, and economic activities could limit the success of gender-focused interventions. This lack of progress in **women’s empowerment** could affect the outcomes of all four projects, particularly the **Livelihoods** and **Social Cohesion** programs, which rely on women’s active participation in economic recovery and peace building efforts. This could also perpetuate inequalities and prevent women from fully benefiting from project interventions.

However, tailoring approaches to **engage male allies** and **cultural leaders** in gender-equality discussions, while respecting local sensitivities, can help reduce resistance. Creating **safe spaces** for women to participate and focusing on **economic empowerment** can also drive long-term change.

More so, Iraq faces high levels of *youth unemployment*, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Young people who are *disengaged* from economic opportunities are at greater risk of being drawn into violent extremism or criminal activities. Failure to address **youth unemployment** could undermine the sustainability of the **PVE** and **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** projects. Disaffected youth may become involved in conflict or radicalization, reversing progress made in promoting peace and stability; but, ensuring that projects provide **youth-specific vocational training**, job creation, and **entrepreneurship support** is critical. Engaging youth in **leadership roles** within community-based peace initiatives can also help channel their energy into productive activities.

Iraq is vulnerable to *climate change impacts*, such as *drought*, *water scarcity*, and *desertification*, which could exacerbate existing social and political tensions. These environmental challenges could lead to increased competition over resources such as land and water, contributing to local conflicts. Environmental degradation and resource scarcity could undermine **livelihood recovery** and economic reintegration efforts, particularly in agriculture-dependent communities. It could also fuel local disputes, making **reconciliation** and **peace building** more difficult under the **C2RI** and **Social Cohesion** projects.

Never the less, promoting **sustainable livelihood strategies**, including climate-resilient agricultural practices, and fostering **resource-sharing agreements** between communities can help reduce the risks associated with climate change and resource scarcity. Integrating **environmental considerations** into peace building and livelihood programs will also enhance resilience.

Economic recovery activities, especially in conflict-affected regions, may inadvertently lead to **environmental degradation**, such as deforestation, soil erosion, and pollution. Without proper safeguards, the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** project could contribute to environmental harm. This could reduce the sustainability of **economic activities**, negatively impacting the long-term livelihoods of beneficiaries and creating new vulnerabilities, such as health risks or loss of agricultural productivity. Therefore, ensuring that all economic activities promoted by the projects are **environmentally sustainable** is key. This includes providing training in **environmentally friendly business practices**, **waste management**, and **resource conservation**.

Iraq's political environment remains fragile, with ongoing challenges related to **governance**, **corruption**, and **political instability**. Changes in government, lack of political will, or governance failures at the local level could disrupt project activities. Political instability could undermine the **implementation** and **sustainability** of project interventions, particularly those that rely on strong **institutional capacity**, such as the **PVE** and **C2RI** projects. Governance failures could also prevent the integration of PVE and reconciliation strategies into national policies.

As such, strengthening partnerships with local civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based mechanisms can help mitigate the impact of political instability. Promoting **local ownership** and ensuring that community-driven initiatives are insulated from political changes will also support sustainability.

Iraq remains divided along *sectarian* and *ethnic lines*, which can fuel **conflict** and **instability** in regions where diverse populations coexist. **Ethnic and sectarian divisions** could impede reconciliation efforts and make it difficult to implement project interventions that promote peace and social

cohesion. Sectarian tensions could disrupt the work of the **Social Cohesion** and **C2RI** projects, which rely on **inclusive dialogue** and **trust-building** among communities. It could also exacerbate resistance to the reintegration of returnees affiliated with ISIL, particularly in areas with diverse sectarian populations. Emphasizing **interfaith dialogue**, **inclusive governance**, and **community-led peace mechanisms** can help mitigate the effects of sectarianism. Engaging religious and community leaders to promote tolerance and coexistence will also be crucial for long-term peace building.

Local communities, political factions, or security forces may resist the **reintegration of families** perceived to be affiliated with ISIL due to **security concerns** or **social stigma**. Resistance from local actors could hinder progress on the **C2RI** project’s reintegration efforts. Continued resistance to reintegration could lead to social fragmentation, undermining **community cohesion**, and increasing the risk of radicalization. This would also impact the **PVE** project’s ability to promote social stability and prevent violent extremism. Undertaking activities focused on promoting long-term **community dialogue**, **education campaigns**, and **conflict resolution mechanisms** to reduce stigma and build trust between communities and returnees is critical. Supporting **psychosocial services** and ensuring returnees’ active participation in community development can also help reduce resistance.

Social fragility (such as high youth unemployment and marginalization of returnees) together **environmental degradation** (e.g., water scarcity and land degradation) can exacerbate conflict and increase the vulnerability of communities. These factors may interact, especially in rural and conflict-affected areas, leading to economic collapse and social unrest. The sustainability of economic and social interventions, particularly in the **Livelihoods** and **Social Cohesion** projects, may be compromised if communities face **compounded stressors** from both social exclusion and environmental degradation. However, the **integration of interventions** that combine economic, social, and environmental considerations are crucial. Building **resilient livelihood systems**, promoting **social inclusion**, and addressing **environmental vulnerabilities** through sustainable development practices can mitigate these compounded risks.

3.6.4 Assessment of the project exit plan and strategy

As a crucial aspect for ensuring that the outcomes and impacts of development projects continue to be sustained after external funding and support are withdrawn a well-structured **exit plan and strategy** is a necessity. For the four projects—the **exit strategy** focused on ensuring **local ownership**, **institutional capacity-building**, and the **long-term sustainability** of project outcomes. Below is an assessment of the key elements of the exit strategy across the four projects.

Sustainability Through Local Ownership and Capacity Building

A central part of the exit strategy for all four projects is the *building of institutional capacity* of national and local institutions to sustain the gains made during the project implementation phase. The projects focus on equipping local government bodies, civil society organizations (CSOs), and community leaders with the skills and knowledge they need to continue implementing project-related activities after external support ends.

Specifically, the **PVE action plans** developed at the national and local levels, along with the training provided to **government institutions**, ensure that **counter-extremism measures** are integrated into existing governmental structures. This ensures that Iraq’s government can continue **preventing violent extremism** without external dependency. **Additionally**, the **C2RI and Social Cohesion Projects** emphasize the strengthening of **local peace mechanisms**, such as **Local Peace**

Committees and **Women and Youth Peace Groups** to mediate conflicts and support reconciliation. These mechanisms can continue to operate effectively in fostering peace and social cohesion long after the project ends.

Additionally, the projects ensured *community ownership for sustained engagement* by guaranteeing that local actors took full responsibility for continuing the project activities and maintaining the outcomes. For instance, in the **C2RI** and **Social Cohesion Programme**, the reliance on **Community-Based Structures** such as the community-based peace mechanisms is key to the exit strategy. **Training community members** to lead dialogue, reconciliation, and mediation efforts fosters local ownership and reduces reliance on external actors.

Similarly, the livelihoods projects’ focus on **economic empowerment** through **vocational training** and **business development** equips individuals with skills they can use independently, ensuring that beneficiaries can continue to generate income and contribute to their community’s economic recovery. This long-term self-reliance is a cornerstone of the exit strategy.

The *institutionalization of project outcomes* ensured that project outcomes are integrated into **national and local governance structures**, the projects lay the foundation for sustainability.

Government-Led Policies: The **PVE project** ensures that the **PVE action plans** and frameworks are institutionalized within **government policy**. By embedding these plans into official strategies, the project ensures that **PVE efforts** are not dependent on external funding and are driven by local governance structures. Relatedly, the **Social Cohesion Programme** works to integrate **peace building efforts** into the existing governance systems at the local level, ensuring that social cohesion becomes part of regular governance processes, further reducing reliance on external actors.

Transfer of Knowledge and Resources

A key component of the exit strategy was the transfer of **knowledge and skills** to local actors, ensuring that they are fully equipped to continue project activities independently. **Specifically**, in the **PVE** and **C2RI** projects, extensive training was provided to local government officials, community leaders, and other stakeholders. This training covered areas such as **conflict resolution, psychosocial support, and economic reintegration**, ensuring that local actors have the skills necessary to sustain these activities in the future. Moreover, the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** project also emphasized **vocational training** and **entrepreneurship support** to ensure that beneficiaries can sustain the businesses and income-generating activities established during the project. This focus on skills development promotes long-term economic resilience among participants.

Furthermore, as part of the exit strategy, the projects’ focused on ensuring that local actors can access the **financial and technical resources** they need to continue implementing project-related activities. The projects focused on linking local actors—whether they are government bodies, CSOs, or community groups—to available **national and international resources**. For instance, they were supported in applying for additional funding, leveraging local resources, and engaging in **partnerships** with other organizations or donors. Similarly, the **livelihoods project** supported the creation of **market linkages** for small businesses, ensuring that beneficiaries are connected to buyers and markets, thereby reducing their dependence on ongoing financial support.

Engaging Stakeholders for Continued Support

A crucial aspect of the exit strategy was the continuation of strong partnerships with government actors, ensuring that they remain **accountable** and committed to sustaining project outcomes.

Policy Integration: Specifically, the **PVE** and **Social Cohesion** projects worked closely with the Iraqi government to ensure that key project outcomes are integrated into national and local policies. This ensures **political commitment** to continuing the peace building, reconciliation, and economic recovery processes initiated by the projects.

Secondly, by involving government institutions in monitoring and evaluation processes, the exit strategy ensures that the government remains accountable for the continuation of project activities. This promotes **long-term ownership** by government bodies.

Engaging Civil Society and Community Leaders

The projects recognized that **civil society organizations (CSOs)** and **community leaders** are essential for sustaining project outcomes at the local level.

As such, the projects worked closely with CSOs to ensure that they have the capacity to continue peace building, reconciliation, and economic recovery efforts after the projects end. By empowering local CSOs to lead initiatives and manage local resources, the exit strategy ensures that these organizations are well-positioned to drive long-term change.

Additionally, under the projects, Community Leadership such as **traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community elders** were engaged in decision-making processes ensures that local ownership of project outcomes is strong. These leaders are instrumental in fostering social cohesion and continuing reconciliation efforts, especially in rural or conflict-affected communities.

Monitoring and Evaluation for Long-Term Sustainability

As part of the exit strategy, the projects focus on establishing robust **monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks** that local actors can use to track the progress of project outcomes. For instance, under the **PVE** and **Social Cohesion** projects local institutions were trained in **data collection, impact assessment, and monitoring**, allowing them to measure the long-term success of peace building and reconciliation efforts. This enables local actors to adapt interventions as needed and ensure sustained impact.

Relatedly, by building local **capacity for learning** and **adaptive management**, the projects promote continuous improvement of interventions. Local stakeholders were encouraged to participate in regular assessments of the effectiveness of interventions, ensuring that adjustments can be made based on changing community needs and evolving political or social contexts.

Potential Challenges and Gaps in the Exit Strategy

Political Instability: Is one of the potential risks to the success of the exit strategy. Changes in government, political priorities, or governance failures could disrupt the continuity of project outcomes, particularly in the areas of peace building and reconciliation.

The projects' strategy of building strong **community-based mechanisms** and **decentralized local governance** structures is critical for mitigating this risk. However, continued **engagement with government actors** and **international support** may still be necessary to ensure long-term political stability.

Resistance to reintegration: Social resistance to the reintegration of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL remains a significant challenge. Communities may continue to marginalize these families, undermining efforts at reconciliation. **The** projects focus on long-term community dialogue and **awareness-raising efforts** to address stigma and resistance under the **C2RI** and **Social**

Cohesion could help mitigate this risk. However, the success of these efforts depends on sustained engagement and the gradual shift in community attitudes, which may require extended support beyond the formal project timeline.

Funding and Resource Constraints: The transition from external funding to **locally-sustained initiatives** may be challenging, particularly if local government and CSOs lack access to sufficient financial resources to maintain project outcomes. The projects have made efforts to connect local actors to potential **funding sources** and **resource mobilization strategies**. However, the success of this aspect of the exit strategy depends on continued efforts to secure long-term funding and partnerships.

3.6.5. Government and Community Ownership

Government and community ownership are critical factors for ensuring the **sustainability** and long-term impact of the four projects—**Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)**, **Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI)**, **Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration in the Return Communities in Iraq**, and the **Social Cohesion Programme**. Ownership refers to the degree to which local communities and government institutions are involved in designing, implementing, and sustaining project interventions. Strong ownership leads to higher **commitment, responsibility, and continuation** of efforts after the projects have formally ended.

3.6.5.1. Government Ownership

1. **Government Involvement in Project Design and Implementation:** For instance, the **PVE project** collaborated closely with **national and sub-national government bodies** to support the implementation of **Iraq’s National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism**. Government ownership was evident in the project's focus on **capacity-building** for government institutions, ensuring that Iraq’s government led efforts to counter extremism. The involvement of the **Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA)** demonstrated commitment at the highest levels of government.

Additionally, **capacity building:** such as the development of the **PVE action plans** and **monitoring systems** for both national and local levels, the project ensured that the government has the tools and resources to carry out PVE efforts independently, enhancing ownership.

Relatedly, the **C2RI project** works in partnership with local governments and community-based actors to support the **reintegration of returnees** and promote **community reconciliation**. The project supports the government in addressing post-ISIL recovery challenges, reinforcing national goals related to **peace building** and **social cohesion**.

Not to mention the **government-Led Reintegration process** where the government supported local authorities in reintegrating returnees and families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL through government-endorsed community reconciliation programs.

2. **The institutionalization of Project Results:** For government ownership to be meaningful, project outcomes were institutionalized within government frameworks. For instance, the **PVE project** ensured that key components of the project, such as **PVE action plans**, were integrated into national and local government policies, allowing these efforts to continue beyond the life of the project. Also, by working with the **National Committee for the Implementation of the PVE**

Strategy, the project helped integrate counter-extremism measures into the government's long-term planning.

Additionally, **the incorporation of Social Cohesion into Local Governance** under the **Social Cohesion Programme** helped to promote long-term sustainability by embedding **conflict resolution** and **peace building strategies** into local governance structures. The government's role in fostering **inclusive governance** through **Local Peace Committees** and reconciliation forums demonstrates a high level of ownership at the local level.

3. **The strengthening of government accountability and capacity:** The **Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** project worked closely with local authorities to ensure that local governance structures are accountable for supporting **economic reintegration** and **livelihood recovery**. The project's focus on **governance capacity-building** ensures that government bodies are equipped to lead these efforts without reliance on external support.

Furthermore, the **Social Cohesion Programme** strengthened the **accountability** of local authorities by promoting **community-led reconciliation** mechanisms. Government institutions were encouraged to support and facilitate peace building activities, ensuring local ownership over conflict resolution.

3.6.5.2. Community Ownership

1. **Community Involvement in Project Design:** The findings revealed that all four projects emphasized the importance of involving **local communities** in the design of interventions, which fosters community ownership. For instance, in the **C2RI** and **Social Cohesion** projects, community leaders, **women**, and **youth** actively engaged in **decision-making** and the development of local reconciliation strategies. This ensures that the interventions are relevant to the specific needs and concerns of the community, and also enhances sustainability of the project results.

Similarly, the projects also ensured the active involvement of **tribal leaders, religious leaders, and community representatives** to co-design and implement activities, particularly in areas affected by conflict. This participatory approach builds **trust** between the project team and the community, ensuring that solutions are locally driven.

2. **Community-Led Implementation:** For instance, under the **Social Cohesion Programme**, community ownership was fostered through the establishment of **Local Peace Committees, Women for Peace Groups, and Youth Peace Groups**. These groups lead **dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation** efforts, ensuring that peace building is driven by community members themselves. This bottom-up approach promotes long-term community engagement in maintaining social stability.

Relatedly, under the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** project promotes community ownership by engaging local stakeholders in the implementation of **economic recovery** initiatives. By providing **business grants, vocational training, and cash-for-work programs**, the project empowers community members to take control of their own **economic futures**. Beneficiaries are encouraged to create **sustainable businesses** that contribute to local economic development.

3. **Building Community Capacity for Long-Term Impact:** The projects provided **training and capacity-building** for local leaders and **civil society organizations (CSOs)** to enhance their ability to lead peace building, reconciliation, and economic activities. By investing in local capacity, the

projects ensured that community members can sustain project outcomes after external funding and support have ended.

Also, through the creating local ownership structures where local communities were trained and equipped with the knowledge and resources in **conflict resolution, psychosocial support, and economic reintegration**; such that they can lead **reconciliation** and **PVE** efforts under the **C2RI** and **PVE** projects. This helped to ensure that these interventions are managed and sustained at the community level.

4. Fostering Trust and Inclusion: The projects emphasized inclusivity by ensuring the active participation of **women, youth, and marginalized groups** in project activities; which helps to promote a sense of ownership across all segments of society. For instance, **women’s empowerment** initiatives within the **Livelihoods** and **Social Cohesion** projects ensured that women play a leading role in economic and social recovery.

Secondly, the focus on community-driven **reconciliation** through **dialogue** and **mediation** enhances **trust** between previously conflicting groups. In the **Social Cohesion** and **C2RI** projects, trust-building is a key factor in achieving community ownership, as it fosters a collective commitment to peace and stability.

3.6.5.3. Challenges to Government and Community Ownership

Political Instability: Political instability and shifting governance priorities could undermine government ownership, particularly if there is a lack of continuity in government support for PVE, reconciliation, or livelihood recovery efforts. However, ensuring broad-based **community involvement** and building strong **partnerships** with local CSOs can help mitigate the effects of political instability by decentralizing ownership and empowering non-governmental actors.

Social Fragmentation and Resistance: In some communities, there may be resistance to the reintegration of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL or to the participation of marginalized groups (e.g., women, PWDs) in project activities. This can undermine community ownership. Continued focus on **inclusive dialogue** and **trust-building** through community-led peace mechanisms can reduce resistance and foster stronger community ownership.

Donor "Sustainability is paramount, especially as donor funds become less available. Partnering with the private sector is essential to maintain and build on project achievements. For instance, we collaborated with an Iraqi businessman who donated sewing machines to women beneficiaries. This support has empowered them to establish their businesses, providing sustainable income and stability long after our project funding ends. Private sector involvement is a cornerstone of resilience and continuity in our work."

3.7. Cross-Cutting Issues

3.7.1. Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

The four projects demonstrate a strong commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment. These projects recognize the importance of empowering women not only as beneficiaries but also as key actors in peace building, economic recovery, and social cohesion. Below is an analysis of how each project integrates gender-sensitive approaches and contributes to the empowerment of women.

Promoting Women’s Participation in Peace Building and Social Cohesion: The PVE project design recognized that women play a critical role in promoting peace and stability at the community level. Key contributions included the establishment of Women for Peace Groups, which actively involved women in community-based dialogue, conflict resolution, and efforts to combat

radicalization. The project supported women-led initiatives addressing the root causes of extremism and ensured women's leadership in community initiatives to amplify their voices in shaping local strategies for violence prevention.

The Social Cohesion Programme also emphasized women's participation in promoting peace and resolving conflicts. Through community-based mechanisms like Women for Peace Groups, the program empowered women to lead discussions on reconciliation and conflict resolution, fostering social cohesion while respecting and incorporating women's perspectives. The program further promoted women's leadership in local peace building activities, ensuring that women's voices were central to rebuilding trust and fostering peaceful coexistence.

Gender-Sensitive Approaches and Addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV): Across all four projects, gender-sensitive interventions recognized the different ways men and women experience violent extremism and conflict. The PVE and Social Cohesion projects integrated psychosocial support for women affected by extremism and conflict, promoting their participation in decision-making processes. Specific GBV interventions under the Social Cohesion Programme included raising awareness about gender-based violence and providing support services to women survivors, helping them regain confidence and participate more fully in their communities.

Empowering Women in Reconciliation and Reintegration Efforts: The C2RI project acknowledged the critical role women play in reconciliation and reintegration processes, particularly in conflict-affected communities where women often act as mediators and peacebuilders. Women were actively engaged in local peace committees and reconciliation efforts, ensuring their perspectives were included in decisions about reintegration for families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL. The project promoted women's leadership in reintegration efforts, ensuring women acted not just as beneficiaries but as decision-makers in program design and implementation.

Additionally, the C2RI project addressed gender-specific needs by providing psychosocial support and vocational training tailored to women, particularly those affected by conflict-related trauma. By tackling gender-based violence and enhancing access to economic opportunities, the project contributed to both women's empowerment and broader social cohesion in post-conflict communities.

Economic Empowerment of Women and Addressing Barriers to Participation: The Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project prioritized economic empowerment of women, particularly in communities affected by displacement and conflict. At least 50% of beneficiaries were women, and the project provided vocational training, business skills development, and business grants. These interventions equipped women with skills to enter the workforce or start businesses, fostering financial independence, resilience, and improved social standing.

The project also addressed structural barriers to women's economic participation, including restrictive social norms, lack of access to finance, and limited mobility in conservative communities. By providing targeted support, the project enabled women to overcome these challenges and fully participate in Iraq's post-conflict economic recovery.

Promoting Women's Leadership Across Projects: Across all four projects, there was a consistent emphasis on promoting women's leadership in peace building, economic recovery, and social cohesion. Whether through Women for Peace Groups, local peace committees, or vocational training

programs, the projects recognized that women must play a central role in shaping Iraq’s future to achieve sustainable peace and development.

Ensuring Equal Access to Opportunities and Addressing Women’s Needs: Each project adopted a gender-sensitive approach that recognized and addressed the specific needs of women, particularly those affected by conflict, displacement, and violence. By providing psychosocial support, vocational training, and economic opportunities, the projects empowered women to take control of their lives and contribute to Iraq’s recovery process.

All four projects committed to ensuring women had equal access to employment, leadership, and decision-making opportunities. By promoting gender equality throughout their design and implementation, the interventions contributed to the broader goal of empowering women as key drivers of peace, stability, and economic recovery.

This was well elaborated in a KII interview with a coordinator for Violent Extremism Prevention, who stated: *“UNDP’s support has had a noticeable impact, so much so that even a blind person could see it. Their programs have greatly improved our current situation, from revitalizing schools to providing clean water. The Active Women Project, covering five districts, is a testament to their dedication to inclusivity and community development.”*

3.7.2 Extent of Disability Inclusion

The evaluation revealed that all four projects recognized the importance of inclusive development, ensuring that persons with disabilities (PWDs) were not left behind in Iraq’s post-conflict recovery. While the degree of focus on disability inclusion varied across the projects, each demonstrated efforts to engage PWDs in social, economic, and peacebuilding activities.

Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups: The Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) Project: The project primarily targeted women and youth but included provisions for other vulnerable groups, including PWDs. Community-Based Interventions emphasized engaging PWDs to foster meaningful participation in preventing violent extremism, promoting their involvement in community dialogue and decision-making processes. The project also provided psychosocial services to address trauma caused by conflict, which were adaptable to the specific needs of PWDs, particularly those with physical or mental injuries.

While steps were taken to include vulnerable populations, disability inclusion was less pronounced compared to the focus on gender and youth. More targeted efforts were needed to actively engage PWDs in preventing violent extremism and building peace.

Psychosocial and Economic Support: The project prioritized reconciliation and reintegration efforts for individuals and families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, including PWDs. Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) was a key focus, addressing the needs of PWDs who had experienced physical or psychological trauma due to conflict. This support facilitated their reintegration into communities. Additionally, the project emphasized economic reintegration by providing vocational training and livelihood opportunities accessible to PWDs. This enabled their participation in income-generating activities, promoted financial independence, and enhanced social inclusion. Local peace mechanisms were designed to be inclusive, ensuring PWDs were involved in community dialogues and decision-making processes.

Economic Empowerment: The programme enhanced economic inclusion by adapting vocational training and job placement programs to meet the specific needs of PWDs. By providing skills training, PWDs were better equipped to participate in the workforce. The project also offered business grants and cash-for-work programs that were accessible to PWDs, ensuring they could engage in income-generating activities and achieve financial independence. Additionally, the project addressed barriers such as accessibility challenges, social stigmas, and lack of tailored support, enabling PWDs to participate fully in economic recovery efforts.

Social Inclusion: The Social Cohesion Programme: The program aimed to rebuild trust and promote peaceful coexistence in post-conflict communities, ensuring PWDs were included in these efforts. It facilitated the participation of PWDs in Local Peace Committees and community dialogue forums, allowing their voices to be heard in rebuilding social cohesion. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by PWDs in conflict-affected areas, the program provided tailored support to ensure peacebuilding activities were accessible and inclusive. Efforts were also made to address social stigmas and discrimination against PWDs by promoting inclusive dialogue and reducing marginalization. This contributed to ensuring PWDs' full participation in social, economic, and political life.

Across all four projects, efforts were made to ensure that PWDs had access to services and opportunities, including tailored psychosocial support, vocational training, and income-generating activities. Community-based reconciliation mechanisms were also designed to include PWDs in decision-making and peace building processes.

Each project addressed key barriers that prevented PWDs from fully participating in social and economic activities. This included improving service accessibility, delivering tailored training programs, encouraging community engagement, and reducing social stigmas. By addressing these barriers, the projects collectively contributed to the overarching goal of disability inclusion in Iraq's post-conflict recovery efforts.

3.7.3. Human Rights and 'Leave No One Behind'

The principle of "**Leave No One Behind**" (**LNOB**) is a key pillar of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and is deeply embedded in the **human rights-based approach (HRBA)**. It emphasizes the need to prioritize the most marginalized and vulnerable individuals in all development efforts, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background, has equal access to opportunities and services. In this regard, in all the four projects both the **human rights** approach and the **LNOB** principle were core to their design and implementation. The projects aimed to include all vulnerable populations, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, persons with disabilities (PWDs), women, youth, and those perceived to be affiliated with ISIL.

3.7.3.1 Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) in the Projects

A **human rights-based approach** emphasizes the empowerment of individuals to claim their rights and the accountability of duty-bearers (e.g., governments, institutions) to uphold those rights. This approach is central to ensuring that no one is left behind, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups. This was evident in all four projects.

For instance, all four projects prioritize the protection of **vulnerable populations**, ensuring that their **human rights** are respected and promoted. Specifically, the projects focused on ensuring the safe and dignified reintegration of **returnees** and **displaced individuals**, many of whom were facing stigmatization, marginalization, and discrimination. The projects promoted their **right to security**,

right to livelihood, and **right to social inclusion**. Also, projects integrate **gender-sensitive approaches** to protect the rights of women and promote their **empowerment, economic independence**, and **participation** in decision-making. Not to mention the fact that they worked to ensure that **PWDs** had equal access to services, including **vocational training, psychosocial support**, and **community-based reconciliation mechanisms**. This aligns with the **right to inclusion** and **non-discrimination** for persons with disabilities.

Accountability and Participation: The projects ensured the **participation of citizens** in decisions that affected them, and that the duty-bearers were held accountable for delivering services and upholding rights. Specifically, under the projects', vulnerable populations, including women, youth, and PWDs, were involved in decision-making processes related to peace building, reconciliation, and economic recovery. Secondly, through capacity-building of government and local institutions, the projects promote **accountable governance**, ensuring that state actors uphold their responsibilities to protect the rights of all citizens, particularly those who are marginalized.

3.7.3.2 Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Principle:

The **LNOB principle** is central in ensuring that development efforts are **inclusive** and reach the most marginalized groups in society. In post-conflict Iraq, this principle is particularly important given the diversity of vulnerable populations, such as IDPs, returnees, women, and individuals perceived to be affiliated with ISIL. The projects addressed the following key aspects of LNOB:

Reaching the Most Marginalized: The four projects were designed to reach those who were most often excluded from mainstream recovery efforts, including: **individuals perceived to be affiliated with ISIL**. These individuals and their families faced **stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion**. The **C2RI project** specifically focused on the **reintegration** of these individuals, providing them with **psychosocial support, livelihood opportunities**, and a pathway to **community acceptance**. Additionally, the projects reached **internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Returnees**. The **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration and Social Cohesion Programme** prioritize support for IDPs and returnees, many of whom face challenges in accessing employment, housing, and services. These projects ensure that IDPs and returnees are included in **economic recovery efforts** and **community reconciliation** activities, ensuring their right to return with dignity and security.

Inclusive Economic Opportunities: Specifically, the **Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration project** played a crucial role in ensuring that **economic opportunities** are accessible to all, especially the marginalized populations such as women, youth, and PWDs: By providing **Vocational training, cash-for-work programs**, and **small business grants**, the project ensures that even the most vulnerable individuals can benefit from Iraq's economic recovery. This is in line with the LNOB principle, which prioritizes the economic inclusion of those who are often excluded from formal employment opportunities.

Psychosocial Support for Marginalized Groups: Across the projects, particularly **C2RI and Social Cohesion Programme**, **psychosocial support (PSS)** is a critical intervention to help individuals who have experienced trauma and marginalization. These services ensure that marginalized individuals—particularly those with mental health needs—receive the care they need to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society.

3.8. Challenges faced

The four projects encountered several significant challenges that impacted both the pace and effectiveness of implementation, as well as the achievement of intended outcomes.

One of the primary challenges was the stigma and community resistance against reintegrating Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and families formerly associated with ISIL. Many communities were initially resistant to accepting these returnees, viewing them with suspicion and fearing they might bring instability or even extremist ideas back into the community. This negative perception created a hostile environment that slowed reintegration efforts and undermined social cohesion activities. In response, the projects initiated targeted awareness-raising and sensitization campaigns that emphasized the benefits of reconciliation and forgiveness. Community and religious leaders played crucial roles as advocates, working within their communities to foster acceptance and understanding. This approach gradually helped to reduce stigmatization, allowing reintegration activities to proceed more effectively as attitudes began to shift.

Trust and Collaboration with Key Stakeholders: Building trust and fostering collaboration between key stakeholders often proved challenging in project implementation. For example, distrust between local communities and security forces hindered efforts to foster social cohesion, as some initiatives were misunderstood or viewed with suspicion. In some cases, local leaders were hesitant to collaborate due to fears of misinterpretation, while others struggled to engage stakeholders effectively in reconciliation and development efforts.

Inadequate Training and Capacity Building: Many training programs were too short to provide the depth of knowledge and practical skills needed for long-term impact. Condensed training sessions limited the absorption of critical concepts, leaving participants underprepared to implement their learning effectively. Furthermore, insufficient follow-up after initial training meant participants lacked ongoing support, reducing the sustainability of their contributions.

Community Resistance and Social Tensions: Resistance to reconciliation and reintegration efforts was a common barrier, particularly in areas affected by violent extremism. In some communities, individuals viewed initiatives aimed at reintegrating displaced persons or returnees as betrayal, creating divisions and impeding progress. Social stigmas and unresolved grievances contributed to tension, requiring extensive mediation and trust-building efforts.

Resource Limitations: Financial constraints were a recurring issue across projects, affecting their ability to deliver impactful outcomes. Insufficient funding often limited the scale of initiatives, such as vocational training, economic support, and infrastructure development. Many participants reported that grants were too small to sustain their projects, while others faced delays in receiving promised financial assistance.

Logistical and Accessibility Barriers: Projects faced significant logistical challenges, including delays in securing approvals, disbursements, and resource allocation. Accessibility issues, such as inadequate transportation support or long distances to training venues, further hampered participation, particularly for women and vulnerable groups with caregiving responsibilities.

Equity and Transparency Issues: Favoritism and lack of transparency in participant selection and grant distribution undermined trust in several initiatives. Reports of individuals receiving preferential

treatment based on personal connections or local authority influence led to dissatisfaction among those who felt excluded or unfairly treated.

Economic and Market Challenges: Participants frequently encountered low demand for their products or services in local markets, particularly in saturated trades. Rising competition and fluctuating economic conditions, such as currency fluctuations, further impacted the profitability of beneficiary projects, leaving many struggling to sustain their businesses.

Resistance to Change: Cultural and social resistance to new initiatives, especially those addressing reconciliation or social cohesion, created additional hurdles. Some community members were unwilling to embrace proposed solutions or participate actively, requiring extensive sensitization and advocacy efforts to encourage their involvement.

Insufficient Infrastructure and Basic Services: A lack of essential infrastructure and services, such as housing, electricity, and water supply, hindered the reintegration of displaced families and the success of community-based projects. These deficiencies created instability and discouraged returnees from leaving camps, where services were more reliable.

Impact of External Factors: Political instability, security risks, and frequent changes in government leadership disrupted project implementation. Shifting priorities and policies delayed initiatives, while unresolved conflicts and societal divisions created additional complexity.

Another challenge was the high level of trauma and psychological distress among beneficiaries, particularly among returnees and at-risk youth, due to years of exposure to conflict and violence. The psychological toll manifested in disengagement or reluctance to participate fully in vocational training, social cohesion programs, and other reintegration activities. This distress limited the effectiveness of efforts to build empowerment and resilience. To address this, the projects integrated Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) as an essential component of their strategies. Beneficiaries were offered individual counseling, group therapy, and community support sessions that provided emotional stability, enabling them to engage more meaningfully in the programs. The MHPSS approach proved to be an effective intervention, enhancing the overall well-being of participants and ultimately improving program outcomes.

Economic insecurity and the scarcity of sustainable livelihood opportunities presented another formidable challenge. In regions with high unemployment and underdeveloped economic infrastructure, financial instability made it difficult for returnees and host community members to secure basic needs, increasing their vulnerability to extremist recruitment. The lack of income-generating options undermined efforts to build resilience and foster lasting peace, as economic hardship often drives discontent and resentment. To address these issues, the projects introduced cash-for-work programs, vocational training, and small business support tailored to the local economic landscape. Additionally, efforts were made to connect trained beneficiaries to local job opportunities, which promoted economic stability and facilitated the reintegration process. These economic support initiatives provided immediate financial relief and contributed to long-term resilience by fostering self-sufficiency.

Cultural and gender-based barriers also complicated the implementation of these projects. In some areas, cultural norms limited women's participation in decision-making and economic activities, impeding efforts to ensure their inclusion and empowerment. This challenge was particularly relevant in initiatives that sought to integrate women and young people into community leadership and

decision-making processes. To navigate these barriers, the projects engaged male community members, traditional leaders, and religious figures to promote the benefits of women's participation in peace building and socio-economic activities. By actively involving these influential figures in advocacy efforts, the projects were able to shift perceptions gradually and improve the engagement of women and other marginalized groups. This approach reinforced gender-sensitive programming and demonstrated that inclusive approaches could align with cultural values, thereby fostering a more equitable and supportive environment for all beneficiaries.

3.9. Lessons Learnt

Government Coordination: Effective collaboration with government entities is critical for the success of development projects. For example, in Ramadi, close coordination with local authorities facilitated the reintegration of returnees from Jada Camp, showcasing how leveraging government-held resources can amplify project impact.

However, delays in securing approvals for other initiatives revealed areas for improvement. Strengthened coordination mechanisms with government agencies and stakeholders, ensuring timely access to data and approvals, can significantly enhance project outcomes. While cooperation exists, optimizing these partnerships is essential to fully utilize government resources and information.

Cash for Work (C4W) vs. Small Grants: Balancing cash-for-work programs and small grants proved challenging. In one project, the disparity in financial benefits led to community dissatisfaction, as C4W participants felt disadvantaged compared to those receiving grants. To address this, UNDP introduced the "C4WBTS" model (Cash for Work followed by Business Training and Small Grants), which reduced tensions and ensured fairer participation. This hybrid approach not only resolved equity concerns but also fostered sustainable community participation. However, it is crucial to recognize that while C4W aids short-term integration, it is not a sustainable long-term livelihood solution.

Sustainability of Livelihood Support Models: Livelihood projects must move beyond short-term relief to create enduring economic stability. For instance, vocational training in stone cladding and agriculture value chain development equipped participants with marketable skills, offering a sustainable alternative to temporary interventions like C4W. UNDP should prioritize such demand-driven, value-chain-focused models to build economic resilience and enable long-lasting impact for beneficiaries.

Social Cohesion and Digital Engagement: In conflict-affected areas, fostering social cohesion often requires innovative approaches. Digital campaigns have been particularly effective in promoting inter-community dialogue, as demonstrated by an online initiative that engaged over 5,000 individuals in conflict zones. This engagement reduced tensions and improved community relations, even where physical events were challenging. Expanding digital tools and online platforms can further strengthen social cohesion and community integration.

Project Timelines and Flexibility: Short project durations limited their effectiveness. For example, a six-month livelihood program in Salahuddin faced delays due to security issues and required an extension, yet still lacked adequate time for impact evaluation and follow-ups. Extending timelines and adopting flexible planning would allow for comprehensive implementation and robust monitoring, ensuring long-term success.

Beneficiary Selection Process: Delays in beneficiary selection often disrupted project schedules. In Salahuddin, the complex assessment process prolonged finalization, delaying subsequent training and grants. Streamlining these processes through efficient systems, such as digitized databases, can speed up implementation and ensure timely delivery of support to beneficiaries.

Security and Risk Management: Security disturbances, including attacks and internal conflicts, frequently disrupted project activities. For instance, training sessions were suspended in some areas for weeks due to instability. Incorporating adaptive security strategies and flexible operational frameworks can mitigate such disruptions, allowing projects to proceed with minimal impact.

Resource Management and Budget Flexibility: Budget limitations often constrained project scope and quality. For example, a stone cladding initiative struggled due to insufficient funding, leaving participants like Nawar Abd unable to complete even one full project. Greater flexibility in resource allocation, coupled with contingency plans for unforeseen expenses, would ensure smoother implementation and sustained project quality.

Private Sector and Community Engagement: Sustainability is a critical challenge as donor funding decreases. Engaging the private sector has proven effective, such as when an Iraqi businessman donated sewing machines to women beneficiaries, enabling them to start businesses. Deepening partnerships with private entities and fostering community engagement can enhance project sustainability and foster local ownership. For instance, involving local stakeholders like the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in project design and implementation ensured alignment with community needs and smoother execution.

All in all, while UNDP’s initiatives demonstrated significant positive impacts, several lessons emerged. Coordination with government bodies, though functional, needs to be optimized to ensure timely approvals and resource utilization. Balancing cash-for-work and small grants requires careful structuring to avoid community dissatisfaction, with hybrid models offering a promising solution. Social cohesion efforts can benefit from digital tools, especially in areas where physical activities are hindered by security risks. Sustainability demands a shift toward long-term livelihood models and increased private sector involvement. Addressing challenges such as short project durations, delays in beneficiary selection, security disruptions, and budget constraints requires adaptive planning and resource flexibility. Partner capacity assessments, strengthened local stakeholder engagement, and a focus on community-driven approaches remain crucial for achieving lasting success in conflict-affected regions.

3.10. Best Practices

Community-Led Solutions for Lasting Change: A community-centered approach was highly effective in fostering social cohesion and preventing violent extremism. Community members were given roles in identifying, designing, and implementing activities, leading to greater ownership, accountability, and sustainability of results.

Integrated Socio-Economic and Psychosocial Interventions: Combining economic empowerment with psychosocial support created a more holistic approach to reintegration. This dual strategy addressed both the economic and emotional needs of beneficiaries, helping them to rebuild their lives while fostering resilience against extremist influences.

Inclusive and Gender-Sensitive Programming: Programs that emphasized gender sensitivity—such as engaging men in supporting women’s economic participation—successfully addressed cultural barriers. Inclusive initiatives also involved youth and marginalized groups in decision-making processes, leading to more comprehensive and equitable outcomes.

Capacity Building of Local Structures for Longevity: Building the capacity of LPCs, youth and women’s groups, and local institutions created local champions for peace and reintegration who will continue this work beyond the project’s lifespan. Local capacity-building helped bridge gaps between communities and formal governance structures, reinforcing trust and stability. This was further elaborated by an advisor on Women's Affairs who noted that, *"The training sessions organized by UNDP were transformative. They taught us how to frame and implement projects effectively. Despite frequent government changes disrupting plans, the knowledge and methodologies shared by UNDP have had a lasting impact, equipping us with the skills to adapt and continue the work."*

Strategic Use of Religious and Community Leaders as Influencers: Recognizing the social influence of religious and community leaders, projects involved these figures to promote tolerance, counter extremist ideologies, and facilitate reintegration. Their endorsement of peace and reintegration activities lent credibility to the projects and encouraged community acceptance.

Adaptive Project Management: Projects that remained adaptable to the shifting dynamics on the ground were able to respond effectively to emerging challenges and opportunities. Flexibility in program planning and resources enabled quick adjustments in activities and improved responsiveness to beneficiaries' evolving needs.

Strong Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Systems: Systematic M&E practices allowed teams to track progress, measure impact, and make informed adjustments. This practice ensured accountability, improved resource allocation, and contributed to a body of knowledge that will guide future peace building and reintegration efforts.

4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusion

This assessment reflects a comprehensive analysis of the project's performance, balancing achievements with challenges.

Criterion	Rating (1 low, 5 high)	Rationale
Impact	4	The projects achieved significant positive outcomes, such as fostering social cohesion, reintegrating marginalized groups, and empowering women and youth. However, lingering issues like stigmatization of returnees and economic instability limited the full extent of impact.
Sustainability	3	While local structures such as LPCs and community groups were established, financial constraints, lack of institutional support, and dependency on donor funding posed challenges to long-term sustainability. Efforts to institutionalize these programs in local governance systems were still in early stages.
Relevance/Design	5	The projects were highly aligned with the needs of conflict-affected communities and national priorities, such as preventing violent extremism and promoting reintegration. Tailored interventions for vulnerable groups enhanced their relevance, though some design flaws in grant allocation and training duration were noted.
Effectiveness	4	Most projects delivered on their objectives, including training, economic support, and reconciliation. However, challenges in coordination, delays, and logistical issues affected the overall effectiveness of some activities.
Efficiency	3	The projects efficiently utilized resources in many cases, but delays in grant disbursements, limited training durations, and logistical challenges reduced overall efficiency. Financial constraints also impacted timely implementation and participant satisfaction.

The projects implemented in Iraq, including **Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)**, **Community-Based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq (C2RI)**, **Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration in Return Communities in Iraq**, and the **Social Cohesion Programme**, demonstrated strong alignment with the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria—**relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability**—and achieved notable outcomes in each area.

Relevance: The projects effectively addressed the pressing needs of post-conflict Iraq, focusing on peace building, socio-economic reintegration, and preventing violent extremism. Each project was closely aligned with national priorities and the needs of communities affected by conflict, ensuring

that their objectives were relevant to both immediate and long-term recovery processes. For instance, **C2RI**'s focus on reintegrating families formerly associated with ISIL directly responded to the societal divisions caused by conflict, while **PVE** initiatives were tailored to build local capacity for addressing extremism, a critical issue in Iraq.

Effectiveness: The projects were largely successful in achieving their intended outcomes. The **Support Social Stability in Iraq through PVE** project built local and national capacity to combat extremism through training and action plans, while the **Social Cohesion Programme** promoted reconciliation and peace building through community dialogue and local peace committees. **C2RI** was effective in reconciling communities and reintegrating vulnerable groups, and **Supporting Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration** successfully provided economic opportunities through vocational training and business development. These outputs were well aligned with their objectives, leading to positive changes in both community relations and individual livelihoods.

Efficiency: Despite some challenges, such as delayed funding, security concerns, and the complexity of beneficiary selection, the projects demonstrated a relatively efficient use of resources. The integration of multiple activities under each project, such as vocational training, business grants, and community dialogue, allowed for comprehensive solutions to complex issues. **C2RI** and **Support Social Stability** efficiently utilized local structures, such as peace committees and youth groups, to maximize reach and impact without excessive overhead.

Impact: The projects made a significant positive impact, particularly in fostering social cohesion and economic recovery. The **Social Cohesion Programme** and **PVE** initiatives helped reduce tensions in communities, promoting peace and trust among returnees, IDPs, and host populations. **C2RI**'s reintegration efforts helped ease the return of displaced families, while **Supporting Livelihoods** contributed to reducing poverty and improving economic conditions for vulnerable populations. The **impact on women** was also substantial, with increased participation in leadership roles and economic activities, significantly advancing gender equality in conflict-affected areas.

Sustainability: The sustainability of these initiatives showed mixed outcomes. The **Social Cohesion Programme** and **C2RI** projects established strong local peace building mechanisms, such as peace committees and women's groups, which continued to operate in many areas. However, the long-term success of these initiatives depended on continued funding, capacity building, and local ownership. The **Supporting Livelihoods** project's focus on vocational training and business grants empowered individuals to maintain their livelihoods, but its sustainability could have been further enhanced by strengthening links to local markets and businesses. Similarly, the **PVE** project's capacity-building efforts needed to be institutionalized within local governance structures to ensure lasting impact.

In conclusion, the projects demonstrated strong alignment with the OECD DAC criteria, making substantial progress in addressing Iraq's post-conflict challenges. They were highly relevant, effective in achieving their goals, and efficient in utilizing resources. Their impacts, particularly on social cohesion, reintegration, and economic recovery, were significant, though ensuring sustainability required continued efforts, resources, and local engagement. These projects represented important steps toward long-term peace and stability in Iraq, with lessons learned that could guide future interventions in similar contexts.

4.2. Recommendations

Direct Beneficiaries:

To support the economic development and empowerment of vulnerable populations, especially displaced individuals, women, and youth, it is essential to expand and tailor economic empowerment programs that directly address their specific needs. Vocational training, cash-for-work initiatives, and small grants should be designed to alleviate unemployment and financial hardships. These programs must be carefully tailored to suit the particular demands of each community, such as focusing on livestock breeding in rural areas where agriculture plays a key role in livelihoods, or providing training in solar panel installation in urban regions that are increasingly relying on renewable energy sources. By aligning these economic interventions with local resources and expertise, beneficiaries will have the tools and opportunities they need to create sustainable livelihoods and contribute to community development.

In underserved areas, expanding access to vocational training is crucial to bridge the skills gap and improve employment prospects for individuals who might otherwise remain excluded from the workforce. Vocational training should be diversified to include practical fields that meet the local job market's demands, such as mobile repair, barbering, sewing, and driving. These skills are often in high demand, and offering them in remote or underserved locations ensures broader access to economic opportunities. Furthermore, expanding training centers and partnering with local businesses for apprenticeships will help provide hands-on learning and increase job placement rates for participants.

Alongside training, it is vital that participants are provided with the necessary tools and resources to fully enable their work post-training. This means ensuring that individuals receive comprehensive toolkits and essential supplies, such as generators for those in trades that require heavy machinery or sewing machines for seamstresses. By equipping participants with the resources they need to succeed in their new endeavors, they will be empowered to begin their work immediately, and the chances of long-term productivity and business success will increase.

To support displaced families and stabilize return communities, addressing critical infrastructure needs is a key component. These communities often face the challenge of inadequate housing, water supply, electricity, and access to education. Improving infrastructure, such as repairing or rebuilding homes for displaced families and providing essential services like water and electricity, will create a stable environment for families to rebuild their lives. Access to education is particularly important in ensuring that children and youth can integrate into society and benefit from long-term development opportunities. By prioritizing infrastructure support, the overall quality of life for displaced families and the broader community will improve, enabling them to regain a sense of stability and normalcy.

Religious Leaders and Community Influencers:

Expanding training and advocacy initiatives for influential community leaders such as religious figures, tribal leaders, and youth will be essential to building long-term peace and fostering social cohesion. By providing more workshops on peacebuilding, social cohesion, and conflict resolution, these leaders will be equipped with the knowledge and tools to promote unity and collaboration among community members. These workshops should focus on developing the leadership capabilities of influential figures so that they can effectively mediate conflicts, promote mutual understanding, and foster cooperation among different community groups, reducing tensions and preventing violent extremism.

Supporting volunteer and community-led projects is another critical avenue to ensure sustainable community development. By sustaining engagement with individuals who have received training, they can be encouraged to lead initiatives within their own communities. This kind of local leadership ensures that solutions are rooted in the context and needs of the community. Continuous support for youth-led initiatives and volunteer teams, through mentorship and resources, will help guarantee the long-term success of these projects. Local leaders will be empowered to drive initiatives that address local issues and create lasting impact.

As communities continue to face tensions and disputes, particularly in post-conflict settings, there is a need for strengthened mechanisms for conflict resolution and detainee support. Religious and community leaders should be equipped to reduce community conflicts, monitor detainees' conditions, and foster dialogue that helps de-escalate tensions. Strengthening these mechanisms will foster trust and cooperation, and contribute to a more peaceful social environment. Moreover, building the crisis management skills of community leaders is essential for responding to both current and future challenges. These skills will enable community groups and peace committees to collaborate effectively in addressing socio-political challenges and mitigating risks associated with emerging crises. This kind of preparedness is vital for maintaining social harmony in volatile environments.

Ensuring diversity and inclusivity in programming is also crucial. Training programs must represent the diversity of Iraq's communities, including ethnic and religious minorities like Christians and Sabians. This will help foster equitable representation and inclusivity in peacebuilding efforts. Promoting diversity within training programs ensures that all communities are represented, and it helps build trust between different groups, leading to more effective and inclusive outcomes in social cohesion and conflict resolution initiatives.

Local Peace Committees (LPCs):

Strengthening peace building mechanisms within Local Peace Committees (LPCs) is essential for improving mediation and conflict resolution capabilities. LPCs should be continuously supported through training and resources to enhance their ability to address persistent community issues like drug abuse, unemployment, and family violence, which exacerbate the risks of extremism. Providing LPCs with the necessary skills and resources enables them to effectively intervene in conflicts and resolve local tensions, which is fundamental to preventing further violence and promoting peace.

Youth and high-energy participants must be prioritized in LPC activities, empowering them to lead initiatives that foster peace and prevent extremism. By tapping into the enthusiasm and energy of young people, LPCs can ensure that the next generation of leaders is actively involved in shaping the future of their communities. Programs should be designed to cultivate leadership skills among youth, allowing them to take charge of peace building projects and contribute to creating a peaceful environment.

The sustainability of prevention and reintegration programs is another key aspect for LPCs to focus on. Continuing the successful prevention of violent extremism (PVE) and reintegration initiatives will require consistent funding and alignment with community needs. These programs should be adapted over time to ensure that they remain relevant to the challenges faced by the community. Ongoing support for individuals transitioning from violent extremism will help them reintegrate successfully into society and prevent relapse into radicalization.

For returnee families, providing basic services such as healthcare, education, and access to electricity is essential to facilitating their reintegration into society. These services will provide the necessary foundation for families to rebuild their lives and ensure their long-term stability. By improving access to these services, returnee families will be better able to integrate into their new communities and contribute to their recovery and development.

PVE Committees:

To enhance the effectiveness of PVE efforts, local coordination is crucial. Working closely with local governments, security agencies, and legal entities will facilitate the reintegration of displaced families and help foster trust between authorities and the communities they serve. Regular engagement between local authorities and community members will ensure that PVE programs are informed by local realities and effectively address the root causes of extremism. This will also strengthen the relationship between the community and local institutions, fostering a cooperative environment for reintegration efforts.

Assigning skilled personnel to oversee PVE efforts is essential for ensuring that interventions are targeted, effective, and responsive to local contexts. Technically experienced staff with expertise in conflict resolution, community engagement, and security will be better equipped to lead these efforts. Their expertise will ensure that PVE programs are not only strategic but also sensitive to the dynamics of the communities they are designed to support.

Supporting marginalized and vulnerable groups, including women, children, and other at-risk populations, is also a priority. Specialized programs should be developed to address the unique challenges these groups face, such as gender-based violence or child recruitment into armed groups. These targeted interventions will provide vulnerable populations with the support they need to reintegrate successfully and avoid radicalization.

Expanding community engagement in PVE programs is another critical component. By using trusted local organizations to implement PVE programs, these initiatives will resonate more effectively with community members and build the necessary trust for their success. Community-driven solutions are vital in fostering ownership of PVE efforts, which is necessary for long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

UN Staff and Implementing Partners (IPs):

The duration of projects should be extended to allow for comprehensive implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Longer project timelines enable more thorough responses to complex challenges such as reintegration and economic recovery, providing the necessary time for the successful realization of program objectives. A longer duration also allows for more detailed monitoring and adjustments, ensuring that projects remain effective and responsive to changing needs.

Increasing budget flexibility is essential to enable adaptive responses to unforeseen challenges such as security disruptions or delays in beneficiary identification. Allowing for greater flexibility in resource allocation will ensure that projects can continue to operate smoothly, even in the face of unexpected setbacks. This will also allow implementing partners to respond more effectively to emerging issues or needs in the field.

Strengthening monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms is critical to ensuring that projects are on track and achieving their intended outcomes. Collaborating with government M&E teams to track

project results and adjust strategies based on real-time feedback ensures that programs are continually improved and aligned with community needs. This iterative process of monitoring and adjustment enhances the effectiveness and relevance of interventions.

Fostering cross-agency coordination is necessary to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and that resources are used efficiently. Agreements with agencies like IOM, which outline specific roles in reintegration activities, will help prevent duplication of efforts and ensure that all stakeholders are working toward common goals. This coordination will maximize the impact of PVE and reintegration programs.

Promoting ownership and sustainability of programs is vital for long-term success. Training government staff and local organizations to take over program activities after donor funding ends will ensure continuity and reduce dependency on external aid. This will help build local capacity and resilience, ensuring that initiatives continue to thrive long after funding has been exhausted.

Finally, expanding knowledge-sharing platforms across projects will foster the exchange of best practices and lessons learned. Regular sessions to share insights and experiences will allow implementing partners to refine their strategies and improve the quality of future initiatives. This collaborative approach will lead to more effective programming and enhance the impact of future efforts.

5 ANNEXES

Annex 1: OECD/DAC - Program Ranking table

This assessment reflects a comprehensive analysis of the project's performance, balancing achievements with challenges.

Criterion	Rating (1 low, 5 high)	Rationale
Impact	4	The projects achieved significant positive outcomes, such as fostering social cohesion, reintegrating marginalized groups, and empowering women and youth. However, lingering issues like stigmatization of returnees and economic instability limited the full extent of impact.
Sustainability	3	While local structures such as LPCs and community groups were established, financial constraints, lack of institutional support, and dependency on donor funding posed challenges to long-term sustainability. Efforts to institutionalize these programs in local governance systems were still in early stages.
Relevance/Design	5	The projects were highly aligned with the needs of conflict-affected communities and national priorities, such as preventing violent extremism and promoting reintegration. Tailored interventions for vulnerable groups enhanced their relevance, though some design flaws in grant allocation and training duration were noted.
Effectiveness	4	Most projects delivered on their objectives, including training, economic support, and reconciliation. However, challenges in coordination, delays, and logistical issues affected the overall effectiveness of some activities.
Efficiency	3	The projects efficiently utilized resources in many cases, but delays in grant disbursements, limited training durations, and logistical challenges reduced overall efficiency. Financial constraints also impacted timely implementation and participant satisfaction.

Annex 2: List of persons interviewed

Stakeholders	KIIs	FGDs	Survey
UNDP	7 (3M, 4F)		
MOMD	2 (1M, 1F)		
MOLSA	1F		
IPs	5M		
Religious Leaders	7M		19M
Beneficiaries	49 (24M, 25F)	67 (27M, 40F)	
LPCs	5M		23 (19M, 4F)
PVE Committees Members	8 (6M, 2F)		5(3M, 2F)
Journalists			8 (6M, 2F)
CBOs			15 (11M, 4F)
CSOs	5 (2M, 3F))		18 (14M, 4F)
Donor	4 (2M, 2F)		
Other UN agencies	1 F		
Youth groups			7(2M, 5F)
Total 256 (156M, 100F)	94 (55M, 39F)	67 (27M , 40F) - 10 FGDs	95 (74M, 21F)

Annex 3: Table of Documents and Reports by Project received by the Consultant

#	Category	Document Type	Producer	Date	Document Name
1	Community-Based Reconciliation C2RI (Japan)	Project Document (ProDoc)	UNDP	February 2021	JSB 2020 C2RI IRAQ_ Final SIGNED.pdf
2		Situation Analysis Report	UNDP	February 2021	UNDP-IQ-Pathways-to-Reintegration-Report.pdf
3		Perception Survey	UNDP	August 2021	UNDP_IQ_Perception_Survey.pdf
4		Baseline Assessment	UNDP	July 2022	C2RI Perception Survey Report.docx
5		Annex - Business Engagement Report	Human Relief Foundation	June 2022	Annex C. Business Engagement Report.pdf
6		Annex - Impact Assessment Presentation	Human Relief Foundation	August 2022	Annex A. Impact Assessment Presentation - Project 327-21.pdf
7		Final Narrative Report	Mercy Hands	October 2022	Final Narrative Report - Mercy Hands.pdf
8		Final Narrative Report	Human Relief Foundation	October 2022	Final Narrative Report HRF (Implementing Partner).docx
9		Final Narrative Report	UNDP	December 2022	Final Narrative Report - JSB2020 - C2RI - UNDP.pdf
10	Community-Based Reintegration (FW) C2RI	Project Document (ProDoc)	UNDP	-	Final ProDoc FW_C2RI_2023 s.docx
		Project Document (ProDoc)	UNDP	May 2020	C2RI_Project Document NED.pdf
11		Pre-Post Assessment Report (MHPSS Sessions)	Human Appeal	March 2023	Pre-Post MHPSS Sessions Assessment Report.docx
12		Closure Technical Report	Human Appeal	May 2023	Closure Technical Report_HA_C2RI.pdf

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1 3		Social and Economic Empowerment Assessment Workshop Report	Human Appeal	October 2023	Economic and Social Empowerment.docx
1 4		Pre-Post Assessment Report (BST)	Human Appeal	November 2023	Economic And Social Empowerment Workshops Report.docx
1 5		Pre-Post Assessment Report (VST)	Human Appeal	March 2024	Pre-Post Assessment Report (BST).docx
1 6		Final Activities Report	Human Appeal	March 2024	Pre-Post VST Assessment Report.docx
1 7		Final Impact Report	Human Appeal / CCRTS	-	MHPSS Activities Final Report.docx
1 8		Project Document (ProDoc)	UNDP	August 2024	HA_Final Impact Report by CCRTS.docx
1 9	Iraq Social Cohesion Programme (ISCP)	Project Document (ProDoc)	UNDP	May 2022	(Signed) ISCP PSED.pdf
2 0		Project Document (ProDoc)	UNDP		ISCP Final Project Document (ed).pdf
2 1		Annual Progress Report	UNDP	2023	UNDP Iraq Annual Progress Report - Iraq Social Cohesion Programme 2023.pdf
2 2		Final Project Report	TILY/UNDP	August 2023	Final Project Report.pdf
2 2	Support Social Stability - PVE	Project Document (ProDoc)	UNDP	March 2022	Support Social Stability in Iraq through Preventing Violent Extremism 11 February 2022 Final
2 3		Plan of Action (PoA)	UNDP	January 2023	Sample - Plan of Action Diyala (English).pdf
2 4		Final Narrative Report	World Vision / UNDP	December 2023	Final Narrative Report - JSB2021 - Support Social Stability - UNDP_Final_2024.03.28.pdf

Further Docs provided via E-mail:

1. Evaluation Stakeholders.xlsx
2. Inception report content

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3. UNDP evaluation report template and quality standards
4. Country Program Document for Iraq (2020-2024). (UNDP-IQ--CPD-Iraq.pdf)
5. Return and Reintegration Prospects for Iraqis returning from Al-Hol Camp
6. (UNIDIR_Return_Reintegrations_Prospects_for_Iraqis_Coming_Back_from_Al_Hol_MEAC_Findings_Report_32.pdf
7. FINAL CBR Guidance Note for graphic design_11-01-2024

Annex 4: Data Collection Tools

KII Guide- Implementing Partners & UNDP Staff

Standard information for all interviews:

1	Program name	
2	Specific role during implementation	
3	Institution/Organization	
4	Organization’s mandate	
4	Position in the Organization	
5	Date of the Interview	

Opening Statement

Hello,

My name isYour Institution/Organization was selected on the basis of being a key partner and stakeholder in the Social Cohesion program/UNDP. The program is nearing completion and hence the need for a terminal evaluation. Primary purpose of the evaluation is to take stock of the achievements hitherto and capture feedback to inform future programming. You are requested to freely provide information that will enable the achievement of the evaluation objectives. Your views and opinions shall be treated with utmost confidentiality. To ensure this, the names of the respondents shall not feature anywhere in the report.

We are an independent team of evaluators, with two independent consultants - one national and one international. [introduce members present]

The interview takes about 30- 40 minutes and you are free to stop the interview at any point should you deem yourself unable to continue with it.

Relevance

- How has the project helped to address the security, political, economic, and institutional or other changes in the country?
- How is the project alignment to the national development priorities
- How is the project aligned to UNDP CPD, UNDP strategic plan and SDGS?
- What is the contribution of the project to LNOB principle (i.e., human rights-based approach, gender equality and women’s empowerment? Especially, with regard to the target beneficiary groups including returnees, youth, women, disabled persons, etc
- What were the weaknesses and strengths of the project design?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT-RELEVANCE 1 2 3 4 5

(1=very poor 2= rather unsatisfactory 3=satisfactory 4=good 5=excellent/ highly relevant)

Please briefly explain your choice:

Coherence:

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- Share the coordination aspects and synergies of the project with other programme interventions.
- What are the linkages between project with similar interventions
- How was the project aligned with the social cohesion programme contributing to Iraq Country Programme Document?
- Explain how the project aligned with interventions from other UNDP Iraq units?
- How did the project ensure external coherence?
- Was the project consistent with other interventions by other actors?
- Are there any opportunities for future partnerships? If Yes What?
- How did coherence of the project enhance equality especially, with regard to the target beneficiary groups including returnees, youth, women, disabled persons, etc?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT-COHERENCE 1 2 3 4 5
(1=very poor 2= rather unsatisfactory 3=satisfactory 4=good 5=excellent/highly relevant)

Please briefly explain your choice:

Efficiency

- How did the projects management, technical support, administrative, procurement and financial management procedures enhance efficiency??
- How efficient were project management structures and allocated resources in achieving the expected results?
- How did the projects implementation strategies enhance efficiency and cost effectiveness?
- Comment on the timely delivery of project funds and activities?
- How cost-effective was the visibility and communications strategy adopted by the project in promoting the project and its achievements?
- How robust is the M&E system of the project? (Probe: How is the project keeping track of project progress on expected outputs and outcomes? Does it allow for continuous collection and analysis of quality and segregated data on expected outputs and outcomes? HOW?)
- Did the project results contribute to any development innovation in social cohesion and gender integration? HOW?
- what are future recommendations?

Financial Management-Funding sources, annual planned and actual expenditures, and component/output/activity wise expenditures

What is the funding history and sources?

SOURCE OF FUNDING	Year 1 (2020/2021)	Year 2 (2021/2022)	Year 1 (2022/2023)	Year 3 (2023/2024)	Year 4 (2024/2025)	Year 5 (2026/2027)	Total	Total

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	Planned Expenditures	Actual Expenditures	Planned Expenditures	Actual Expenditures	Planned Expenditures	Actual Expenditures	Planned Expenditures	Actual Expenditures	Planned Expenditures	Actual Expenditures		
UNDP												
Embassy of Japan												
Government of Denmark												
Total												

Comments, if any

.....
Expenses as of As of June, 2020

Component	Expenditures	% of Project's total expenditures
Management (staff)		
Project Activities		
Equipment		
Misc.		
Total		

Fund release problems, if any and how those were resolved?
 Were UNDP audit procedures and rules were adhered to in fund utilization, allocations and procurement (ATLAS, etc.)?
 Provide comments by Auditors.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF EFFIECIENCY 1 2 3 4 5

(1=very poor 2= rather unsatisfactory 3=satisfactory 4=good 5=excellent/ highly relevant)

Please briefly explain your choice:

Impact

- What has happened/changed as the result of the projects in the targeted locations?
- What real difference have the activities made to the lives of beneficiaries (taking into account gender considerations, such as focus on women- headed households, as well)?
- How many people (gender disaggregated) have been affected by the social cohesion and reintegration projects?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT 1 2 3 4 5

(1=very poor 2= rather unsatisfactory 3=satisfactory 4=good 5=excellent/ highly relevant)

Please briefly explain your choice:

Effectiveness

- Comment on the progress made towards achieving planned objectives, outcomes, and outputs? What has been achieved thus far?
- To what extent do the projects’ activities/management systems support the reintegration and reconciliation of persons with perceived ISIL affiliation, IDPs, returnees, and stayers?
- How were strategies for gender and women’s empowerment incorporated? And how did they enhance effectiveness?
- How have the findings of data analysis or project best practices been used for drawing lessons learned, and adjusting implementation?
- How have the government both at national and local levels supported the implementation of the projects and contributed to effectiveness?
- How have the project activities improved coordination, cooperation, and capacity as relevant at the National and/or Governorate and/or Municipality levels?
- What steps or strategies were taken by the projects to strengthen project implementation and/or ensure project sustainability? (Probe: Seeking partnership with relevant actors among others.)

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS 1 2 3 4 5

(1=very poor 2= rather unsatisfactory 3=satisfactory 4=good 5=excellent/ highly relevant)

Please briefly explain your choice:

Sustainability

- How are the project results likely to be Sustained in the long-term contributing to social cohesion?
- How was the project exit plan and strategies been operationalized?
- How did the project contribute to the expansion of knowledge on reintegration and reconciliation among government counterparts, local partners, and community members?
- What are the social, economic, environmental, political risks that are likely to affect sustainability of project results?
- How does the level of stakeholders’ ownership address the risks mentioned above and allow for the project benefits to be sustained?
- To what extent have the government and community owned project benefits?
- How can the lessons learnt, and results be integrated in similar future programmes to ensure sustainability and continuation of benefits for inclusive and equitable development?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY 1 2 3 4 5

(1=very poor 2= rather unsatisfactory 3=satisfactory 4=good 5=excellent/ highly relevant)

Please briefly explain your choice:

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Evaluation of Cross-Cutting Issues:

Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

- How were gender issues included in project design, implementation and monitoring?
- How representative is the gender marker assigned to this project?
- What intended and unintended positive changes in gender equality and women empowerment did the project promote?
- What unintended effects emerged for women, men or vulnerable groups?
- How was Gender Action Plan implemented during project interventions?
- What are the opportunities for gender transformation for future programming?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT- GENDER AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT <i>(1=very poor 2= rather unsatisfactory 3=satisfactory 4=good 5=excellent/ highly relevant)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Please briefly explain your choice:					

Disability

- How did the project cater for inclusion of PwDs in project design and implementation? (Probe: Were PwDs consulted and meaningfully involved in programme planning and implementation?)
- How many PwDs benefitted from the project?
- What were the barriers to participation faced by PwDs during project implementation?
- What recommendations can be taken to enhance inclusion in future programming under social cohesion?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT- DISABILITY <i>(1=very poor 2= rather unsatisfactory 3=satisfactory 4=good 5=excellent/ highly relevant)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
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Please briefly explain your choice:

Human Rights and ‘Leave No One Behind’

- How was data on most vulnerable and marginalized in research and project monitoring captured?
- How did the project benefit to the poor, indigenous and physically challenged, women, men and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT- HUMAN RIGHTS AND ‘LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND’ <i>(1=very poor 2= rather unsatisfactory 3=satisfactory 4=good 5=excellent/ highly relevant)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
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Please briefly explain your choice:

KII Guide- Donors (Embassy of Japan, & Government of Denmark)

Relevance

- How has the project helped to address the security, political, economic, and institutional or other changes in the country?
- How is the project alignment to the national development priorities?
- What were the weaknesses and strengths of the project design?

Coherence:

- Share the coordination aspects and synergies of the project with other programme interventions.
- What are the linkages between the project with similar interventions?
- How did the project ensure external coherence?
- Was the project consistent with other interventions by other actors?
- Are there any opportunities for future partnerships? If Yes What?

Efficiency

- How did the projects management, technical support, administrative, procurement and financial management procedures enhance efficiency??
- How efficient were project management structures and allocated resources in achieving the expected results?
- How did the projects implementation strategies enhance efficiency and cost effectiveness?
- Comment on the timely delivery of project funds and activities?
- How cost-effective was the visibility and communications strategy adopted by the project in promoting the project and its achievements?
- How robust is the M&E system of the project? (Probe: How is the project keeping track of project progress on expected outputs and outcomes? Does it allow for continuous collection and analysis of quality and segregated data on expected outputs and outcomes? HOW?)
- Did the project results contribute to any development innovation in social cohesion and gender integration? HOW?
- What are future recommendations on enhancing efficiency?

Impact

- To your knowledge what are real differences have the project activities made to the lives of beneficiaries (taking into account gender considerations, such as focus on women- headed households, as well)?

Effectiveness

- Comment on the progress made towards achieving planned objectives, outcomes, and outputs? What has been achieved thus far?
- What steps or strategies were taken by the projects to strengthen project implementation and/or ensure project sustainability? (Probe: Seeking partnership with relevant actors among others.)

Sustainability

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- How are the project results likely to be Sustained in the long-term contributing to social cohesion?
- What are the social, economic/ financial, environmental, political risks that are likely to affect sustainability of project results?

Evaluation of Cross-Cutting Issues:

Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

- How were gender issues included in project design, implementation and monitoring?
- What intended and unintended positive changes in gender equality and women empowerment did the project promote?
- What are the opportunities for gender transformation for future programming?

Disability

- How did the project cater for inclusion of PwDs in project design and implementation? (Probe: Were PwDs consulted and meaningfully involved in programme planning and implementation?)
- What were the barriers to participation faced by PwDs during project implementation?
- What recommendations can be taken to enhance inclusion in future programming under social cohesion?

Human Rights and ‘Leave No One Behind’

- How did the project benefit to the poor, indigenous and physically challenged, women, men and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

KII Guide: National/Sub-National Stakeholders (Governmental partners)

Relevance

- How has the project helped to address the security, political, economic, and institutional or other changes in the country?
- How is the project aligned to the national and sub national development priorities?
- What were the weaknesses and strengths of the project design?

Coherence:

- Share the coordination aspects and synergies of the project with other programme interventions.
- What are the linkages between project with similar interventions in the country?
- How was the project aligned with the social cohesion programme contributing to Iraq Country Programme Document?
- Was the project consistent with other interventions by other actors?
- Are there any opportunities for future partnerships? If Yes What?

Efficiency

- How efficient were project management structures and allocated resources in achieving the expected results?
- Comment on the timely delivery of project funds and activities?

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- How did the projects implementation strategies enhance efficiency and cost effectiveness?
- How robust is the M&E system of the project? (Probe: How is the project keeping track of project progress on expected outputs and outcomes? Does it allow for continuous collection and analysis of quality and segregated data on expected outputs and outcomes? HOW?)
- Did the project results contribute to any development innovation in social cohesion and gender integration? HOW?
- what are future recommendations to enhance efficiency?

Impact

- What has happened/changed as the result of the projects in the targeted locations?
- What real difference have the activities made to the lives of beneficiaries (taking into account gender considerations, such as focus on women- headed households, as well)?
- How many people (gender disaggregated) have been affected by the social cohesion and reintegration projects?

Effectiveness

- Comment on the progress made towards achieving planned objectives, outcomes, and outputs? What has been achieved thus far?
- What steps or strategies were taken by the projects to strengthen project implementation and/or ensure project sustainability? (Probe: Seeking partnership with relevant actors among others.)

Sustainability

- How are the project results likely to be Sustained in the long-term contributing to social cohesion?
- What are the social, economic/ financial, environmental, political risks that are likely to affect sustainability of project results?

Evaluation of Cross-Cutting Issues:

Equality and Women's Empowerment

- How were gender issues included in project design, implementation and monitoring?
- What intended and unintended positive changes in gender equality and women empowerment did the project promote?
- What are the opportunities for gender transformation for future programming?

Disability

- How did the project cater for inclusion of PwDs in project design and implementation? (Probe: Were PwDs consulted and meaningfully involved in programme planning and implementation?)
- What were the barriers to participation faced by PwDs during project implementation?
- What recommendations can be taken to enhance inclusion in future programming under social cohesion?

Human Rights and 'Leave No One Behind'

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- How did the project benefit to the poor, indigenous and physically challenged, women, men and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

KII Guide Direct beneficiaries:

Introduction

- What is your name? In which area do you live?
- How did you learn about the UN programme? Was it easy to apply?
- What were the criteria for selection, was it explained to you and how did you meet them?

Payments (optional for programmes where inputs or money were paid to beneficiaries)

- Did you receive money, goods, supplies? If yes, what did you receive?
- Was it easy to receive money, goods, supplies? Did you receive what you were promised?
- Did anyone from the project mistreat you or did you observe how others were mistreated?

Training

- Did you receive any training? If yes, which one?
- How did you like the training programme? Did you benefit from it? If yes, what was the benefit?
- Did it help you after the programme ended? Were you able to apply any knowledge learned?
- Are you benefiting from other similar programs? If yes, please specify.
- Are any family members benefiting from other similar programs? If yes, please specify which programs?

Grievances/Communication

- Did the project staff consult you to seek your advice or input in the planning of the project? Did you feel that your needs were addressed?
- If you had any issues about the project, did you know how to complain?
- If you had any issues, to whom did you complain? Were you contacted upon submitting your complaint?
- How was the issue resolved? Were you satisfied by the way the complaint was handled?
- Did anyone from the project mistreat you or did you observe how others were mistreated?

Impact

- What difference has it made to your life as a result of the work of UNDP/specific project?

Do you have any recommendations for any areas for improvements?

Evaluation of Cross-Cutting Issues:

Equality and Women's Empowerment

- How were gender issues included in project design, implementation and monitoring?
- What intended and unintended positive changes in gender equality and women empowerment did the project promote?
- What are the opportunities for gender transformation for future programming?

Disability

Inception Report – Thematic Evaluation of the Social Cohesion Programme -Iraq, August – September 2024

- How did the project cater for inclusion of PwDs in project design and implementation? (Probe: Were PwDs consulted and meaningfully involved in programme planning and implementation?)
- What were the barriers to participation faced by PwDs during project implementation?
- What recommendations can be taken to enhance inclusion in future programming under social cohesion?

Human Rights and ‘Leave No One Behind’

- How did the project benefit to the poor, indigenous and physically challenged, women, men and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

8.1.5. KII Guide Community coordination:

Background

- Please briefly describe your role in your organization or in your community, including how long you have held the role.
- Please describe the relationship between you/your organization and UNDP Iraq. Please describe which projects or programmes you have worked with UNDP directly on or taken part in initiatives.

Relevance

- What are your key expectations on UNW's role and interventions in the country? Based on your experience and perspective, to what extent is the UNDP Iraq projects aligned to CO's context and priorities?
- How has the project helped to address the security, political, economic, and institutional or other changes in the country?
- What were the weaknesses and strengths of the project design?

Coherence

- What are the mechanisms of coordination between UNDP and your organization? How effective are they? Are there any challenges? What are the linkages between project with similar interventions in the country?
- How was the project aligned with the social cohesion programme contributing to Iraq Country Programme Document?
- Was the project consistent with other interventions by other actors?
- Are there any opportunities for future partnerships? If Yes What?
- How efficient were project management structures and allocated resources in achieving the expected results?
- Comment on the timely delivery of project funds and activities?
- How did the projects implementation strategies enhance efficiency and cost effectiveness?

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- How robust is the M&E system of the project? (Probe: How is the project keeping track of project progress on expected outputs and outcomes? Does it allow for continuous collection and analysis of quality and segregated data on expected outputs and outcomes? HOW?)
- Did the project results contribute to any development innovation in social cohesion and gender integration? HOW?
- what are future recommendations to enhance efficiency?

Impact

- What has happened/changed as the result of the projects in the targeted locations?
- What real difference have the activities made to the lives of beneficiaries (taking into account gender considerations, such as focus on women- headed households, as well)?
- How many people (gender disaggregated) have been affected by the social cohesion and reintegration projects?

Effectiveness

- Comment on the progress made towards achieving planned objectives, outcomes, and outputs? What has been achieved thus far?
- What steps or strategies were taken by the projects to strengthen project implementation and/or ensure project sustainability? (Probe: Seeking partnership with relevant actors among others.)

Sustainability

- How are the project results likely to be Sustained in the long-term contributing to social cohesion?
- What are the social, economic/ financial, environmental, political risks that are likely to affect sustainability of project results?

Evaluation of Cross-Cutting Issues:

Equality and Women's Empowerment

- How were gender issues included in project design, implementation and monitoring?
- What intended and unintended positive changes in gender equality and women empowerment did the project promote?
- What are the opportunities for gender transformation for future programming?

Disability

- How did the project cater for inclusion of PwDs in project design and implementation? (Probe: Were PwDs consulted and meaningfully involved in programme planning and implementation?)
- What were the barriers to participation faced by PwDs during project implementation?
- What recommendations can be taken to enhance inclusion in future programming under social cohesion?

Human Rights and 'Leave No One Behind'

- How did the project benefit to the poor, indigenous and physically challenged, women, men and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

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Survey questionnaire

Civil society/PVE PoAs, Local Peace Committee Members, Religious leaders, Journalists, Governmental representatives, UNDP Social Cohesion, & UNDP Field facilitators)

1	Program name	
2	Specific role during implementation	
3	Institution/Organization	
4	Organisation's mandate	
4	Position in the Organization	
5	Date of the Interview	

Introduction

Dear Madam/Sir:

The UNDP Independent Evaluation Service thank you for participating. In this Survey, which is a key component of the Social Cohesion programme evaluation in UNDP Iraq. The Objective of this evaluation. Is to assess the social cohesion program, and document LLs and recommendations for future initiatives.

In this context, the survey seeks to better understand your perspective on UNDP's work in the country. The survey will take between 30-40 minutes to complete; certain questions are optional in the case you are unable to answer.

All data will be treated confidentially without any attribution to your identity. The results of this survey will only be provided in aggregate and no specific comments will be attributed to you or your organization.

Section 1: Background Information

Partner Organization Name:

Project Name:

Respondent title

Location(s):

Section 2: Relevance

2.1 Responsiveness to Changes

To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to security, political, economic, institutional, and other changes in the country?

- 1 = Not at all responsive
- 2 = Slightly responsive
- 3 = Moderately responsive
- 4 = Highly responsive

Please explain your response above. _____

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2.2 Alignment with National Priorities and Policies

To what extent were the projects in line with recovery, national development priorities and policies, the UNDP country programme's outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the SDGs?

- 1 = Not aligned
- 2 = Slightly aligned
- 3 = Moderately aligned
- 4 = Well aligned
- 5 = Fully aligned

Please explain your response above. _____

2.3 Contribution to Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Women's Empowerment

To what extent do the projects contribute to the human rights-based approach, gender equality, and women's empowerment, especially with regard to the target beneficiary groups including returnees, youth, women, disabled persons, etc.?

- 1 = No contribution
- 2 = Minimal contribution
- 3 = Moderate contribution
- 4 = Significant contribution
- 5 = Full contribution

Please explain your response above. _____

Section 3: Coherence

3.1 Synergies and Linkages within Programme

To what extent do the projects address synergies and linkages with other projects under the programme?

- 1 = No synergies or linkages
- 2 = Minimal synergies or linkages
- 3 = Moderate synergies or linkages
- 4 = Significant synergies or linkages
- 5 = Extensive synergies or linkages

Please explain your response above. _____

3.2 Alignment with Social Cohesion Programme

To what extent are the projects aligned with the social cohesion programme contributing to the Iraq Country Programme Document (CPD)?

- 1 = Not aligned
- 2 = Slightly aligned
- 3 = Moderately aligned
- 4 = Well aligned
- 5 = Fully aligned

Please explain your response above. _____

3.3 Alignment with Other UNDP Iraq Units

To what extent are the projects aligned with interventions from other UNDP Iraq units?

- 1 = Not aligned

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- 2 = Slightly aligned
- 3 = Moderately aligned
- 4 = Well aligned
- 5 = Fully aligned

Please explain your response above. _____

3.5 Consistency with Other Interventions by Other Actors

How consistent are these projects with other interventions by other actors, and what are the opportunities for future partnerships?

- 1 = Not consistent, no opportunities
- 2 = Slightly consistent, few opportunities
- 3 = Moderately consistent, some opportunities
- 4 = Highly consistent, several opportunities
- 5 = Fully consistent, extensive opportunities

Please explain your response above. _____

Section 4: Effectiveness

4.1 Achievement of Objectives

To what extent have the projects made progress toward achieving planned objectives, outcomes, and outputs?

- 1 = No progress
- 2 = Minimal progress
- 3 = Moderate progress
- 4 = Significant progress
- 5 = Full achievement

Please explain your response above. _____

4.2 Support for Reintegration and Reconciliation

To what extent do the projects' activities/ management systems support the reintegration and reconciliation of persons with perceived ISIL affiliation, IDPs, returnees, and stayers?

- 1 = No support
- 2 = Minimal support
- 3 = Moderate support
- 4 = Significant support
- 5 = Full support

Please explain your response above. _____

4.3 Achievements to Date

what has been achieved thus far?

4.4 Incorporation of Gender and Women’s Empowerment Strategies

To what extent were the strategies for gender and women’s empowerment incorporated into the projects?

- 1 = Not incorporated
- 2 = Slightly incorporated
- 3 = Moderately incorporated
- 4 = Significantly incorporated
- 5 = Fully incorporated

Please explain your response above. _____

4.5 Improvement of Coordination, Cooperation, and Capacity

To what extent have the projects’ activities led to improved coordination, cooperation, and capacity at the National, Governorate, or Municipality levels?

- 1 = No improvement
- 2 = Minimal improvement
- 3 = Moderate improvement
- 4 = Significant improvement
- 5 = Full improvement

Please explain your response above. _____

4.7 Government Support

To what extent do the projects have the support of the government at national and local levels?

- 1 = No support
- 2 = Minimal support
- 3 = Moderate support
- 4 = Significant support
- 5 = Full support

Please explain your response above. _____

4.8 Seeking Partnerships

To what extent have the projects actively sought partnerships with relevant actors to strengthen project implementation and/or ensure sustainability?

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Significantly
- 5 = Fully

Please explain your response above. _____

Section 5: Efficiency

5.1 Functioning of Project Management Systems

How efficient is the functioning of the projects’ management, technical support, administrative, procurement, and financial management procedures?

- 1 = Very inefficient

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- 2 = Inefficient
- 3 = Moderately efficient
- 4 = Efficient
- 5 = Very efficient

Please explain your response above. _____

5.2 Efficiency and Cost-effectiveness of Implementation

To what extent have the projects' implementation been efficient and cost-effective?

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Significantly
- 5 = Completely

5.3 Timely Delivery of Funds and Activities

To what extent have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?

- 1 = Not at all timely
- 2 = Slightly timely
- 3 = Moderately timely
- 4 = Timely
- 5 = Very timely

Please explain your response above. _____

Section 6: Impact

6.1 Changes Resulting from Projects

What has happened/ changed as the result of the projects in the targeted locations?

6.2 Real Difference in Lives of Beneficiaries

What real difference have the activities made to the lives of beneficiaries, taking into account gender considerations such as focus on women-headed households?

Section 7: Sustainability

7.1 Strategies for Sustainability

Which suitable strategies for sustainability been developed?

7.2 Expansion of Knowledge on Reintegration and Reconciliation

How have the projects contributed to the expansion of knowledge on reintegration and reconciliation among government counterparts, local partners, and community members?

7.3 Likelihood of Long-term Sustainability

To what extent are the projects' results likely to be sustained in the long-term, contributing to social cohesion?

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Likely
- 5 = Very likely

Please explain your response above. _____

7.4 Stakeholder Ownership Risk

What is the risk that the level of stakeholders' ownership will not be sufficient to sustain project benefits?

7.5 Risks to Sustainability

What are the financial, social, political, or other risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs and the project's contributions to country programme outputs and outcomes?

Section 8: Cross-cutting Issues

Human Rights

8.1 Benefits for Disadvantaged Groups

To what extent have poor, indigenous, and physically challenged women, men, and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the work of the project in the country?

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Significantly
- 5 = Completely

Please explain your response above. _____

Gender Equality

8.2 Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project?

- 1 = Not addressed
- 2 = Slightly addressed
- 3 = Moderately addressed
- 4 = Significantly addressed
- 5 = Fully addressed

Please explain your response above. _____

8.3 Accuracy of Gender Marker

Is the gender marker assigned to this project representative of reality?

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Significantly
- 5 = Completely

Please explain your response above. _____

8.4 Promotion of Gender Equality

To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women?

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Significantly
- 5 = Fully

8.5 Unintended Gender Effects

If Yes, What unintended effects emerge for women, men, or vulnerable groups?

8.6 Opportunities for Gender Transformation

What are the opportunities for gender transformation for future programming?

Disability Inclusion

8.7 Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

Were persons with disabilities consulted and meaningfully involved in programme planning and implementation?

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately

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- 4 = Significantly
- 5 = Fully

Please explain your response above. _____

8.9 Barriers Faced by Persons with Disabilities

What barriers did persons with disabilities face?

8.10 Recommendations for Enhancing Disability Inclusion

What are the recommendations to enhance inclusion in future programming under social cohesion?

Focus Group Discussion:

Direct Beneficiaries (MHPSS Beneficiaries, Vocational Training Beneficiaries, Business Training/SME Grant Beneficiaries)

1	Program name	
2	Specific role during implementation	
3	Institution/Organization	
4	Organisation’s mandate	
4	Position in the Organization	
5	Date of the Interview	

Introduction

Hello,

My name isYour Institution/Organization was selected on the basis of being a key partner and stakeholder in the program. The program is nearing completion and hence the need for a terminal evaluation. Primary purpose of the evaluation is to take stock of the achievements hitherto and capture feedback to inform future programming. You are requested to freely provide information that will enable the achievement of the evaluation objectives. Your views and opinions shall be treated with utmost confidentiality. To ensure this, the names of the respondents shall not feature anywhere in the report.

The interview takes about 30- 40 minutes and you are free to stop the interview at any point should you deem yourself unable to continue with it.

Relevance and Coherence:

- How did the project address your needs and priorities?
- How has the project linked with similar interventions?
- How has the project supported the marginalised in your community?
- How does the project work with other programmatic interventions in your area?
- How were you involved in the design, implementation of the project?
- What would the strength and weaknesses of the project design?

Efficiency

- To what extent did the project include Youth, Women & Men, PwDs?
- How well were the project finances and human resource utilised during project implementation?
- Comment on timelines financial flows from UNDP to grantees and beneficiaries?
- Was there value for money in relation to project results?

Impact and Effectiveness

- What were the achievements of the project?
- What were the strengths and weakness in the way the project was managed?
- What were the project intended and unintended effects on Youth, Women & Men, PwDs?

Sustainability of the Project

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- How are the project results likely to be sustained?
- What are the social, environmental, political risks likely to affect project outputs?
- What are the possible Social and Political risks likely to affect sustainability of project results?
- To what extent has the government and community owned project benefits?

Evaluation of Cross-Cutting Issues:

Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

- How were gender issues included in project design, implementation and monitoring?
- What were the project positive changes in gender equality and women empowerment?
- To what extent were resources committed to address gender imbalances during project implementation?

Disability

- How did the project cater for inclusion of PwDs in project design and implementation?
- How many PwDs benefitted from the project in this area?
- What were the barriers to participation faced by PwDs during project implementation?

Human Rights and ‘Leave No One Behind’

- What have been the project benefits to the disadvantaged and marginalized?

Annex 5: Evaluation Matrix

Theme	Sub-Theme	What Was Done (Activities)	Why (Rationale)	Expected Results (Outcomes)
Strengthened Policy Frameworks	Capacity Building	Built capacity of national and sub-national institutions to develop and implement policies on social cohesion and PVE.	Stronger institutional frameworks were essential for sustained peace and reconciliation efforts.	National and local governance structures were equipped to promote and sustain social cohesion.
		Provided training and tools for conflict analysis, reconciliation, and PVE strategies.	Equipping institutions with technical skills ensured effective implementation and response.	
	Policy Development and Institutionalization	Supported the creation of PVE action plans and monitoring systems.	Ensured that PVE strategies were institutionalized and integrated into broader governance frameworks.	Sustainable and ongoing anti-extremism initiatives aligned with local and national priorities.
Empowered Communities	Community Engagement	Established and supported Local Peace Committees (LPCs), Women for Peace Groups, and Youth Peace Groups.	Community-driven reconciliation mechanisms foster trust and local ownership.	Communities resolved conflicts independently and sustainably.
		Facilitated community dialogues, mediation forums, and reconciliation initiatives.	Dialogue fostered understanding, reduced tensions, and strengthened social cohesion	

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Theme	Sub-Theme	What Was Done (Activities)	Why (Rationale)	Expected Results (Outcomes)
			at the grassroots level.	
	Inclusion of Marginalized Groups	Actively involved women and youth in peacebuilding efforts and leadership roles.	Inclusion ensured diverse perspectives in decision-making and promoted equitable recovery processes.	Women and youth were recognized as critical actors in reconciliation and social cohesion.
Socioeconomic Reintegration	Economic Empowerment	Delivered vocational training, cash-for-work programs, and business development support for marginalized groups.	Economic empowerment reduced grievances and improved reintegration, fostering peaceful coexistence.	Vulnerable populations accessed sustainable livelihoods and contributed to local economies.
		Linked small businesses to markets and integrated them into local economies.	Strengthened the economic viability and sustainability of businesses established by beneficiaries.	
	Psychosocial Support	Delivered services to address trauma and reintegration challenges.	Addressing psychological needs ensured a holistic approach to recovery.	Beneficiaries experienced improved well-being and readiness to engage in livelihoods and community life.
Sustainable Social Norms	Awareness Campaigns	Conducted campaigns on gender equality, inclusion, and reconciliation.	Advocacy shifted harmful social norms, reduced stigma, and promoted	Marginalized groups, including women and returnees,

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Theme	Sub-Theme	What Was Done (Activities)	Why (Rationale)	Expected Results (Outcomes)
			inclusive participation.	were integrated into community life.
	Leadership Development	Trained media professionals, community leaders, and CSOs to champion social cohesion.	Local leaders and media shaped narratives that promoted peace and reduced stigma.	Communities developed inclusive leadership driving reconciliation and stability.

Annex 6: Terms of Reference

Social Cohesion Thematic Evaluation