United Nations Development Programme - Iraq

Outcome Evaluation of CPAP Outcome 1

Participatory Electoral Processes, National Dialogue and Reconciliation

Evaluation Report

Final Report

30 April 2016

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Acronyms

ADR	Assessment of Development Results
BCPR/DPA	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery/Department of Political Affairs
BOC	Board of Commissioners
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CMI	Crisis Management Initiative
CO	Country Office
CoR	Council of Representatives
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee at the OECD
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DIB	Disputed Internal Boundary
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General of UN Country Team
FFIS	Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GETF	Gender Elections Task Force
GoI	Government of Iraq
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IECI	Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Support
IHEC	The Independent High Electoral Commission
IR	Inception Report
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (or known as ISIS, also)
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdish Region of Iraq
LADP	Local Area Development Programme
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MDTF	(World Bank) Multi Donor Trust Fund
MoPDC	Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding

MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MSU	Management Support Unit
NCCI	NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NDP	National Development Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Prodoc	Project Documents
RBAS	United Nations Regional Bureau for the Arab States
ROAR	Results Oriented Annual Report
RRF	Results and Resources Framework
SCR	Security Council Resolution
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDA	The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
TOR	Terms Of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNAMI-EAD	United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq - Electoral Assistance Division
UNAMI-Pol	United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq - Political Affairs Office
UNCT	UN Country Team Iraq
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
RBAS	United Nations Regional Bureau for the Arab States
UNWOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USIP	United States Institute of Peace and the Institute for International Law and Human Rights

Executive Summary

This Outcome Evaluation was commissioned by the UNDP Iraq to take stock of progress made and lessons learned from implementation of Outcome 1 of the CPAP (2011-2015): *"Government of Iraq and civil society have strengthened participatory mechanisms in place for electoral processes, national dialogue and reconciliation."* The main purpose of the evaluation was to help UNDP identify strengths and weaknesses in the programme in respect of the stated outcome; extract lessons and best practices for futures interventions; propose better ways of coordinating donor interventions in the sector; and, identify priority areas of focus for future programming. Towards this end, and in line with UNDP guidelines, the evaluation assessed: 1) the extent to which the outcome and related outputs have been achieved; 2) influential factors that facilitated and/or hindered progress; 3) strategic partnerships and linkages; and 4) value addition and distinctive contribution of UNDP.

The scope of the evaluation covers the period of the extended CPAP, 2011 to 2015. Various projects under Outcome 1 are spread over the entire country and hence the geographical focus of the evaluation covered the entire country. The security constraints, however, restricted the scope of primary data gathering and the evaluation team had to rely on face-to-face interviews and phone calls from within the confines of the international zone. The challenge of access to evaluable data was compounded by the fact that adequate documents were unavailable in many cases which limited the ability of the evaluation team to assess several questions outlined in the inception report.

Through the first output under Outcome 1, UNDP focused on strengthening the institutional framework, organisational and human resource capacity of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) to carry out fair and transparent elections. UNDP was working as part of IEAT led by UNAMI. The second output was designed to strengthen the technical and administrative capacity of the Council of Representatives (CoR) to improve integrity of operations, and to develop capacity for inclusive governance, gender and human rights through enactment of laws and strengthening oversight functions. The intermediate result expected from various activities under this output was to enhance the CoR's capacity to support national dialogue and reconciliation. The third output was intended to develop the capacity of CSOs to promote participation in elections and national reconciliation. The fourth and last output focused primarily on promoting women's participation in elections and political process of decision-making.

Relevance:
Outcome 1 of the CPAP was rooted in the Iraqi National Development Plan (NPD) 2010-2014 vision of good governance based on participation, collective opinion and accountability as well as the UNDAF's emphasis on inclusive governance. The first output under Outcome 1 - strengthening the institutional capacity of IHEC - was the key intervention and followed a coherent approach and built on long-term support that was being provided since 2005. The three remaining outputs, though highly relevant, had considerably weak links to the Outcome.

UNDP's comparative advantage is reflected in its ability to provide technical assistance and bring in international best practices, both of which it leveraged in its support to IHEC. However, the evaluation found no evidence of UNDP bringing to bear its distinctive competence in any other area under the Outcome 1.

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Except for one brief joint review involving the GoI undertaken in early 2012, there was no strategic review of the CPAP, which would have brought out the need to change UNDP's approach to promoting reconciliation or a more joined up approach to working with CSOs.

Projects under the four outputs lacked a theory of change which would have identified assumptions that were being made and provided the programme team opportunities to work cross-thematically to ensure that linkages with other Outcomes were leveraged adequately during programme planning and implementation.

Effectiveness:
Achievements under Outcome 1 do not represent a coherent picture; the level of effectiveness has varied from one output to the other making it difficult to arrive at an overall assessment at the outcome level; the outcome is partially achieved.

The UNDP election programme has achieved notable results and contributed considerably to the development of IHEC's institutional and personnel capacity. However, the voter registry system remains problematic and might undermine the credibility of future elections.

UNDP's support to enhance national dialogue and reconciliation has made little contribution to the CoR's capacity in this regard. Support to the CSO committee of the CoR has enabled CSOs to advocate for the voices of civil society to be heard and taken into account in public policy-making.

UNDP's support to CSOs, however, has had only marginal impact with regard to the creation of an improved political and legal environment for CSOs' engagement in national development and reconciliation process.

UNDP's support to the CoR's women's committee has successfully focused on amending laws that discriminate against women. UNDP has also made positive contributions towards women's political empowerment, though considerable work needs to be done.

Efficiency:
The evaluation found very little data to reliably assess management and delivery capacity. Documentation on projects and outcome reporting remains weak. There has only been one project completion report and one evaluation (the ADR 2014). There was only one CPAP review undertaken by the CO for which report was available.

There has been an overall realisation of 96 percent of planned budget for Outcome 1 during 2015 for which data is available. Data on outcome-wise utilisation for rest of the CPAP period were not available.

Sustainability:
The sustainability prospects of achievements made under the different components and projects of Outcome 1 are mixed. Despite proven capacity to effectively manage elections, IHEC remains susceptible to political pressures, which may threaten its independence in the future and, thus, undermine the credibility of future elections.

There has hardly been any achievement with regard to the CoR's capacity to enhance national dialogue and reconciliation thus far. The sustainability of any improvements in the capacity of CSOs is also uncertain.

Influential factors
The successful achievements of the UNDP election programme were due to a number of inter-related factors: the long-term, successful strategic partnership between UNDP and IHEC; UNDP's comparative advantage in technical assistance and international best practices; and, the positioning of the election programme within IHEC. However, the core civil service of IHEC continues to be susceptible to political pressures. This may well have detracted from the impact of UNDP's support.

Reconciliation and national dialogue is a complex, politically contentious issue. This is primarily due to the Iraqi Constitution which institutionalised sectarian divide through a quota system. The CoR is consumed by political battles and turf war amongst parliamentarians, all of which have had their negative ramifications on progress and achievements of UNDP interventions, especially in absence of strategic support at the highest political level.

The complex political environment, coupled with the short-term nature of UNDP support, the lack of a coherent strategy within UNDP to leverage its country programme for strengthening CSOs and the lack of joined up approach by all agencies, have all been the factors behind the limited effect UNDP support to CSOs has had. That said, UNDP has during 2015 intensified its work with CSOs as part of a broad strategy.

The Constitution has ensured women a good representation in the CoR. However, social conditioning and prevailing cultural attitudes that restrict women's participation are behind the reported lack of women parliamentarians' participation in public policy-making. Such a culture makes it challenging to promote gender equality, especially in absence of a national counterpart and lack of a UNDP comprehensive gender strategy.

Partnership strategy
UNDP had a successful, long-term partnership with IHEC since the latter's early days (then IECI). This has enabled UNDP to continue providing requested technical support to IHEC. It is understood, though, that as funding decreased and UNDP's support was downsized, this led to some tensions in the working relationship between the two entities. For the most part, the IEAT was a good example of how the three UN agencies - UNDP, UNAMI and UNOPS - came together in a coordinated approach. However, there have been instances of confusion and tension over the division of roles and responsibilities between UNAMI and UNDP.

The lack of a joint strategy between UNDP and UNAMI is perhaps more evident, and influential, when it comes to national reconciliation, which is an extremely complex and politically charged issue. UNDP's support to the CoR has largely been at the technical level and had virtually no impact on the latter's capacity to enhance national dialogue on reconciliation. UNDP's partnership with CSOs to address reconciliation at the community level was short lived, and lacked a coherent strategy within UNDP itself to leverage the country programme in support of CSOs. Further, there are no indications of interaction between the UNDP and USAID which invested heavily in capacity development of CSOs when it comes to supporting CSOs in monitoring elections.

Recommendations:
UNDP is advised to maintain its strategic relationship with IHEC - to safeguard IHEC's capacity, independence and neutrality - and its support to Iraqi CSOs in election monitoring, to ensure the integrity and inclusiveness of future electoral processes. In partnership with UNAMI and all major religious/political groups and development partners, UNDP needs to

develop a coherent strategy for national reconciliation; the focus on stabilisation does not negate the fact that national reconciliation has to be approached in a balanced manner at both political and community levels. UNDP also needs to ensure its operations under the new country programme is channelled through a robust, strategic and coherent programme approach to maximise synergies among its different components. Interventions under the new CPD should evolve in line with contextual changes and developments. The CO needs to institutionalise a learning culture through the establishment of an efficient monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management system; the primary focus should be on progress towards achieving outputs and outcomes. UNDP is also advised to approach gender equality through a coherent interagency strategy. While addressing issues at the grass-root and community level, the strategy should aim clearly to support Iraq in bridging its gender-related institutional gap. Finally, UNDP is also advised to conduct an evaluability assessment before commissioning an evaluation.

Section 1: Introduction, Purpose and Methodology of the Evaluation

1.1 Background

1. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) 2011-2014[1] was approved by the Government of Iraq (GoI) and UNDP Iraq in late 2010. The document is aligned to the National Development Plan (NDP) 2010-2014 and represents UNDP's contribution to the development priorities identified in the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2011-2014.

2. In line with UNDP's emphasis on result-oriented programming, the country office (CO) undertakes project and outcome evaluations from time to time. During 2011, an evaluation of the Outcome 5 (policy framework for rapid economic recovery, inclusive and diversified growth and private sector development) was undertaken. According to the CO evaluation plan, another outcome evaluation was to be conducted in 2014 and it was decided that Outcome 1 (strengthening participatory mechanisms for electoral processes, national dialogue and reconciliation) would be the focus of this evaluation. However, due to security situation in the country, this could not be done as planned until the end of 2015. Commissioned by the CO, the evaluation of Outcome 1 was finally undertaken during January 2016.

1.2 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

3. As described in the Terms of Reference (ToR, attached as Annex 1), the main purpose of this evaluation was to take stock of progress made and lessons learned from implementation of Outcome 1 of the CPAP (2011-2015)[2] which was stated as: *"Government of Iraq and civil society have strengthened participatory mechanisms in place for electoral processes, national dialogue and reconciliation."*

4. The purpose of the evaluation was to conduct an outcome evaluation of the Outcome 1 of the CPAP in order to help UNDP:
    *   identify strengths and weaknesses in the programme in respect of the stated outcome;
    *   extract lessons and best practices for futures interventions;
    *   propose better ways of coordinating donor interventions in the sector; and
    *   identify priority areas of focus for future programming.

5. The key objective of the evaluation was to assess overall performance against outcome indicators in the country programme document (CPD)/CPAP Results and Resources

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[1] The CPAP was subsequently extended to 2015.
[2] The other Outcomes of the CPAP were: Outcome 2: Enhanced rule of law, protection and respect for human rights; Outcome 3: Strengthened regulatory frameworks, institutions and processes for accountable, transparent and participatory governance at national and local levels; Outcome 4: institutional framework to develop and implement Millennium Development Goals (MDG)-based pro-poor, equitable and inclusive socio-economic and environmental policies and strategies; Outcome 5: policy and frameworks for rapid economic recovery, inclusive and diversified growth and private sector development.

Framework (RRF) and the UNDAF priorities. The evaluation focused on identifying and analysing the external and internal factors that contributed to or hindered the realisation of outcomes, and draw lessons from these. Towards this end, the evaluation had the following four main objectives:[3]

- Assess the extent to which the planned outputs and related outcome have been achieved[4] or are likely to be achieved by the end of current the CPAP, and suggest any *course correction* that may be necessary;
- Comment on *factors that facilitate and/or hinder progress* in achieving the outcomes, both in terms of the external environment and those internal to the UNDP, including: weaknesses in design, management, resource mobilisation and human resources;
- Analyse the extent of engagement of partner institutions and stakeholders in the project, and assess the *strategic partnerships and linkages* created; and
- Examine the strategic *value addition and distinctive contribution* of UNDP in contributing to the outcome vis-à-vis similar work implemented by other key partners and stakeholders in the country.

6. The scope of the evaluation covers the period of the extended CPAP, 2011 to 2015.[5] Various projects under Outcome 1 are spread over the entire country (Table 2 in the Inception Report attached as Annex 2) and hence the geographical focus of the evaluation covered the entire country.

7. The ToR (Annex 1) includes a list of questions which (together with the purpose and criteria) enabled the evaluators to develop an evaluation matrix which was approved by UNDP during the inception phase and included in the Inception Report (IR) presented as Annex 2. As described in the IR, the evaluation has used the following standard criteria for drawing overall conclusions based on the findings. These are based on UNDP evaluation guidelines and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development /Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria for evaluation of development assistance:

- Relevance
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Sustainability

1.3 Organisation of the evaluation

8. The evaluation was commissioned by the UNDP country office (CO) in Iraq and managed by the Management Support Unit (MSU) reporting to the Deputy Country Director. Through UNDP's procurement process regulating recruitment of short-term consultants, two international and one national independent consultant[6] were hired to

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[3] The ToR (UNDP Iraq (2015). Terms of Reference – Evaluation of Outcome 1 of CPAP 2011-2014) lists these under three bullet points which the evaluation team has refined at the inception stage to articulate the objectives with greater coherence and clarity in accordance with UNDP guidelines for outcome evaluation.

[4] This will include assessing performance against the evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of UNDP's interventions.

[5] The ToR indicates that this evaluation will cover the period from 2009. However, desk research by the evaluation team during inception phase indicates that doing so would be beyond the scope as this evaluation is assessing only the Outcome 1 of the current CPAP which covers the period 2011-2014, extended to 2015.

[6] The national consultant's participation in the evaluation was during carrying out desk research at the inception phase and in conducting a few interviews during the field work stage.

conduct the evaluation. The field visit for the evaluation took place between January 10 and 26, 2016. The UNDP CO provided support in arranging meetings and interviews and ensured that the team had access to available documents. The first draft evaluation report was submitted on 22 February 2016. Upon receiving feedback and comments from UNDP (on 3 March 2016), a final draft was developed and submitted on 14 March 2016. In line with the ToR, a debriefing session, over Skype, was held on 12 April 2016. On 26 April 2016, the UNDP CO confirmed that no further feedback was forthcoming and, accordingly, this final evaluation report was produced.

1.4 Methodology

9. The overall methodology followed by the evaluation is described in detail in the IR. As is customary with any mixed-method evaluation, the evaluation ensured that opinions, views and perspectives offered by each interviewee or key informant were tested against information obtained from other interviewees and documents. Triangulation with multiple sources of data comprising field observations, key informant interviews (KII), focus group discussions (FGD) and desk reviews is a standard practice for an evaluation like this. However, due to security constraints, the evaluation team was confined to the international zone in Baghdad and could not travel to any of the project sites.

10. As outlined in the IR, the key questions examined by the evaluation were as follows (Box 1):

Box 1: Key questions for the evaluation

Relevance

1. To what extent was the intended outcome (#1), and related outputs, relevant to the national priorities, and the mandate of the UNDP in Iraq? Do the activities and outputs bear direct links with the outcome and does the outcome relate directly to UNDP and national priorities? Were UNDP approaches, conceptual framework, models and, resources relevant to achieving the intended outcome?
2. Have there been changes to the CPAP context since its inception? If so, what are these changes and how do they impact on CP implementation?
3. To what extent was UNDP able to adapt its programme and maintain the relevance of the outcome, taking into account the changes in environment and other situational (including policy) factors?
4 How has UNDP's programming incorporated gender equality, rights based approach and human development priorities in all aspects of planning and implementation?
5. To what extent is UNDP's engagement a reflection of strategic considerations, including UNDP's role in Iraq's development context and its comparative advantage?
6. Were the implementation approaches, resources and scale of programming relevant to achieve the intended outputs and outcome?

Effectiveness
1. To what extent has the outcome been achieved, or has progress been made towards its achievement?
2. What are the key contributions that UNDP has made/is making to the outcome?
3. What are the main factors, positive and negative, that influence the development environment and affect the achievement of outcome?
4. How have corresponding outputs delivered by UNDP affected the outcome, and in what ways have they not been effective?
5. Has UNDP's partnership strategy been appropriate and effective in contributing to the outcome? What was the main factor(s) in effectiveness/ ineffectiveness in the partnership?
6. What were the positive or negative, intended or unintended, changes brought about by UNDP's work?
7. Has UNDP best utilized its comparative advantage in deciding to deliver planned outputs? What are the key gaps that UNDP interventions could address within its comparative advantage that would significantly contribute to the achievement of outcome in future?

Efficiency

1. How well did the internal management and decision-making processes work together to support the various interventions to achieve the CP outcome?
2. To what extent were human resources capacity, administrative, finance, and logistics/supply systems able to meet the demands of the programme? Were implementation capacities of partners adequate to deliver activities in a timely and efficient manner?
3. To what extent has UNDP's partnership strategy been appropriate and effective? Has UNDP been able to bring together various partners across social, ethnic and sectoral lines?
4. How effective were the monitoring systems? Did they provide management with timely information that fostered a learning culture and informed adjustments of implementation?
5. To what extent has the programme outputs, contributing to the outcome, resulted from economic use of resources? Have the interventions been implemented within intended deadlines and cost estimates? Are the activities cost-effective and do they deliver value for money? How is value for money monitored, and if so, what type of data /mechanism used?

Sustainability

1. What indications are there the outcome will be sustained? Has UNDP been able to develop national capacity in a sustainable manner?
2. Have the interventions created capacities (systems, structure, and staff) for sustained results? To what extent are policy and regulatory frameworks in place that will support the continuation of benefits?
3. What is the level of ownership among national partners? Has partnership strategy enabled the integration and embedding of programme implementation in the government system?
4. Is there an exit strategy? What will happen after UNDP projects have come to an end?
5. How will concerns for gender equality, human rights and human development be taken forward by national partners?

1.5 Sampling, schedule and data collection

11. For key informant interviews and documents research, the evaluation used purposive sampling - i.e., based on an informed judgment by the evaluators (after initial briefing and preliminary desk research), sources were selected for their ability to contribute relevant and representative data to answer the evaluation questions. Attempt was made to select partners/stakeholders to represent different types of activities/interventions undertaken through the CPAP under Outcome 1.

12. The evaluation team interviewed a total of 46 individual key informants through a semi-structured process; some were met face-to-face and others were interviewed on phone. The following table (Table 1) shows the breakdown of primary-data sources (key informants and semi-structured interviews):

Table 1: Summary data on stakeholders interviewed by evaluation team

Sr. No	Category of stakeholder group met	Number of individuals
1.	UNDP staff	14
2.	Government of Iraq	20 (18 Commissioners/CoR members and 2 civil servants)
3.	Implementing partners NGOs	4
4.	Development partners/other UN agencies	8 (4 UNAMI; 3 DPs; 1 UNOPS)

[Source: Constructed by evaluation team]

13. A full list of all interviews and KIIs and FGDs is provided at Annex 3. Data from these were supplemented with those obtained from desk research carried out by the team. A detailed list of the key documents consulted is attached as Annex 4.

1.6 Limitations

14. Any evaluation in a country like Iraq is challenging in the prevailing security context. Access to most of the areas outside of Baghdad (international zone) in general for staff and consultants is difficult. This restricted the scope of primary data gathering by the evaluation team which had to rely on face-to-face interviews and phone calls from within the confines of the international zone and data available from reports. The evaluators relied on secondary data, project evaluation reports and self-reported data provided by UNDP to a large extent, and attempted to triangulate these through interviews with key external stakeholders as far as possible to make up for limited data.

15. A serious limitation of this evaluation has been the availability of and access to evaluable data because of the reason stated above. This has been compounded by the fact that adequate documents (project completion reports, outcome-wise financial utilisation reports,[7] monitoring reports) were not available in many cases which further limited evaluators' ability to assess several questions outlined in the inception report. In this regard, data for assessment of efficiency criteria (see Section 4.3) has been particularly limited. Several key documents (the Results Oriented Annual Reports (ROARs) for 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015) which should have been provided to evaluators during the inception phase or data gathering phase were made available only after the first draft of evaluation report was submitted, leaving little room for evaluators to check and validate data in these reports.

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[7] UNDP's financial system records and tracks expenditure according to UNDP's corporate outcomes, and not CPD outcomes

Section 2: UNDP Programme and Country Context

2.1 Country and programme context

16. The Terms of Reference (TOR, Annex 1) provides a detailed account of the country context as it has evolved over the period of the CPAP 2011-2015. The key elements of the context are described in the following paragraphs.

17. The duration of the CPAP under evaluation has been marked by intensification of conflict in a complex transitional country which is still facing conflicts and war. Increasing sectarian violence and insecurity fuelled by a combination of factors including weak governance and feelings of exclusion among specific sectarian groups have negated some of the development gains made by the country in the early part of the last decade. In the years following the overthrow of dictatorship, the country has witnessed a dramatic fall in extreme poverty and food insecurity, reduction in infant and child mortality, and increase in school enrolment including increased participation of girls. Economic growth has steadily increased and the country was expected to grow annually at an average rate of 9 percent during 2014-2018.[8] Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Iraq rose from USD 1,790 in 2005 to over USD 6,300 in 2012. While poverty at the national level decreased significantly between 2007 and 2012, it increased in Missan, Qadissiya and Ninewa[9] - the governorates of Muthanna, Missan, Qadissiya and Thi-Qar have the highest poverty rate in the country.

18. Iraq developed its National Development Plan (NDP) 2010–2014 with the aim of achieving a GDP growth of 9.4 percent per annum, generating 3 to 4.5 million new jobs, diversifying the economy away from oil, and creating a stronger role for the private sector. It also aimed to strengthen the role of local governments to bring service delivery and economic development closer to the people. In September 2013, Iraq launched the National Development Plan 2013–2017 to replace the NDP 2010–2014. The new plan is complementary to the earlier plan, with the additional aims of reducing the gaps between rural and urban areas and strengthening the role of local governments in NDP implementation.[10]

19. Iraq faces many interconnected structural problems at the community, governorate and national levels. Most notable among these are complex regional political dynamics; a majoritarian democracy; a highly centralized Government, with limited room for participatory approaches in decision-making and weak engagement with civil society; an outdated and dysfunctional legal system; and sustained erosion of the social fabric and related alienation of large segments of the population from state institutions and politics. Another key factor is the dependence on a single commodity that has created a rentier economy, inhibiting the emergence of a strong private sector and exposing Iraq to oil price shocks. This has significantly hampered job creation for a rapidly growing youth

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[8] Government of Iraq/United Nations (2014). United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Iraq 2015-2019. April 2014
[9] *Ibid*
[10] UNDP IEO (2014). Assessment of Development Results Iraq– Evaluation of UNDP contributions

population. Additionally, major disaster risks from water scarcity and the state of the Mosul Dam could have severe repercussions if left unattended.[11]

20. Weak legal mechanisms and widespread corruption constrain development. Iraq ranked 169 out of 176 countries on the 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index[12] and 170 out of 175 countries on the same index in 2014.[13] The devolution of powers to provinces is evolving in Iraq, although at a very slow pace. The Constitution of Iraq allows for governorates to form into regions, and it recognises Kurdistan as a region, providing it a special status. Endemic corruption that siphons funds away from development and security priorities combined with mismanagement of national assets and natural resources. Politically driven distribution of oil revenues and the national budget has created poorly prioritised and inequitable delivery systems for goods and services, crippled by chronic inadequacy of capacity and resources. A persistent inability of the state to resolve sources of conflict aggravated by exclusionary politics, a sectarian quota system, and 'cleansing' of religious and/or ethnic minorities in several provinces have prolonged war, destruction and displacement.[14]

21. In September 2014, the GoI launched its General Framework for the Government Programme 2014-2018. This framework builds on the NDP 2013-2017, but recognises that an emergency plan of action was required to address the situation in the governorates that have been targeted by terrorist attacks (by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant - ISIL), particularly the problem of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Security and stability, improving citizens' living standards and, institutional reform all remained top priorities for Iraq. Interestingly, the framework foresaw the increase in oil and gas production as a means to improving financial sustainability.

22. The Government still faces major challenges in ensuring adequate basic services including electricity, water supplies and health services. Inadequate security continues to disproportionately affect the most vulnerable groups, in particular women, children and persons with disabilities. Iraq ranks low in human development indicators. There is high income poverty (22 percent of Iraqi families live below the national poverty line), growing illiteracy (women in particular), and high unemployment (+18 percent) especially among women and youth. Gender-based violence has emerged as an issue of concern. As indicated in the Government programme 2014-2018, the Government is committed to reforming the public sector and addressing corruption, including more inclusive institution-building and modernisation of the state at the national and sub-national levels.

23. Iraq has a high level of gender inequality. The 2015 Gender Inequality Index of 0.539 placed Iraq at position 121 out of 188 countries globally[15] - which is almost equal to the average of 0.537 among Arab States. While women's representation in parliament (25 percent) is acceptable, the gap is huge in education and economic participation. The percentage of men holding secondary school certificates or higher is 28 percent compared to 16 percent of women. The gender gap in economic activities is even wider; 72 percent of men are economically active compared to 13 percent of women. Women generally

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[11] UNDP Iraq (2015). Draft Country Programme Document for Iraq 2016-2020
[12] UNDP IEO (2014). Assessment of Development Results Iraq– Evaluation of UNDP contributions. pp 8
[13] Transparency International: http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results
[14] UNDP Iraq (2015). Draft Country Programme Document for Iraq 2016-2020
[15] UNDP Human Development Reports - Table 5: Gender Inequality Index: http://gdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII

have lower working hours, more underemployment, and less paid work, but their proportion of secure jobs to total female employment is higher than men.[16]

24. Successive governments initiated reforms to better perform core state functions but due to general insecurity and institutional capacity gaps these efforts have had limited impact.[17] Despite the successful electoral process of April 2014 and the formation of an inclusive Government in September that year, enormous mistrust among the country's Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish components continues to linger and minorities such as Yazidis, Turkmen, Christians and Assyrians feel marginalised.

25. A critical challenge for Iraq has been the high levels of 'security incidents', beginning in 2007 and 2008, followed by a reduction up to 2012, and then an increase in security incidents in late 2012, which rose dramatically in 2013,[18] and even more so in 2014. Such incidents, however, have been much reduced in 2015. This has affected UNDP's operations significantly as up until the year 2013, the CO was operating remotely from its base in Jordan. The CO moved from Jordan to Iraq in January 2014 and expanded its presence inside the country, establishing an operational hub and programming office in Erbil, and programme offices in Basra and Karbala.

26. In June 2014, however, staff had to be evacuated again from Baghdad - reportedly with only a 48-hours notice – with the ominous threat of ISIL marching into the city. International staff were re-located in several other UNDP offices around the region (e.g., Amman and Kuwait); international experts had to return to their countries; and, national staff were working from home. The CO did not have the established remote operation base it previously had in Amman, so to speak. Meanwhile, it is understandable the priorities of Iraqi counterparts shifted away from development efforts and political reform. International staff started returning to Baghdad, and the CO began operations again in January 2015. UNDP's interactions with Iraqi counterparts, and on-the-ground interventions, were extremely limited during the period June 2014 - January 2015.

27. The ISIL's genocidal attacks against minorities have almost completely uprooted them from their ancestral homes and destroyed their places of worship. By mid 2014, ISIL had occupied the city of Mosul, attacked the Tikrit Air Academy (Camp Speicher) and, reached the boundaries of Baghdad and even occupied some of its districts. In retaliation, the Iraqi forces and the so-called Al-Hashed Al-Sha'abi (*People's Legion*) have been fighting ISIL on a number of fronts. It is reported that by November 2015, this has reduced the area of Iraq under ISIL's control from 40 percent to 17 percent. Such military campaigns, however, have their negative impact on development efforts, especially with dwindling oil prices.

28. The Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) has been relatively stable for over two decades and had managed to score significant development gains. However, the influx of both refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) since last year has put the region's hard-won development gains under serious threats of reversal. In addition to 1 million IDPs,[19] KRI hosts about 244,527 Syrian refugees.[20] Presently, an estimated 30 percent

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[16] UNDP (2014). Iraq Human Development Report 2014
[17] UNDP Iraq (2015). Terms of Reference – Evaluation of Outcome 1 of CPAP 2011-2014
[18] UNDP IEO (2014). Assessment of Development Results Iraq– Evaluation of UNDP contributions
[19] Reliefweb International: http://reliefweb.int/map/iraq/iraq-iom-dtm-round-32-5-november-2015-idp-families-shelter-category
[20] UNHCR-Iraq (2015). Inter-Agency Operational Update - Syrian Refugees in Iraq (November 2015)

of the region's inhabitants are IDPs and refugees. In August 2014, The Emergency Relief Coordinator designated Iraq as a Level 3 Emergency. With the engagement of the air campaign of the coalition forces, the Iraqi defence forces and the Kurdish *peshmerga*, some areas were liberated at the end of 2014.

29. Institutional challenges continue to pose major constraints on economic reforms and significantly affect the country's efforts to diversify economy and promote private sector investment. Multiple issues have caused over 20,000 private companies in Iraq to close. The Government allocated over USD 1 billion for lending to facilitate private sector growth but did not generate the desired expansion in investment and enterprise development due to the absence of the financial and non-financial support services and legal frameworks.

2.2 Country programme (2011-2015)

The CPAP outlines the following outputs and indicators (Table 2) for the Outcome 1 that is the subject of this evaluation.

Table 2: CPAP Outcome 1, associated indicators and outputs[21]

CP outcome	CP outputs	Partners
1. Government of Iraq and civil society have strengthened participatory mechanisms in place for electoral processes, national dialogue and reconciliation Indicators: *1- IHEC has the capacity and the mechanisms to carry out fair and transparent election process for inclusion of all Iraqis in elections (2010: no; 2014 yes)* *2- # of CSOs with the capacity to promote participation in elections and national reconciliation (2010: 10; 2014: 30)* *3-Council of Representatives has the capacity and mechanisms to enhance national dialogue and reconciliation (2010: no; 2014: yes)* *4. Number and percentage of women candidates contesting national elections (2010: 1800;*	Strengthened institutional framework, organisational and human resource capacity of the IHEC to effectively conduct any electoral processes as Iraq's permanent electoral institution, established under the constitution	United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq - Political Affairs Office (UNAMI-Pol), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWOMEN), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), IHEC, Communications and Media Commission, Council of Representatives, Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), political parties, Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation (MOPDC), Ministry of Planning - Kurdish Regional Government (MOPKRG), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), media institutions
	Technical and administrative capacity of the Council of Representatives (COR) strengthened to perform its legislative, representative and oversight functions and support to national reconciliation	
	Improved political, policy and legal environment that allows CSOs to freely engage in national development and reconciliation processes	

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[21] Government of Iraq and the United Nations Development Programme/Iraq: Country Programme Action Plan 2011 - 2014. pp. 24-25

CP outcome	CP outputs	Partners
2014: 2160 – 20% increase)	Enhanced participation of women in national and local governance processes	

[Source: Extracted from Results and Resources Framework, CPAP 2011-2014]

30. It needs to be noted that there were several projects which were not listed in the ToR, but for which some documentation was available for this evaluation to include these in the study:
    - **Enhancing Transparent Participatory Governance and Human Rights**: budget US$ 3,091,256 from UNDAF Trust Fund; duration April 2012-May 2014, later extended to 31 December 2014; subsequently re-extended to 30 June 2015. Only Project Document was available.
    - **Strengthening Participatory and Accountable Governance** (SPAG): This is a 24-month project (15 September 2014 - 14 October 2016) with a total budget of USD 1,797,999 from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).[22] Project Document and three quarterly reports were available.

31. Other projects that were not listed in the ToR, reportedly within UNDP's election programme but for which no information was available:
    - **Support for Enhanced Media Coverage and Monitoring of Electoral Processes:** budget US$ 1 million from ITF; start date 1/2010, end date 12/2011. No information was available. (reference: UNDP (circa 2010). UNDP Current Progress in KRG. (part of the 2011 CPAP review). The project was also referenced in the former election programme manager exist report (2015), but with a different time frame (12/2009 - 12/2012)
    - **Support Iraqi Media in Fostering Peace & Democracy:** budget US$ 6,131,285 from the Kingdom of Spain via ITF; start date 1/2009, end date 12/2011 (reference: UNDP (circa 2010). UNDP Current Progress in KRG. (part of the 2011 CPAP review)

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[22] UNDP Iraq (2014). Strengthening Participatory and Accountable Governance. (signed on 15/9/2014). It should be noted that it was only after the submittal of the first draft evaluation report that the evaluation team was formally informed the project (SPAG) falls under Outcome 1. As such, the evaluation team did not have the opportunity to discuss any issues pertaining to this particular project with stakeholders, or to independently validate its achievements and contributions to Outcome 1.It is also noted that the signed Project Document shared with the evaluation team then differed (in budget and timeline) from the document available to the team at the onset of the evaluation.

Section 3: Evaluation Findings

3.1 Output 1: Strengthened capacity of the IHEC

3.1.1 Overview

32. Through this output, UNDP focused on strengthening the institutional framework, organisational and human resource capacity of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) to carry out fair and transparent elections. Additionally, UNDP also undertook interventions for increased public awareness campaigns with effective support from the media and CSOs on electoral processes to encourage participation in elections and the promotion of independent media, and protection of press freedoms.

33. Support to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) was provided through three major projects during the current CPAP:[23]

    ▪ Technical Assistance to IHEC - Phase II: a 24-month project (1/2009 - 12/2010) with a total budget of USD 3,674,736 million from UNDG ITF.[24] The project aimed to provide IHEC with essential and urgent technical assistance through securing the required number of international electoral experts and advisers for electoral events.

    ▪ Institutional Development Support to the IHEC: a 36-month project (10/2010 - 10/2013 for a total of USD 24,861,991 million from UNDG ITF.[25] This project provided capacity building support to IHEC to effectively plan, implement, monitor and evaluate its short and long term goals through application of best electoral management practices, policies and processes.

    ▪ Institutional Development Support to IHEC - Phase II: a 15-month project (10/2013 - 12/2014) with a total budget of USD 7.9 million (of USD 2,134,050 million from UNDG ITF and the remaining from other sources that were to be determined).[26].

3.1.2 Findings

UNDP contribution

34. UNDP has continued to provide assistance to the IHEC during the CPAP period, working as part of the international electoral assistance team (IEAT) led by the UNAMI and comprising amongst other members, UNOPS, the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), the European Council (EC) and the Department for International Development (DFID) - United Kingdom (UK).

35. Within the IEAT, UNDP focused on supporting the development of institutional capacity of IHEC on dispute resolution mechanisms and public outreach, as well as developing staff capacity in the areas of electoral data collection; reporting; field coordination and management; complaints processing; and use of social media. The approach was to have advisory staff working closely with IHEC to identify areas of improvements and lessons

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[23] These were the projects listed in the ToR
[24] UNDG ITF (2008). Technical Assistance to IHEC - Phase 2 - Project Document.
[25] UNDG ITF (2010). Institutional Development Support to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) - Project Document.
[26] Iraq UNDAF Fund (2013). Institutional Development Support to IHEC - Phase II: Project Document

learned from previous elections and address gaps therein. UNDP has contributed considerably to the capacity of IHEC; a view shared equally among IHEC personnel at all levels as well as among UNDP staff and advisors, and confirmed by other donors. UNDP's support to elections was described as a "flagship programme, having achieved considerable results."[27]

36. The support and advice extended by UNDP to IHEC addressed both institutional and personnel capacity: planning for and implementation of electoral events, including advice for relevant legislation; IHEC regulations and procedures (complaints, voter registration, public outreach, political entities); and operational aspects (assistance with international procurement and logistics, ballot design, security coordination, coordination of national and international observers support).[28]

37. One of the major contributions of UNDP was in sponsoring, either fully or partially, numerous study visits for IHEC commissioners and personnel to other countries (India, South Africa and Australia to name a few).[29] It is reported by key informants interviewed in UNDP that the voter registry builds on the Indian model and the complaint system has been largely informed by the Australian one, both of which are renowned and recognised internationally. However, the downside of this has been that, besides cost, for many commissioners, capacity building came to mean foreign jaunts - several interlocutors within IHEC and UNDP laid the blame on the latter's doorstep for encouraging this culture among politicians and senior officials. It is understood that, as funding decreased and UNDP's support was down-sized, this led to some tensions in the working relationship between the two entities.

38. The ADR[30] noted in 2014 that the relevance of UNDP programme had diminished as the real challenges faced by IHEC were no longer technical and UNDP did not have much role. It was also noted that IHEC management was distancing itself from the international advisors. Part of the reason was also that the four international organisations (UNAMI, UNDP, UNOPS and IFES) did not present a common front.

Overall IHEC capacity

39. The general consensus among those interviewed - from IHEC, UNDP, UNAMI, UNOPS as well as other donor agencies - is that IHEC now has adequate capacity to successfully manage election processes with minimal or no external support – during 2013-2014, the country had seen four successful elections at national and regional levels,[31] and IHEC is now seen as a "mature" institution capable of managing its political dimension. The same assessment was made in the ROARs for 2013 and 2014. IHEC is regarded by the majority of key informants interviewed as one of the success stories of international assistance in Iraq. The ADR[32] came to the same conclusion noting that the "support to elections has

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[27] UNDP IEO (2014). Assessment of Development Results Iraq– Evaluation of UNDP contributions (5 June 2014)
[28] Between 2011 and 2013, a total of 1,182 participants from IHEC (950 male, 232 female - representing 64.6% and 63.0%, respectively, of project target) benefited from numerous trainings, workshops, conferences and study tours all carried out under one project (Institutional Development Support to IHEC - Programme number: G11-23).
[29] Under the same project (Institutional Development Support to IHEC), a total of 109 IHEC personnel participated in 11 international conferences, training, study tours and workshops in 10 countries (Mozambique, Spain, Mauritius, Denmark, Lebanon, UAE, Australia, South Africa, Kenya and Turkey)
[30] UNDP IEO (2014). Assessment of Development Results Iraq– Evaluation of UNDP contributions (5 June 2014)
[31] 1) Governorate Councils elections in south and central Iraq (2013); 2) Parliamentary elections in the KRI (2013); 3) Council of Representatives elections (2014); and, 4) KRI Governorate Councils elections (2014).
[32] UNDP IEO (2014). Assessment of Development Results Iraq– Evaluation of UNDP contributions (5 June 2014)

achieved considerable results as IHEC is now regarded as an institution that can run well-organised elections."

40. That said, the voter registry remains quite a problematic issue which, if not properly addressed, may undermine the credibility of future elections. The current registry is based on the food rations system, inherited from the dictatorship era with all its inaccuracies. Key informants interviewed in IHEC, UNDP and UNAMI indicated that IHEC is considering moving to a biometric system.[33] This is an overly-ambitious plan from both technical and financial perspectives. It also bears considerable data, and national and security risks, given the security situation in Iraq and lack of data protection infrastructure, legal or technical, according to key informants.

41. Key informants opined that IHEC remains susceptible to political pressures, due to the quota system that underlines the whole of the Iraqi political life. The commissioners are selected on a quota basis, representing the three major factions as well as minorities, and have a five-year tenure. This turn-over in commissioners every five years impacts the core civil service of IHEC as senior civil servants are also changed according to the political equation that emerges after every such change, thus affecting continuity. In this regard, a joint review[34] of CPAP undertaken in 2012 had recommended that recruitment to all civil service posts are made on the basis of competence, instead of ethno-sectarian quota, but this was never implemented by the GoI.

42. Support to the IHEC from all agencies gradually declined during 2012-2015 as IHEC began to demonstrate its capacity to run elections on its own. Key informants interviewed in IHEC estimated that in the election processes that took place during the 2009 - 2010 period, there were as many as 200 UN-affiliated personnel (staff, consultants and experts) supporting IHEC. This figure came down to no more than 10-12 in the last election (2014 CoR elections). Since 2013, there has been no support from UNDP in particular, and organisations like the IFES also ceased their assistance programme targeting IHEC. Key informants were unanimous in their opinion that while IHEC has been a success story for international assistance and it is only right that the former stands on its own, total withdrawal of engagement by international agencies may have adverse effects as UN/international engagement is seen necessary to secure public confidence in the integrity of the elections and in the independence, professionalism, and neutrality of IHEC.[35] As IHEC plans to embark on a new voter registration system, this issue becomes crucial as otherwise, the sectarian divide that marks the political leadership of IHEC may mar the neutrality of such a process.

43. In terms of technical capacity, there are still areas where gaps remain. Key informants interviewed in the IHEC stated that it needs to develop capacity on information technology (IT). Although people were trained through UNDP assistance in the past,[36] staff transfers and replacement have meant that there is need for continuing capacity and skills development.

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[33] According to IHEC's official web-site (http://www.ihec.iq/ar/index.php/albaaomitri_date.html), 316 stations are available nation-wide for voter registration

[34] UNDP (2012). 2011 – 2014 Country Programme Action Plan UNDP-UNICEF-UNFPA Joint Annual Review DRAFT Selected Minutes, 22 February 2012, Baghdad, Iraq

[35] REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION, IRAQ, Mission Dates: 20 November – 2 December 2012

[36] Source: An Excel workbook, provided by a former UNDP Election Officer, listing UNDP electoral activities (2011-2013). It also lists a total of 87 workshops held internally in IHEC at their expense in 2011.

UNDP and UNAMI relationship

44. By and large, with regard to managing election processes and supporting the IHEC, the general view among those interviewed was that the two agencies - UNDP and UNAMI - coordinated well. Many saw the IEAT as a good example of how the three UN agencies - UNAMI, UNDP and UNOPS - came together in a concerted and coordinated approach. However, an issue that came up repeatedly in discussions as well as in reports[37] was the confusion and tension over the division of roles between UNAMI and UNDP. The working relationship between the two entities seems to have been contentious with perceived trespassing into each other's territory. There were instances when either agency agreed to or implemented an activity/ intervention with IHEC without consulting or coordinating with the other - an issue that did not go unnoticed by IHEC, as some IHEC interviewees also brought it up. There were also instances where UNDP was less consultative. The issue is perhaps more profound when it comes to reconciliation, as discussed in section 3.2.2.

3.1.3 Conclusions

45. The UNDP election programme has contributed considerably to the development of IHEC capacity to manage election processes, with acceptable levels of fairness and transparency. That said, the voter registry system remains problematic and might undermine the credibility of future elections. This evaluation, therefore, adds its voice to that of the ADR in this regard: if the UN is not invited to advise on such a key issue as the voter registration, "it can seriously risk its credibility by blindly associating itself with the election results."[38] Such an issue calls for a serious political-level involvement and clarification, which is clearly the mandate of UNAMI.

46. The turn-over in and transfer of IHEC personnel after intensive investments in their capacity development is also a major issue that may well negatively impact IHEC's institutional and organisational capacity - and thus - ultimately, the credibility of future elections.

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[37] UNDP IEO (2014). Assessment of Development Results Iraq– Evaluation of UNDP contributions (5 June 2014)
[38] *Ibid*

3.2 Output 2: Strengthening Council of Representatives (CoR)

3.2.1 Overview

47. This output was designed to contribute to the outcome of strengthening participatory mechanisms for electoral processes, national dialogue and reconciliation through strengthening technical and administrative capacity of the CoR. The specific intermediate result expected from various activities under this output was to enhance the CoR's capacity to support national dialogue and reconciliation.

48. As per the CPD,[39] the Council of Representatives was to be supported to improve integrity of operations, and to develop capacity for inclusive governance, gender and human rights through enactment of laws and strengthening oversight functions. Regional and sub-regional mechanisms were to be strengthened to support intergovernmental dialogue in a participatory manner so that these institutions can address development issues and respond to needs of vulnerable communities more effectively. Support to the Council of Representatives was provided through a 30-month project[40] which started in 2011 and ended in 2013 and involved support to women parliamentarians, the administration (the Secretariat) of the Council and support to six parliamentary commit- tees (covering programmes to which UNDP provided funding under other programme areas) with a total budget of USD 1.4 million from UNDP's Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund and the Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery.[41]

49. Additionally, the Strengthening Participatory and Accountable Governance Project (SPAG) which began to be implemented from early 2015 also focuses on strengthening the operational, outreach and oversight capabilities of the Council of Representatives. This is a 24-month project with a budget of USD 1,797,999 from SIDA.[42] Broadly, this is a continuation of the previous project (Capacity and Support programme to the Council of Representatives "CoR", 2011-2013), though the SPAG project document refers to it as a "new programme phase", which "will consolidate the gains of the first phase";[43] and there was no specific reference to the previous project by title or number.

3.2.2 Findings

Women in parliament

50. During the 2014 elections to the Iraqi parliament, there were 2,607 female candidates in the fray, representing 29 percent of candidates and an increase of 44 percent of number of women candidates from the 2010 elections.[44] UNDP is credited by all stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation with successful advocacy[45] over the past several years to ensure a 25 percent quota for women in parliament. Although the quota system as interpreted and applied by various political parties is far from bringing about equality between men and women in their participation in the CoR, that there are now 4 Committees (out of 18) of the parliament which are headed by women is a good

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[39] UNDP Iraq (2010). UNDP Country Programme Document for Iraq (2011-2014), 15 October 2010
[40] Capacity and Support programme to the Council of Representatives "CoR" No. 75294
[41] UNDP IEO (2014). Assessment of Development Results Iraq– Evaluation of UNDP contributions
[42] UNDP Iraq (2014). Strengthening Participatory and Accountable Governance. Project Document
[43] *Ibid, p. 4*
[44] UNDP (2014). Iraq Results Oriented Annual Report 2014
[45] This evaluation however noted that the "Evaluation of UNDP Governance Projects Funded by the Iraq Trust Fund" observed that UNDP's role was principally logistical, peripheral to the substantive drafting effort.

achievement.[46] Among the political parties, one woman is chairing one of the major political coalitions inside the parliament; another woman MP chairs a parliamentary political bloc, and five former women MPs were appointed as advisers to the Speaker of the CoR.[47] Key informant interviews with senior parliamentarians indicated that at least "one or two" women are now starting to prepare for the launch of their own parties for elections in future to break into what has hitherto been a male bastion.

Capacity building of CoR

51. UNDP's major contribution and support to the women's committee of the CoR in the current as well as the previous parliament has focused on amending laws that discriminate against women: discriminating sentences in the penal law, the personal status law specifically with regard to Article 2 on citizenship and the domestic violence law. UNDP provided the services of a parliamentary development expert to support the Secretariat of Council of Representatives, its research directorate, parliamentary development committee, women's committee and the CSOs committee in developing the CoR Strategic Development Plan, performance evaluation criteria, and conduct capacity building programmes targeting staff.[48] The research directorate helps parliamentarians on technical issues, budget analysis, etc., and UNDP helped their capacity building, including in IT.

52. UNDP worked with the CoR at technical level, keeping itself distant from the political battles and turf war that go on among the parliamentarians and their staff who represent the various political and religious ideologies. This has not always been easy. UNDP suggested setting up a budget analysis office of the parliament at the CoR Secretariat for which it developed ToR and helped lead a consultation process. Initially it ran into difficulty as the Deputy Speaker of the CoR insisted on having staff recruited based on 'quota'; UNDP rightly rejected this idea and insisted on merit-based recruitment, rather than religious and political affiliations. So UNDP dropped the idea of going with the budget office of the parliament and instead attached this to the office of the Speaker who was amenable to the idea of recruitment based on professional competence only. This will provide members of the parliament (MPs) and Advisors with budget and financial analysis to enable them to efficiently vote and approve the Iraqi National Budget and also support MPs to perform their oversight function.[49]

53. UNDP helped set up a CSO Committee of the Council of Representatives. This interface enables CSOs to advocate for the voices of civil society to be heard and taken into account in relation to public policymaking.[50] In the recent past, input from civil society channelled though the CSO Committee was timely for parliamentary debates on a law on regulating social media in the country – key informants reported that without the CSO inputs, the law would have put severe curbs on social media. It is also reported the civil society, through the CSO Committee, had provided input into drafting of the NGO law and amending the political parties law as well. During 2015, technical support was

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[46] UNDP Iraq (2016). Results Oriented Annual Report 2015 (8 March 2016). These are the education, civil society, culture and women and family committees.

[47] UNDP Iraq (2016). Results Oriented Annual Report 2015 (8 March 2016)

[48] UNDP Iraq (2015). Strengthening Participatory and Accountable Governance Project ID: 00075294. Second Quarterly Progress Report, 1 May 2015 to 30 July 2015

[49] UNDP Iraq (2016). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2015

[50] UNDP. Iraq UNDAF Trust Fund MPTF Office Generic Annual Programme Narrative Progress Report: 1 January – 31 December 2013

provided to develop 3-year Strategic Action-plan and the Standards Operation Procedures (SOPs) for the Civil Society Committee of the Council of Representatives.[51]

Human Rights Commission

54. The first Iraqi government established post-2003 included a State Ministry for Human Rights for the first time in Iraq's history. The initial task of this ministry, assisted by national councils, committees and CSOs, was to document the abuses of the previous regime. CSOs involved in the process not only partnered with the government, but also collaborated with the UN, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other international actors in the field of human rights advocacy.[52] Subsequently, UNDP (and UNAMI) initially assisted the Iraqi CoR in establishing the first Independent High Commission for Human Rights at central level, and the independent Board for Human Rights at regional level.[53] UNDP also successfully supported the establishment of the first Kurdistan Commission of Integrity.[54]

55. The launch of the new Human Rights Commission was seen as a major opportunity to strengthen capacities of key government and non-governmental institutions to better promote human rights, and enable reconciliation. The Human Rights Commission, however, can hardly be called independent as its membership is allotted based on pre-agreed religious-political quota system, with each religious group (Shia, Sunni, Kurds and minorities) nominating fixed number of Commissioners to represent them. As the Commissioners (who are appointed at the same level as a Director General of a GoI Ministry) could not agree on a consensus candidate for a permanent chair of the Commission, a monthly-rotational system of chairing is followed. For the same reason, the Commissioners have also not hired any senior civil servant (at the level of DG) to head the organisation or to provide continuity when the Commission is reconstituted every four years with new members replacing the current Commissioners. After an initial phase (2012-2013), UNDP has not supported the Commission which is currently supported by UNOPS in the areas of staff capacity, IT, M&E, and equipment and furniture.

56. Besides the Commission which is an independent entity reporting to the Parliament, the CoR has a human rights committee as well which advises the former on policy and legislative issues on human rights. Like all committees and institutions of the GoI, representation in the Committee is based on religious affiliation. In order to provide an independent perspective in deliberations of the Committee, UNDP facilitated setting up a CSOs' advisory board attached to the Committee. The CSOs were selected through an open and transparent competitive process based on rigorous criteria which assessed their background and experience in human rights work – there are 19 members, one from each governorate and two from Baghdad. Ideally, this advisory group could have been attached to the human rights commission to help the latter monitor the situation on the ground in each governorate; however, the Commission withdrew from all discussions when the advisory group was being set up in 2014.

[51] UNDP Iraq (2015). Strengthening Participatory and Accountable Governance, Second Quarterly Progress Report, 1 August 2015 to 30 November 2015
[52] NGO Coordination Committee of Iraq (2011). Iraq Civil Society Perspective, April 2011
[53] UNDP (2014). Iraq Results Oriented Annual Report 2014
[54] *Ibid*

CoR and national reconciliation

57. By and large, UNDP's assistance to the CoR has been at technical level. Key informant interviews including with over half a dozen senior politicians and parliamentarians during this evaluation indicated that while UNDP's (and UNAMI) continued engagement with capacity development and technical support for various Committees are helpful for the CoR, they would have liked to see greater engagement of the UN (UNAMI included) using its convening power and reputation and neutrality to facilitate dialogue at political level to facilitate a reconciliation process in the country. UNDP tried to engage with the CoR on reconciliation and brought in a consultant to develop a Community Reconciliation Strategic Framework.[55] The framework focused on the role of the CoR and CSOs as well as ethnic minorities and religious groups in promoting and coordinating national reconciliation efforts in Iraq.[56] However, the work of the consultant, according to parliamentarians, produced very little usable output (except a report of the consultancy) and certainly involved no process facilitation. Several interlocutors opined that UNDP tends to come up with its own idea of what the country needs, rather than facilitate dialogue to bring different political groups together. Such criticism was targeted at both UNDP and UNAMI.

58. It is reported that during the year 2015, a Finnish peacebuilding organisation (Crisis Management Initiative - CMI) has been able to create a platform to foster serious dialogue among different political groups involving senior politicians in the country, and this has attracted attention of all major players including donors. The role of UN in this has been minimal, according to several senior parliamentarians. Added to this, turf war and lack of coordination between UNDP and UNAMI was mentioned by majority of the stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation as creating confusion in the minds of various interlocutors over the role of these agencies.

59. In this regard, this evaluation noted the very apt observation made in the Assessment of Development Results (ADR) undertaken in 2014: *"...expectations from the project (COR) were high,* UNDP's *credibility has declined inside the Council. Consider, for example, the strategic plan for the Secretariat. The UNDP counterparts inside the Council are generally senior politicians or senior managers who expect to work with senior experts when working with the UNDP. They were disappointed to find that their counterparts were junior consultants lacking the requisite experience."* [57]

60. UNDP's initiative on reconciliation at community level came in the form of two relatively minor projects on peace-building in communities in the Ninewah governorate where Kurds and Sunni Arabs have been caught up in conflicts. The projects included community-oriented research and studies; support to intercommunity reconciliation; addressing rights of minorities in Ninewah by bringing minorities together in disputed boundary areas to reconcile differences; interfaith dialogue to bring together groups of different faiths for reconciliation; Conflict and Development Analysis (CDA) using conflict analysis tool; and support to income generation activities. Funds came primarily from the Government of the Netherlands and the UNDAF fund.[58] The Ninewa Minorities

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[55] UNDP (2015). National Reconciliation in Iraq: An Integrated Strategic Framework (October 2015)
[56] UNDP Iraq (2016). Results Oriented Annual Report 2015 (8 March 2016)
[57] UNDP IEO (2014). Assessment of Development Results Iraq– Evaluation of UNDP contributions
[58] *Ibid*

Dialogue Initiative trained 40 local facilitators on conflict resolution with facilitators enabled to hold workshops where community issues are discussed.[59]

61. According to key informant interviews with UNDP staff, the CDA study took over a year and was undertaken by a consultant who did not have prior experience of working in Iraq. Besides, both the project officer and consultant were considered as junior staff by community leaders. Pilot projects were formulated targeting religious and community leaders after the study. Community level facilitators (18) [60] were trained to address local level conflicts, bringing different communities together for conflict resolution in 3 of the 15 disputed districts in Iraq. During implementation of the projects when conflict escalated affecting different communities, UNDP did not change its plan and continued dealing with the same stakeholders and community leaders. The situation changed during implementation, but UNDP did not change its plans as different communities were affected at different points in time. Since the project started with stakeholders from one particular area where communities were initially affected, when dynamics of the conflict changed and the same community was committing atrocities on another community later, UNDP continued to implement the project as per initial design. According to some key informants, this ran the danger of compromising UNDP's neutrality. Similar comments were made by several parliamentarians interviewed for this evaluation to the effect that sometimes UNDP was seen sticking to its "own plans", rather than accommodating what was actually needed by stakeholders.

62. The reconciliation projects were premised on the expectation that lessons learned from these will provide a basis for engagement with various communities on peace and reconciliation, an assumption that turned out to be unfounded, given the complex dynamics of conflict and civil war raging in the country. As was observed in the ADR, "some regarded the projects as naively conceived. While the overall objective is relevant to the critical issues facing the country, these projects have not engendered wider interest; support was found to be minimal."[61]

63. It needs to be observed that similar work in conflict areas was also being undertaken by UNDP in the disputed internal boundary (DIBs) areas through the Local Area Development Project (LADP) project under the Outcome 3. LADP's focus is on participation of women, minorities and affected populations in *daesh* areas. The CDA study focused on DIBs areas and aimed to inform various UNDP projects by providing a solid understanding of issues and drivers of tensions in the DIB areas, and includes a component within Ninewa. However, interviews with UNDP staff pointed to the fact that there were very little programmatic interactions between different projects, thus missing out on potential synergy that could have been generated. It is reported that substantive work on community reconciliation has now been included in Iraq Crisis Resilience and Response Programme and the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilisation (FFIS) which were both launched in 2015 under Outcome 3.

64. As discussed in section 3.1.2, similar lack of coordination was noted between UNDP and UNAMI. One particular example of this lack of clarity and coordination - perhaps even basic communication - was a document reportedly submitted by UNDP to the CoR.

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[59] UNDP Iraq (2012). Results Oriented Annual Report 2011.
[60] UNDP Iraq (2012). Support for the Rights of Minorities and Vulnerable Groups in Ninewa, Project Final Report DRAFT 5/11/2012
[61] *Ibid*

According to key informants interviewed in UNAMI, this document was thought to be a fully-fledged strategy for national reconciliation, developed and submitted unilaterally by the UNDP. The issue, it is said, escalated to the highest ranks of the UN mission in Iraq. It is understood that the issue has now been cleared, but this example perhaps serves to highlight the lack of joint, coordinated programming. Key informants reported that now the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) has put in place a mechanism (in the form of a task force) for coordination between the two agencies.

65. Overall, UNDP's contribution to reconciliation has been minimal. This, however, should be read in the context of the complex and deep-seated sectarian divide and extremism ravaging the country. As one senior UN staff put it, "now we are in a worse situation in relation to reconciliation than three years ago as all avenues are shrinking due to the fact that political space for dialogue is getting limited as all sides get polarised to the extreme." UNDP is now changing tack and has begun focusing on stabilisation measures in areas which have been reclaimed from the *daesh* and/or where displaced people are returning to. Stabilisation activities include repair and rehabilitation of essential services like water, electricity and infrastructure to enable people to return, as well as supporting the local authorities and returning communities to take charge of the area. This is essential for subsequent dialogue and engagement for reconciliation at political level.

3.2.3 Conclusion

66. On the issue of women's representation in parliament, UNDP has made some positive contribution. This evaluation concludes that the support provided by UNDP has strengthened participation of women in parliament and enabled CSOs to provide inputs on major policy issues, besides building some of the housekeeping and internal management capacity of the CoR. Judging by outcome indicators in the CPAP, however, support to the CoR made very little contribution to its capacity to enhance *national dialogue and reconciliation*. Reasons are varied and complex, starting from the Constitution of Iraq adopted in 2005 which institutionalised sectarian divide through a quota system. In this regard, this evaluation echoes the findings of the ADR which noted that "the support to the Council of Representatives has accomplished far less than expected, and the peace and reconciliation projects have been small, pilot initiatives that have generated little appreciation or interest."[62]

3.3 Output 3: CSOs engagement in national development and reconciliation processes

3.3.1 Overview

67. This output was intended to develop the capacity of CSOs to promote participation in elections and national reconciliation. Through a project 'Empowering CSOs' during 2012-2014,[63] UNDP provided grants to CSOs selected through a competitive bidding process with the intent that enhanced capacity of civil society would promote citizens' oversight in human rights, service delivery, integrity and transparency. The project was

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[62] UNDP IEO (2014). Assessment of Development Results Iraq– Evaluation of UNDP contributions
[63] Initial project duration was March 2012-September 2013, later extended to June 2014; subsequently the UNDP component was further extended to December 2014.

administered through direct implementation modality of UNDP (DIM)[64] and had 2 separate components: the UNDP component funded by UNDAF Trust Fund for US$ 2,221,818 and a UNOPS component[65] for US$ 1,015,601 funded by DANIDA.[66] Technical support was provided to participating CSOs for proposal development, institutional capacity building, and project management and implementation through training workshops and on-the-job coaching and support.[67] As a follow up to this project, the SPAG project also focuses on establishing a permanent capacity development resource for Iraqi NGOs within the NGOs Directorate of the Council of Ministers Secretariat, and creating a civil society consultation mechanism at the CoR for Iraqi citizens to engage in legislative process.[68]

68. UNOPS and UNDP have helped to build an enabling legal framework for Iraqi civil society, supporting the drafting and passage of the Law on Non-Governmental Organisations (Law 12 of 2010) and the Law on Non-Governmental Organisations Operating in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Kurdistan Parliament Law 1 of 2012). They have also supported development of the NGOs Directorate in the Council of Ministers Secretariat, the government agency charged with registration and supervision of Iraqi NGOs.[69] UNDP's support to the NGOs Directorate during 2015 has included technical assistance for development of NGOs database.[70]

3.3.2 Findings

69. UNDP encouraged a consortia-based approach through which CSOs were to select one lead organisation and work together in specific geographical areas. A total of eight consortia comprising 31 CSOs were selected through a competitive bidding process. To complement the grant process, a capacity building approach was also developed based on capacity needs assessment of each consortium. The methodology was designed to be as much demand-based as possible and to take advantage of different coaching methods for better results.[71] To provide ongoing capacity support to the CSOs, UNDP enlisted the services of two private companies, one focusing on monitoring and evaluation,[72] and the other on coaching, training and capacity enhancement of the CSOs.[73]

70. Key informant interviews revealed that the CSOs supported through the consortia rated UNDP's assistance highly, though this was a short-term project. A monitoring report in 2014[74] found that by and large, the eight consortia had achieved their intended outcomes and UNDP's support was effective in building capacity of the involved organisations through mutual support and learning. However, to what extent this capacity contributed to the objective of promoting human rights, reducing corruption and holding the govern-

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[64] Iraq UNDAF Fund (2012). Project Document - Empowering CSOs in Iraq

[65] UNOPS component is for work with civil society in KRI

[66] Iraq UNDAF Fund (2012). Project Document - Empowering CSOs in Iraq

[67] Canadian Leaders in International Consulting and Knowledge Development Company (2014). Provision of Technical Assistance to Iraqi Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on Project Development and Project Implementation, June 2014.

[68] UNDP Iraq (2014). Strengthening Participatory and Accountable Governance. Project Document

[69] *Ibid*

[70] UNDP Iraq (2015). Strengthening Participatory and Accountable Governance Project ID: 00075294. Second Quarterly Progress Report, 1 May 2015 to 30 July 2015

[71] UNDP Iraq (2014). IRAQ UNDAF TRUST FUND MPTF OFFICE GENERIC ANNUAL PROGRAMME NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT: 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2013

[72] Stars Orbit Consultants and Management Development

[73] Canadian Leaders in International Consulting and Knowledge Development Company.

[74] Stars Orbit Consultants and Management Development (2014). Empowering CSOs in Iraq - Final Technical Report, June 2014

ment accountable in service delivery remains unclear. The ROARs for 2012 and 2013 noted that UNDP's CSO support were in the form of "small projects". As was noted in the ADR, the CSO project has not operated at a large enough scale to register a discernible impact.[75] In this regard, it is worth noting that UNDP is now working on CSO capacity through several initiatives: besides the SPAG, UNDP has another project working with civil society under its Outcome 3 (participatory governance for enhanced accountability and human rights), and in the past two years, UNDP has used some of these CSOs for implementation of projects under Outcome 3.

71. Under the SPAG project, during 2015, UNDP conducted capacity assessment of CSOs and identified candidates from CSOs to be trained as Master Trainers - 25 trainers from all Governorates of Iraq were selected to undergo the TOT.[76] UNDP continued to support the NGOs Directorate to effectively facilitate the NGOs work in Iraq. In doing so, UNDP recruited 4 national experts who started the development of the NGOs data-base. The data-base will constitute an accurate source of information and many reports can be generated to assess the capacity of CSOs, geographical location, reports and area of work.[77]

72. Iraq had seen mushrooming of CSOs after 2005, spurred by availability of international funding. Currently about 1,800 CSOs are registered with the NGO Directorate of the GoI. With withdrawal of bulk of funding in the past few years, number of active CSOs has declined in all governorates dramatically. In the Missan governorate, for example, a senior CSO leader interviewed for this evaluation reported that while there were about 180 CSOs previously, only a handful remains active now. Many of the CSOs have focused on public awareness raising and monitoring of elections. A significant amount of support to CSOs in the country over the past 8-10 years came from the USAID which sought to strengthen civil society sector to help Iraq become a more participatory democracy. They had a programme from December 2011 to December 2015 supporting CSOs to build interface with Government. About 110 CSOs were assisted on organisational development over a period of one year.[78] Then four rounds of grants were made. Each round had a separate thrust area – advocacy on service delivery, human rights, budget analysis at provincial level and the last round was on management of IDP crisis.

73. Working through Mercy Corps, a US international NGO, USAID awarded grants to three local nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) to monitor elections in September 2013. Working with 56 grassroots organisations, these NGOs placed observers at polling stations, monitored the media, and estimated elections results. The project helped build the organisational capacity of more than 80 local CSOs.[79] However, there was no interaction between UNDP which also assisted its consortia members in election monitoring and the USAID. Another USAID partner, National Democratic Institute (NDI) also assisted CSOs in institutional development, capacity building as well as grants, supporting some 150 plus CSOs in 2012.[80]

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[75] UNDP IEO (2014). Assessment of Development Results Iraq– Evaluation of UNDP contributions
[76] UNDP Iraq (2015). Strengthening Participatory and Accountable Governance, Second Quarterly Progress Report, 1 August 2015 to 30 November 2015
[77] *Ibid*
[78] USAID programme focal point in a personal communication with the evaluation team
[79] USAID, Office of Inspector General (2014). Audit of USAID/ Iraq's Broadening Participation Through Civil Society Project, Audit Report No. 6-267-14-006-P February 12, 2014
[80] Iraq UNDAF Fund (2012). Project Document - Empowering CSOs in Iraq

74. It needs to be noted that civil society is increasingly playing an expanded role in the country, taking on several functions which were previously prerogatives of the state into their own hands. With increasing polarisation along ethnic and sectarian lines on the one hand, and ongoing conflict in different regions of the country, the authority and capacity of the national government to provide services is being eroded. As the state withdraws from service delivery, various individual and collective initiatives are taking over these functions. Many local enterprises have emerged to operate and manage local electricity supplies and water provisions in cities and rural areas. People are increasingly relying on local support and solidarity systems to meet their communities' needs. Tribal networks are now the main security providers, and are even being used as proxies by the government in order to maintain stability at the local level.[81] This is also leading to increasing politicisation of civil society as the sectarian and tribal divisions in social and political life gets superimposed on CSOs. This will have consequences for any peace building and reconciliation initiative at community level as Iraqi CSOs, unlike their western counterparts, are not independent from traditional social structures and political parties, including militia groups.

75. Within these structural limitations, UNDP has done well to tread cautiously on providing support to the CSOs. However, a joined up approach by all major players who support civil society would have been called for in the national context. Key informant interviews indicated that with withdrawal of funding by most agencies, major agencies (USAID, NDI, Mercy Corps) which took a lead role in developing the capacity of CSOs have either wound down fully of partially most of their support to CSOs. This does not augur well for civic participation in national reconciliation in future. Politicised as they are, CSOs could partly bridge the gap between sectarian politics on the one hand, and communities' needs on the other.

3.3.3 Conclusion

76. Support to CSOs may have had only marginal impact in terms of contribution to creation of improved political and legal environment for CSOs to engage in national development and reconciliation process for a variety of reasons: (a) complex political environment in the country; (b) short term nature of UNDP support; (c) lack of a coherent strategy within UNDP to leverage its country programme for strengthening CSOs; and (d) lack of joined up approach by all agencies. That said, it appears that since 2014-15, UNDP has been supporting CSOs as a part of a broader strategy across UNDP programmes and this may make a discernible impact in the future, though the evaluation has had no data to comment on impact at this stage.

3.4 Output 4: Women's Participation

3.4.1 Overview

77. The fourth and last output designed to contribute to Outcome 1 was a clear focus on women's participation in national and local governance processes. UNDP also works on gender issues through Outcome 3 at various levels including creating conditions for realising the full potential of women as citizens and significant contributors to development as well as through supporting implementation of Convention on the

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[81] NGO Coordination Committee of Iraq (2011). Iraq Civil Society Perspective, April 2011

Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and UN Security Council resolution 1325 for protection of women.[82] Under this output, the focus has been primarily on promoting women's participation in elections and political process of decision-making.

78. Gender equality is a core value of the UNDP, and an integral cross-cutting theme underlying its strategy, programmes and interventions. As such, it is not surprising that all projects under Outcome 1 (for which Project Documents were available) made clear and explicit reference to gender equality. Gender mainstreaming was well articulated in all projects, and a number of them had gender-specific results and indicators in their Results Framework.

3.4.2 Findings
Women in elections

79. Constitutionally, Iraq has a progressive legal framework for women's equal participation in elections. Iraq is ranked 45th in terms of women's representation in parliament, according to the Inter Parliamentary Union.[83] This is attributed to the use of quota - which UNDP was involved in successful advocacy for - that guarantees nomination and election of a minimum number of women in the CoR. UNDP had also supported the adoption of reduced registration fee for women-only political entities and women candidates by IHEC.[84] This, however, seems to have had little impact on women's participation - as can be seen from the Table (Table 3) below, the percentage of women contesting the CoR elections in 2010 and 2014 remained the same (28.7% and 28.8%, respectively). A similar percentage is also noted in the Governorate Council elections in the South and Central Iraq (2013). This percentage is lower than that of the CoR elections of 2005. It is only in the KRI elections that the percentage of women contesting elections is higher - nearly a third of all candidates.

Table 3: Percentage share of women candidates in different elections

Year	Elections	Candidates			% Female to total candidates
		Total	Male	Female	
2005	CoR	7,648	5,088	2,560	33.5
2010	CoR	6,291	4,485	1,806	28.7
2013	Governorate Councils (S/C)	8,143	5,935	2,208	27.1
2013	KRI Parliament	1,129	763	366	32.4
2014	CoR	9,043	6,436	2,607	28.8

[Compiled from: IHEC (no date): Report on Gender - in Arabic; www.ihec.iq]

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[82] Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides a number of important operational mandates, with implications for Member States and the entities of the United Nations system.
[83] Nyambura Ngugi (undated). PROMOTING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN IRAQ - Women's experiences and the role of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) - Draft v.2 prepared for UNDP Iraq
[84] UNDP (2014), Iraq Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2014

80. This may be due to the rather skewed interpretation of the quota system, according to key informants interviewed in the CoR, IHEC and UNDP. Clause 4 of Article 49 of the Iraqi Constitution states that the "elections law shall aim to achieve a percentage of representation for women of not less than one-quarter of the members of the Council of Representatives."[85] The election law of 2013 duly states that the percentage of women contesting elections should not be less than 25 percent.[86] However, the provisions of both the Constitution and the elections law have been interpreted differently - that women's quota of the CoR will be 25 percent (fixed) and even women who win through direct votes are also included in the calculation of quota allocated.

81. The UNDP, jointly with UNAMI, is credited with the establishment of the "gender team" in IHEC in June 2012. The team was the first of its kind in Iraq, and is headed by the only female commissioner of IHEC. A key informant interviewed in IHEC noted that the number of female commissioners on board IHEC has decreased from three (3) in 2005 (then IECI) to two (2) in 2007 to only one (1) in the Board of Commissioners (BoC) elected in 2012; this trend is a clear and strong indication, from the interviewee's perspective, of the lack of political commitment to gender equality.

82. Perhaps more important than numbers or percentages is women's performance once they become members of parliament (MPs). Political parties regard the female quota as guaranteed CoR seats and, once elected, female MPs are regarded as secured votes when a bill is put to motion. Key informants interviewed in the CoR, IHEC and UNDP noted that very few female MPs are truly "active" as they are often expected to follow the lead of their male counterparts. A key informant interviewed in the CoR reported that when an amendment to the political parties law was proposed - to secure women's quota in political parties' leadership – even many female MPs did not vote in favour. This was also borne out in one study[87] by UNDP which found that having gained their seats through nominations by their political parties, women parliamentarians tend to prioritise their parties' agenda, and are less likely to speak out on gender equality issues. There were a few instances of individual women leaders who spoke out publicly on issues of interest to women.

83. This is a reflection of social conditioning and prevailing cultural attitudes that restrict women's participation in decision making. The lack of internal political party democracy and the double threat of sectarian and gender-based violence make for a very challenging environment. Women candidates for governorate councils and the CoR face discrimination within their parties at the nomination stage, with preference being given to men.[88] The 2014 Gender Inequality Index of 0.539 placed Iraq at position 123 out of 188 countries globally.[89] It is not surprising, perhaps, that political parties have had no motive or interest in promoting a greater role for women in the political process.

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[85] The Iraqi Constitution, 2005
[86] Elections of the Iraqi Council of Representatives Law, No. 45 of 2013, Article 13
[87] Nyambura Ngugi (undated). PROMOTING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN IRAQ - Women's experiences and the role of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) - Draft v.2 prepared or UNDP Iraq
[88] *Ibid*
[89] UNDP (2015). Human Development Report 2015 – Work for Human Development. (Table 5: Gender Inequality Index: pp 225)

Women in government

84. In August 2015, following a reshuffle of all Ministries which resulted in abolition of all state ministries, the Ministry of State for Women's Affairs also became a casualty. This was a key ministry created in 2005 through joint advocacy by UNDP and UN Women (then UNIFEM) to advance the cause of gender equality in the country. Among its achievements was the establishment of a gender unit in every ministry and a gender study unit in the University of Baghdad. With its abolition, as key informants in the CoR, IHEC and UNDP noted, currently there is no Iraqi national entity to advocate for and advance gender equality discourse within the government at political level. It is reported by a UNDP key informant that UNDP had developed a proposal with alternative suggestions for such a national entity to be discussed with the Prime Minister. This proposal had been shared with UNAMI, but there has been no outcome of the initiative thus far.

85. UNDP supported the establishment of the Gender Coordination working group to support the work of the Independent High Commission for Human Rights.[90]

Gender-sensitive research

86. UNDP has supported the establishment of the Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality at the Baghdad University that will ensure that Iraq builds on and institutionalizes its gender equality and women empowerment work.[91]

3.4.3 Conclusion

87. UNDP has made some positive contribution to women's political empowerment, though considerable work needs to be done in this regard. Promoting gender equality in a country like Iraq, especially during times of drastic political changes, is not without challenges. UNDP lacked a comprehensive gender strategy and approach to systematically pursue the issue. The lack of an Iraqi national counterpart clearly further compounds the challenge.

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[90] UNDP Iraq (2016). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2015
[91] UNDP (2014). Iraq Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2014

Section 4: Assessment Against Evaluation Criteria

88. This section presents the findings of the evaluation along the four evaluation criteria.

4.1 Relevance

Alignment with national priorities and changes in context

89. The CPAP 2011-2014 was based on the priorities and challenges identified in the 2009 common country assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2011-2014 which were based on the draft National Development Plan (NDP) 2010–2014.[92] As can be seen from the Table 4 below, the Outcome 1 of the CPAP was rooted in the NDP vision of good governance based on participation, collective opinion and accountability as well as the UNDAF's emphasis on inclusive governance.

Table 4: CPAP Outcome 1 links to NDP and UNDAF

NDP vision: Good governance based on rule of law, participation, transparency, responsiveness, collective opinion, justice and comprehensiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability
UNDAF: Outcome 1.1 The Iraqi state has a more inclusive and participatory political process reflecting improved national dialogue. **Outcome 1.2** The Iraqi state has more efficient, accountable and participatory governance at national and sub-national levels.
UNDP CPAP Outcome 1: Government of Iraq and civil society have strengthened participatory mechanisms in place for electoral processes, national dialogue and reconciliation.

90. Strengthening the institutional capacity of IHEC under the Outcome was a key intervention enabling participation of different political parties in the governance of the country. As discussed in section 3.1, UNDP's support to IHEC was part of a coordinated approach involving several agencies and UNDP ensured that its support focused on areas of capacity building of personnel and the institution, technical assistance, exposure and training on best practices which the IHEC was able to integrate into its operations – voter registration and electoral complaints system, for example. Other outputs, namely support to the CoR, civil society strengthening and women's participation, though highly relevant, had considerably weak links to the Outcome particularly because of the country context which, during most of the CPAP period, remained volatile and in a protracted war-like situation involving highly polarised sectarian groups. This vitiated the environment and opportunities for national dialogue and reconciliation.

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[92] Republic of Iraq/Ministry of Planning (2010). National Development Plan 2010-2014

91. Given the rapidly changing context in Iraq, one would have expected the CPAP to have been reviewed annually and priorities realigned to the changing situation. Except for one brief joint review involving the GoI undertaken in early 2012, there was no strategic review of the CPAP, even though the NDP was revised in 2012 and a new NDP 2013-2017 replaced the previous NDP. An in-depth review would have brought out the need to change UNDP's approach to promoting reconciliation (*See* Section 3.2) or how a more joined up approach to working with CSOs involving other major donors would have been more meaningful in the context.

UNDP approach and programme framework

92. The results and resources framework (RRF) which flows from CPD becomes the guiding document for CPAP during its implementation. An examination of the results chain shows that the Outcome 1 indictors are clearly linked to the outputs. However, when output targets are broken down into projects which constitute one of the primary tools for delivery of UNDP programmes, lack of a theory of change (TOC) which analyses the contextual factors, drivers and inhibitors of change, and assumptions that underpin the activities' potential to contribute to the outputs, becomes a limiting factor. Most project documents begin with a description of the situation followed by a statement of desired state and then moves on to identifying project outputs and activities. This misses out looking at change as a process, instead of being a simple input-output logic model. If programme designs were informed by a clearly articulated TOC, the analysis would have identified the assumptions that were being made, for example, in designing the two reconciliation projects or the limitations of the one-off interventions on CSOs. A TOC would have also provided the programme team opportunities to work cross-thematically to ensure that linkage between, for example, Outcomes 1 and 3 were leveraged adequately during programme planning and implementation.

93. As discussed in the findings section, while interventions on IHEC followed a coherent approach and built on long-term support that was being provided since 2005, support to CSO capacity development in particular was *ad hoc*, though with some contribution to short term output. Work with the CoR may have built some technical capacity, but this did not go deep enough toward promoting any dialogue on reconciliation.

UNDP's comparative advantage

94. UNDP's comparative advantage is reflected in two areas, namely technical assistance and international best practices, both of which it leveraged in its support to the IHEC. However, the evaluation found no evidence of UNDP bringing to bear its distinctive competence in any other area under the Outcome 1. The various projects undertaken for Outputs 2, 3 and 4 appear to have had a scattered approach depending on availability of funding. As was pointed out in the ADR (2014), most of the projects were implemented on a pilot basis, with little follow up or attempt at scaling up. "It appears that UNDP took them on in part because the funds, however modest, were made available and the remote possibility that they would evolve into something more substantial." [93] Towards the end of the CPAP period (2015), however, UNDP appears to have begun scaling up some of its work, namely with CSOs and establishment of budget office of COR – as discussed in

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[93] UNDP IEO (2014). Assessment of Development Results Iraq– Evaluation of UNDP contributions

the ROAR for 2015, these initiatives have certainly produced outputs, but too early to see any outcome level changes.[94]

4.2 Effectiveness

Progress on outcome and outputs, and UNDP contribution

95. Achievements under Outcome 1 do not represent a coherent picture; the level of effectiveness has varied from one output to the other making it difficult to arrive at an overall assessment at the outcome level. As noted in the ROAR for 2015, the "outcome is not yet fully achieved but is partially achieved."[95] This evaluation echoes the finding of the ADR: "Support to elections has been a flagship programme for UNDP, having achieved considerable results. Performance in the other programme areas of the outcome is reduced by the lack of synergy among programme areas, in meeting the expectations of the national counterparts and the small scale and stand-alone character of the activities undertaken."[96]

Output 1

96. The UNDP election programme has achieved notable results and contributed considerably to the development of IHEC capacity. During 2013 - 2014, IHEC successfully managed four elections at national and regional levels. The consensus among all those interviewed, as well as all available documentation, consent to the view that IHEC is a "mature" institution and currently has adequate capacity to successfully manage election processes with acceptable levels of fairness and transparency, with little or no external support.

97. As discussed in section 3.1, UNDP's support addressed both institutional and staff capacity issues through training and exposure which helped IHEC to adopt some of the best practices (e.g., the voter registry and complaints system) from different countries. The progress made over the years has given IHEC the confidence to hold elections without much external assistance. However, the ethno-sectarian politics which dominate all Iraqi institutions mean that total withdrawal of international engagement runs the danger of undermining the progress made in the future.

Output 2

98. The UNDP's support to the CoR to improve integrity of operations and to develop capacity for inclusive governance and human rights has achieved mixed results. Its support to enhance national dialogue and reconciliation has been at the technical level, involved no process facilitation and, as such, has made little contribution to the Council's capacity in this regard.

99. UNDP's major contribution and support to the women's committee of the CoR has focused, successfully, on amending laws that discriminate against women (e.g., penal law and personal status law). It is reported, though, that most of this support has been through the previous parliament.

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[94] UNDP Iraq (2016). Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) 2015. pp8
[95] UNDP (2016). Results Oriented Annual Report 2015 (8 March 2016)
[96] UNDP IEO (2014). Assessment of Development Results Iraq– Evaluation of UNDP contributions

100. UNDP's assistance to the CoR was critical in establishment of the first Independent High Commission for Human Rights in Iraq and the independent Board for Human Rights at regional level, though the Commission can hardly be called independent as its membership is allotted based on a pre-agreed religious-political quota system. It is chaired by its different commissioners on a monthly-rotational basis and lacks any senior civil servant (at the level of Director General).

101. Support to the CSO Committee of the CoR has enabled CSOs to advocate for the voices of the society to be heard and taken into account in public policy-making. UNDP facilitated setting up of a CSOs' advisory board attached to the CoR Human Rights Committee and the establishment of the first Kurdistan Commission of Integrity. However, there was no information available with regard to the status or functioning of either entity, and the evaluation team was unable to access any of them, to reliably assess achievements in this regard.

Output 3

102. UNDP's support to CSOs has had only marginal impact with regard to the creation of an improved political and legal environment for CSOs to engage in national development and reconciliation process. Engagement with CSOs has not been at a large enough scale to register a discernible impact. While UNDP's support may have been effective in building the capacity of participating organisations, the extent to which this capacity contributed to the objective of promoting human rights, reducing corruption and holding the government accountable in service delivery remains unclear.

Output 4

103. UNDP has made some positive contributions to women's political empowerment in Iraq. UNDP pushed for women's representation in parliament and supported the adoption of reduced registration fee for women-only political entities and women candidates by IHEC.

Influential factors

Output 1

104. The successful achievements under this output were due to a number of inter-related factors. The long-term, successful strategic partnership between UNDP and IHEC offered the former entry points to deliver requested technical support. UNDP's comparative advantage in technical assistance and international best practices reflected very positively on its credibility and solidified the partnership between the two entities. The positioning of the election programme within IHEC provided opportunity for constant interaction with beneficiaries, making the transfer of knowledge and skills from international experts to national counterparts more effective.

105. However, it is reported that the selection of IHEC's participants in UNDP-supported activities was sometimes influenced by political pressures and not necessarily on merit basis. The core civil service of IHEC continues to be susceptible to this political pressures - personnel may be transferred according to the political formula that emerges every time the Board of Commissioners (BoC) is elected. This may well have detracted from the impact of UNDP's support. It is also understood that as funding decreased and UNDP's support was downsized, this led to some tensions in the working relationship between the two entities. At any rate, there seems to have been no substantial support

from UNDP to IHEC post-2013; this may well be due to the fact that the challenges IHEC became to face were no longer technical.

Output 2

106. Reconciliation and national dialogue is a complex, politically contentious issue. This is primarily due to the Iraqi Constitution which institutionalised sectarian divide through a quota system. The CoR is consumed by political battles and turf war amongst parliamentarians. The UNDP worked at the technical level, but clearly these battles have had their negative ramifications on progress and achievements, especially in absence of strategic support at the highest political level.

Output 3

107. The complex political environment, coupled with the short-term nature of UNDP support, the lack of a coherent strategy within UNDP to leverage its country programme for strengthening CSOs and the lack of joined up approach by all agencies, have all been the factors behind the limited effect UNDP support to CSOs has had. As discussed earlier, UNDP has during 2015 intensified its work with CSOs as part of a broad strategy.

Output 4

108. The Constitution has ensured women a good representation in the CoR. However, social conditioning and prevailing cultural attitudes that restrict women's participation are behind the reported lack of women parliamentarians' participation in public policy-making. Such a culture makes it challenging to promote gender equality, especially in absence of a national counterpart and lack of a UNDP comprehensive gender strategy.

Partnership strategy

109. UNDP had a successful, long-term partnership with IHEC since the latter's early days (then IECI). This has enabled UNDP to continue providing requested technical support to IHEC. The UNDP election programme came to an end in February 2015; since then, there has been no interventions with IHEC. For the most part, the IEAT was a good example of how the three UN agencies - UNDP, UNAMI and UNOPS - came together in a coordinated approach. However, there have been instances of confusion and tension over the division of roles and responsibilities between UNAMI and UNDP.

110. The lack of a joint strategy between UNDP and UNAMI is perhaps more evident, and influential, when it comes to national reconciliation. This is an extremely complex and politically charged issue. In order to ensure the relevance and safeguard the efficiency and effectiveness of technical support and intervention, this has to be preceded by serious discussions at the highest political levels. In the absence of such political engagement, UNDP's support to the CoR has had virtually no impact on the latter's capacity to enhance national dialogue on reconciliation. UNDP's partnership with CSOs to address reconciliation at the community level was short lived, and lacked a coherent strategy within UNDP itself to leverage the country programme in support of CSOs. Further, there are no indications of interaction between the UNDP and USAID which invested heavily in capacity development of CSOs when it comes to supporting CSOs in monitoring elections.

4.3 Efficiency

Management, decision-making and delivery capacity

111. As mentioned in the limitations (Section 1.6), the evaluation found very little data to evaluate aspects of management and delivery capacity. It may partly be explained by the fact that this evaluation focused only on Outcome 1 which was a very small component of the total programme - with a budget of only US$ 49.43 million out of a total planned budget of US$ 643.3 million, i.e., less than 8 percent of the entire budget on all five outcome areas. Further, within this small component of the programme, only one of the interventions - support to the IHEC – had a coherent long-term approach underpinning it, while rest of the interventions remained short-term and expedient depending on availability of funds.

Monitoring, quality assurance and outcome reporting

112. Documentation on projects and outcome reporting remains weak. The evaluation saw only two project completion reports and no evaluation report (except the ADR) related to Outcome 1 or its associated projects. A scan of the Evaluation Resource Centre of UNDP showed only two evaluation reports during 2011 and 2015 – an evaluation of Outcome 5 undertaken in 2012 and ADR in 2014. The Management Support Unit (MSU) which assisted the evaluation team with reports and secondary data found it difficult to trace many of the progress/completion reports that should have been there. Between 2011 and 2015, there was only one CPAP review undertaken by the CO in 2012 for which report is available.

113. During the time of evaluation data-gathering, Result Oriented Annual Reports (ROARs) were available for one year only (2014), and the one for 2015 was then being prepared and therefore was not available for the evaluation team's review. ROARs for other years could be found and made available to the evaluation team only after the first draft of the report was submitted. All of these show that information and knowledge management within the CO has been weak. A study of these reports also showed that, except for work with the IHEC, reporting was by and large at output and activity level, with weak analysis of outcomes. In this regard, the evaluation concurs with observations made by another evaluation[97] some four years ago: "While the reports increased in volume, they did not increase in depth; there were lists of meetings and consultations, outreach visits and case studies of beneficiaries with occasional reference to events that seemed important. Analysis was at a premium. What was missing was a systematic assessment of results, impacts and outcomes. There were neither indications of these difficulties, their impacts on the project, or a deeper assessment of the causes and ultimate consequences."

114. Back-to-office reports (BTOR) on project monitoring visits by programme staff were also patchy; exit notes by some of the staff who worked on various projects related to elections were the only other source which had some substantive information on project performance. Because of all these reasons and the fact that site visits and face-to-face discussions with partners could not be carried out due to security constraints, evaluability of the Outcome 1 was poor. Had an evaluability assessment been carried out before commissioning this evaluation, the constraints would have been obvious.

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[97] Dr. Jim Freedman, Dr. Abbas Balasem (2012). Iraq - Support to the Rule of Law and Justice Project Final Project Evaluation, August 2012

Resource utilisation

115. There has been an overall realisation of 96 percent of planned budget for Outcome 1 during 2015 for which data is available. Data on outcome-wise utilisation for rest of the CPAP period were not available.[98]

116. Table 5 shows the total programme budget and expenditure, and utilisation ratio, for the duration of the CPAP. It is noted that overall realisation, at the programme level, ranged from as low as 66.57 percent in 2015 to as high as 76.83 percent in 2013.

Table 5: Programme budget, expenditure and utilisation ratio 2011-2015

	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015* As of Today**
Total Programme Budget	91,471	90,084	56,795	41,824	77,285
Total Programme Expenditure	64,075	63,079	43,636	31,700	51,448
Utilisation Ratio	70.05%	70.02%	76.83%	75.79%	66.57%

Source: UNDP Atlas system; data obtained by MSU and table constructed by the evaluation team
Amounts in USD Thousands
* The date data was obtained from the system (circa February 2016); i.e., not necessarily final

4.4 Sustainability

117. The sustainability prospects of achievements made under the different components and projects of Outcome 1 are mixed. The fact that IHEC has successfully managed four rounds of national and regional elections in 2013-2014 at acceptable levels of fairness and transparency, with limited or no external support, is a strong indication the UNDP's election programme has developed IHEC's institutional and personnel capacities. The long-term strategic partnership with IHEC has enabled UNDP to effectively transfer knowledge from international experts to national staff which should stand the organisation in good stead for future.

118. IHEC, however, remains susceptible to political pressures. The UNDP election programme came to an end without an exit strategy in place. IHEC remains in need of support to safeguard its independence, professionalism and neutrality in the face of political pressures. Failure to do so may lead to politically-induced erosion of IHEC's capacitated core civil service, thus undermining the integrity of future elections. The ramifications of such a scenario for the stability of Iraq cannot be overstated. None of the other projects under Outcome 1 had an exit strategy, either. The ability of national counterparts to sustain any achievements made with the support of UNDP, or other partners for that matter, is reliant on their capacity to withstand an extremely complex and volatile situation.

119. The sustainability prospects of achievements made with regard to technical capacity of the CoR's Secretariat and different committees, modest as they are, are quite uncertain. UNDP has been unable to induce any improvement in the Council's capability to address

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[98] CPD outcome-wide budget/expenditure breakdown for years 2011-2014 were not available with the CO finance as the latter now tracks the budget and expenses against UNDP's strategy outcomes.

national reconciliation; there is hardly any achievement to sustain. Unlike IHEC, the national reconciliation thus far; there is hardly any achievement to sustain. Unlike IHEC, the UNDP did not have long-term strategic partnership with the CoR and was not positioned to address the political battles and sectarian division affecting the Council.

120. The sustainability of any improvements in the capacity of CSOs is also uncertain. The number of CSOs that remain active in areas directly related to the Outcome has sharply declined over the past few years. Building CSO capacity is a long-term process that needs sustained engagement and support. The evaluation has found little evaluable data to comment on how UNDP engages with CSOs on other outcomes and the way the short-term, once-off interventions under Outcome 1 were linked up with these.

121. Women's representation in the political life, at least in terms of numbers, is now enshrined in the Constitution. Actual participation in governance is a completely different issue, though. Gender equality, in general, remains a concern in a country with such a wide gender gap and absence of a national entity to advocate for and protect women's rights.

122. The draft CPD 2016-2020[99] focuses on institutional reform of key Iraqi institutions and UNDP plans to develop "selection procedures and training materials for selection panels for merit-based recruitment of senior Government officials". The extent to which this will be applicable to IHEC, and if so strengthen its core civil service, remains to be seen. The CPD 2016-2016 outlines UNDP's planned support to the CoR to further develop its legislative and oversight functions. The focus, though, has shifted more towards national security, judiciary system and anti-corruption. With regard to reconciliation, while the contribution during the 2011-2015 CPD has been minimal, the new CPD aims to promote inclusive legislative processes with an eye on encouraging political reconciliation/ transitional justice, with the assistance of local CSOs. The evaluation, however, concludes that without a coherent political approach involving all major religious/political groups and development partners, reconciliation will remain a distant dream. In this regard, the new initiative led by CMI needs to be watched with interest and, working with UNAMI, UNDP needs to develop a coherent strategy for engagement.

123. It is worth noting that stabilisation is one of the three programme priorities outlined in the CPD 2016-2020. The focus will be on newly liberated areas where UNDP plans to support national and provincial government efforts to create conditions for the safe return of IDPs, through a newly established Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilisation (FFIS). "Additionally, UNDP will pursue a strategy for reconciliation that focuses on building the capacity and mobilizing influential local actors, including religious and tribal leaders and youth and women's groups to promote social peace through mediation training and inter-community dialogue. Similar activities will also be undertaken to promote peace between IDPs and host communities." Community reconciliation is one of four areas in which UNDP plans to extend support to the government under the new CPD 2016-2020. This seems to align with the recently-developed Community Reconciliation Strategic Framework.

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[99] Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund (2015): Draft country programme document for Iraq 2016-2020 (circa 22 September 2015)

Section 5: Overall Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Findings

Output 1

124. The UNDP election programme has contributed considerably to the development of IHEC capacity to manage election processes, with acceptable levels of fairness and transparency. IHEC, however, remains in need for further support - primarily at political level but also to some extent at technical level - to safeguard its independence and neutrality, as well as its capacitated core civil service, against pressures emanating from an extremely complex and deeply divided political environment.

Output 2

125. UNDP has made some positive contributions to women's representation in the parliament and has supported gender-sensitive review and drafting of legislation, besides strengthening some of the housekeeping and internal administrative capacity of the CoR. However, UNDP's support to the CoR has achieved far less than expected and made very little contribution to the Council's capacity to enhance national dialogue and reconciliation. This is primarily due to the Iraqi Constitution of 2005 which institutionalised sectarian divide through a quota system. That said, it should also be noted that UNDP projects in this regard were small, pilot initiatives.

Output 3

126. Support to CSOs may have had only marginal impact in terms of contributing to the creation of improved political and legal environment for CSOs to engage in national development and reconciliation process. The complex political environment is an important reason, but UNDP's support was also short-term and lacked a coherent strategy within UNDP to leverage its country programme for strengthening CSOs. There was also very little by way of a joint approach among all agencies working with CSOs. During 2015, UNDP appears to have scaled up its work with civil society.

Output 4

127. The Iraqi Constitution of 2005 guarantees women a 25 percent quota of the CoR's seats, and the percentage of women contesting elections has been at the same level in 2010 and 2014 parliamentary elections. Strong indications are that women parliamentarians' contribution to public policy making remain at minimal levels. Promoting gender equality in a country like Iraq, especially during times of drastic political changes, is not without challenges. However, UNDP lacked a comprehensive gender strategy and approach to systematically pursue the issue. The lack of an Iraqi national counterpart further compounded the challenge.

5.2 Summary conclusions

Relevance

128. Outcome 1 of the CPAP was rooted in the Iraqi National Development Plan (NPD) 2010-2014 vision of good governance based on participation, collective opinion and accountability as well as the UNDAF's emphasis on inclusive governance. The first output under Outcome 1 - strengthening the institutional capacity of IHEC - was the key intervention and followed a coherent approach and built on long-term support that was being provided since 2005. The three remaining outputs - support to the CoR, civil society strengthening and women's participation - though highly relevant, had considerably weak links to the Outcome.

129. UNDP's comparative advantage is reflected in its ability to provide technical assistance and bring in international best practices, both of which it leveraged in its support to IHEC. However, the evaluation found no evidence of UNDP bringing to bear its distinctive competence in any other area under the Outcome 1.

130. Except for one brief joint review involving the GoI undertaken in early 2012, there was no strategic review of the CPAP, which would have brought out the need to change UNDP's approach to promoting reconciliation or a more joined up approach to working with CSOs.

131. It is also noted that projects under the four outputs lacked a theory of change which would have identified assumptions that were being made and provided the programme team opportunities to work cross-thematically to ensure that linkages with other Outcomes were leveraged adequately during programme planning and implementation.

Effectiveness

132. The UNDP election programme has achieved notable results and contributed considerably to the development of IHEC's institutional and personnel capacity. However, the voter registry system remains problematic and might undermine the credibility of future elections.

133. UNDP's support to enhance national dialogue and reconciliation has thus far made little contribution to the CoR's capacity in this regard. Support to the CSO committee of the COR has enabled CSOs to advocate for the voices of civil society to be heard and taken into account in public policy-making.

134. UNDP's support to CSOs, however, has had only marginal impact with regard to the creation of an improved political and legal environment for CSOs' engagement in national development and reconciliation process.

135. UNDP's support to the CoR's women's committee has successfully focused on amending laws that discriminate against women. UNDP has also made positive contributions towards women's political empowerment, though considerable work needs to be done.

Efficiency

136. The evaluation found very little data to reliably assess management and delivery capacity. Documentation on projects and outcome reporting remains weak. There has

only been one project completion report and one evaluation (the ADR 2014). There was only one CPAP review undertaken by the CO for which report was available..

137. There has been an overall realisation of 96 percent of planned budget for Outcome 1 during 2015 for which data is available. Data on outcome-wise utilisation for rest of the CPAP period were not available.

Sustainability

138. The sustainability prospects of achievements made under the different components and projects of Outcome 1 are mixed. Despite proven capacity to effectively manage elections, IHEC remains susceptible to political pressures, which may threaten its independence in the future and, thus, undermine the credibility of future elections.

139. There has hardly been any achievement with regard to the CoR's capacity to enhance national dialogue and reconciliation. The sustainability of any improvements in the capacity of CSOs is also uncertain.

5.3 Recommendations

140. Drawing on the analysis in the previous sections, and taking into account the draft new CPD (2016-2020), the following recommendations are made:

Recommendation 1: Maintain strategic relationship with IHEC and support to CSOs to ensure the integrity and inclusiveness of future electoral processes.

141. While withdrawing regular funding support to IHEC is the right approach, this should not lead to total disengagement by the international community. UNDP needs to maintain its strategic relationship with IHEC, to enable the latter to safeguard its capacity, independence and neutrality amidst a complex, volatile and a highly-polarised political environment. This will clearly involve high-level political dialogue and, as such, UNDP is strongly advised to synergise its approach in this regard with UNAMI. Additionally, while UNDP may have no future plans for direct interventions, IHEC remains in need of support in particular areas - technical and non-technical. UNDP may be able to advise IHEC on prioritising its needs and identifying appropriate sources for such support, as needed. On the other hand, UNDP is advised to re-consider its support programme for CSOs in the area of election monitoring, so that the Iraqi civil society can continue to play its critical role in ensuring the integrity of electoral processes.

Recommendation 2: Develop an integrated approach to national reconciliation

142. The draft CPD 2016-2020 focuses on stabilisation in newly liberated areas to create conditions for the safe return of IDPs. UNDP's proposed strategy clearly focuses on community-level reconciliation. However, stabilisation is no substitute for national reconciliation which, in a country like Iraq, is extremely challenging and complex and has to be approached in a balanced manner at both political and community levels. In partnership with UNAMI and all major religious/political groups and development partners, a coherent strategy for national reconciliation needs to be developed, through which entry points and engagement of different agencies are all well articulated and coordinated. The task force recently established by the SRSG offers the venue and means to a synergized approach towards national reconciliation among UN agencies. Without a coherent political approach national reconciliation in Iraq will remain a distant dream.

Recommendation 3: Emphasis should be on a programmatic approach to addressing critical, complex development issues

143. UNDP needs to ensure its operations under the new country programme is channelled through a robust, strategic and coherent programme approach to maximise synergies among and leverage its different components, if development results were to be achieved. While maintaining focus on intended results, projects and interventions under the new CPD should evolve in line with and in response to contextual changes and developments. This is particularly so given the complex and fluid nature of the Iraqi context. Related, projects under the new CPD should look at change as a process, articulate their theory of change, identify assumptions and be the subject of continuous, in-depth monitoring and results measurement.

Recommendation 4: The CO needs to examine its monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management systems and practices in order to establish a continuous learning culture and approach to the implementation of the new CPD.

144. Among other critical factors, the effectiveness of the new CPD also depends on the institutionalisation of a learning culture in the CO. The CO needs to establish a robust and efficient monitoring and results measurement system, coupled with a functioning and accessible information and knowledge management system. Interventions under the new CPD should be the subject of rigorous monitoring and periodic evaluation - both of which should ensure the primary focus is on progress towards achieving intended results and, equally important, contextual developments. In-depth analysis should be at output and outcome levels, and should provide management with the valid information and well-founded recommendations for any adjustments to the programme that may be due. The CO should ensure the integrity of its institutional memory in order not to undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of the country programme.

Recommendation 5: Develop a coherent gender strategy

145. Promoting gender equality in Iraq is made even more challenging due to the socio-political environment and dynamics. It is even more compounded by the absence of a national counterpart - ministry, commission, etc. - that is appropriately positioned and empowered to advocate for Iraqi women's rights in a sustained and coordinated manner at all levels. UNDP may be well positioned and equipped to address gender issues at the community level through its stabilisation programme. However, there is clearly a pressing need for high-level dialogue to support Iraq in bridging the gender-related institutional gap. UNDP, therefore, needs to approach gender equality in its new CPD through a coherent strategy that has to be developed in partnership with other agencies. The Interagency Gender Theme Group, led by UN Women, of which UNDP has been an active member, clearly provides the mechanism to facilitate the development of such a coordinated strategy.

Recommendation 6: Conduct an evaluability assessment before commissioning any evaluation in the future.

146. The establishment of a robust monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management system at the CO level is very likely to minimize the constraints future evaluations may encounter. Nonetheless, UNDP is advised to ensure that before commissioning any evaluation, an evaluability assessment is carried out to check and identify potential data that may or may not be available and the constraints an evaluation would face, if commissioned.

Final Note

Since the submission of the final draft report (14 March, 2016), there has been numerous media reports of public demonstrations throughout Iraq but mostly in Baghdad, fuelled by deteriorating living conditions, rising unemployment and, mounting allegations of wide-spread corruption. On 24 April, 2016, hundreds of thousands of supporters of the prominent Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr heeded his call and marched to the Green Zone - where the government is based.[100] Mr. al-Sadr wanted protesters to "compel" MPs to agree to the Prime Minister's proposals for a non-partisan cabinet reshuffle. It was also reported that more than 100 MPs have been staging a sit-in in the parliament since mid-April to express their frustration at others who have blocked votes on the reshuffle.

The situation escalated even further on 30 April, 2016 - the day this report was submitted. Supporters of Mr. al-Sadr broke through the barricades of the Green Zone and hundreds of them stormed Iraq's parliament; a state of emergency was declared in Baghdad.[101]

The evaluation team had no access to independent, in-depth information of these recent developments; nor was it feasible to discuss these with any of the stakeholders. While the outcome of this turmoil remains uncertain, it adds weight to the call for an integrated approach between UNDP and UNAMI. Community-level stabilisation, as envisioned in UNDP's new CPD 2016-2020, is no substitute for national dialogue and reconciliation. As a matter of fact, these recent events may well offer UNAMI the opportunity to leverage tactical pressure on all concerned stakeholders to chart a path for Iraq out of the sectarian division and political impasse it has been suffering from for a long time. The situation may also necessitate broadening UNDP's scope of *socio-economic development* interventions beyond only the recently liberated areas.

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[100] http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36138283
[101] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-36176910

Annex 1: Terms of reference
(separate file)

Annex 2: Inception report
(separate file)

Annex 3: List of individuals interviewed

Sr. No	Name	Organisation/ Department	Title
1	Ms. Nahid Hussain	UNDP	Programme Manager Parliament, Civil Society & Human Rights
2	Mr. Sammy Alfandika	UNDP	Former Elections Programme Manager
3	Mr. Hogr Chato	PAO (NGO)	Chairman
4	Ms. Ala Talabani	Member, CoR	Leader of the Kurdish Alliance, Council of Representatives
5	Mr. Gyorgy Busztin	UNAMI	Deputy Special Representative (political)
6	Mr. Mazin Khder	IHEC	Director General, Regional Office
7	Mr. Hisham Al-Sohail	CoR	Head of the National Reconciliation Committee
8	Mr. Marwan Ali	UNAMI	Director of Political Affairs
9	Mr. Safaa Ibrahim Al-Musawy	IHEC	Member, BoC
10	Mr. Aamir A. Arain	UNAMI	Director, UN Integrated Electoral Assistance Team
11	Bodunrin Adebo	UNDP	UNDP Election Project (former)
12	Mr. Hussein Allawi	Akkad Centre for Strategic Affairs and Future Studies	Chairman
13	Mr. Abbas Alshrifi	CoR	Legal Advisor, CSOs Committee
14	Ms. Rehab Al-Abooda	CoR	Head of the Women's Committee
15	Ms. Shadia ...	CoR	Legal Advisor, Women's Committee
16	Mr. Ahmed Alyassri	UNDP	Assistant Country Director (development programme)
17	Mr. Farooq Al-Wakeel	UNDP	Programme Management Specialist, MSU
18	Mr. Mutaz Al-Tayef	UNDP	Programme Associate, MSU
19	Ms. Vian Kareen Shnawa	Tamuz NGO	Chairwoman

Sr. No	Name	Organisation/ Department	Title
20	Mr. Waleed Al-Azzawi	UNDP	Former Project Officer, Elections
21	Ms. Jouhaida Hanano	UNDP	Project Manager, Local Area Development Programme
22	Mr. Sarbast M. Amedi	IHEC	Chairman, BoC
23	Mr. Muhsen J.Al-Musawy	IHEC	Member, BoC & Chairman of the Electoral Administration Technical Affairs
24	Mr. Qasim Abdulridha Chgaiat	IHEC	Deputy Chairman of the Electoral Administration Technical Affairs
25	Mr. Shalaw Hasan Namat	IHEC	Director General of Public Outreach Department
26	Ms. Nawal Hussain Khalaf	IHEC	Election Information Section
27	Mr. Bassem Al-Jehaishy	IHEC	Director General, Capacity Building Department
28	Mr. Haider Taha Al-Joubori	IHEC	Deputy Director General, Capacity Building Department
29	Quassi Al-Suhail	CoR	Former First Deputy Speaker
30	Ms. Sallama H. Al-Khafaji	High Commission for Human Rights - Iraq	Member, Board of Commissioners
31	Mr. Mohammed Rafiq	UNDP	Project Manager, Ninewah Reconciliation Project
32	DR. LLM. Quolo Khodida Sinjari	High Commission for Human Rights - Iraq	Member, Board of Commissioners
33	Mr. Zeyad Al-Obaidi	UNDP	Project Officer, Parliament & CSOs
34	Ms. Wihda Al-jumaily	CoR	Counsellor to Speaker of the CoR, Reconciliation
35	Ms. Tanya Rzehak	UNOPS	Election Project Manager
36	Ms. Sahar Al-Samarraie	IHEC	Director General, Electoral Education Institute
37	Ms. Golshan Kamal Ali	IHEC	Member, BoC and Head of the Gender Team
38	Mr. Vladan Raznatovic	USAID	Governance Adviser
39	Mr. Ali Badr	Humanitarian Al-Khair Organisation, Missan	Executive Director

Sr. No	Name	Organisation/ Department	Title
40	Ms. Sundus Abbas	UNDP	Gender Specialist
41	Mr. Vahram Abadjian	UNDP	Former Senior Adviser, Election Project
42	Mr. Sultan Hajiyev	UNDP	Deputy Country Director
43	Mr. Hayder Al-Shakeri	SIDA	National Project Officer
44	Ms. Eidi Genfors	SIDA, Stockholm	Focal point for Iraq
45	Ms. Lise Grande	UN/UNDP/UNAMI	DSRSG/RC/HC/Resident Representative
46	Mr. Francesco Motta	UNAMI	Chief of Human Rights Office

Annex 4: Documents reviewed

Project: **Reconciliation and DDR Preparatory Assistance Project**
– UNDP, Iraq. No Date. Project Document

Project: **Institutional Development Support to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) (G11-23)**
– UNDG, ITF. 2010. Project Document (approved by Steering Committee on 29 September 2010)
– UNDG, ITF. Quarterly Progress Report, 01 April – 30 June 2013
– UNDG, ITF. Annual Programme Narrative Progress Report, 1 January – 31 December 2010
– UNDG, ITF. Quarterly Progress Report, 1 January - 31 March 2011
– UNDG, ITF. Quarterly Progress Report, 01 April 2011 – 30 June
– Meeting of the Local Project Appraisal Committee (LPAC). No Date (2 November), Minutes of Meeting
– UNDG, ITF. No Date. Final Programme Narrative Report, From October 2010 To October 2013
– UNDG, ITF. Annual Programme Narrative Progress Report, 1 January – 31 December 2010

Project: **Institutional Development Support to IHEC - Phase II (P1-06)**
– UNDG, ITF. 2013. Project Document (approved by the Steering Committee on 14 October 2013)
– UNDG, ITF. Quarterly Progress Report, 1 October to 31 December 2013
– UNAMI, Iraq UNDAF Trust Fund Steering Committee. 2014. Electronic Approval of request for Additional Funds, 21 October 2014
– UNDP Electoral Project Manager, Exit Report. 2015. UNDP Iraq Elections Programme, 26 February 2015
– IHEC, Secretariat General of the Board of Commissioners (BOC). 2013. Decision No. 6 of the Regular Minutes No. 40, held on April 2, 2013 (approving the extension of The Institutional Development Project for IHEC) English & Arabic
– Iraq UNDAF Fund Steering Committee. 2013. Project Concept Note, 1 June 2013 - English & Arabic
– UNDG, ITF. Annual Programme Narrative Progress Report, 1 January – 31 December 2013
– UNDG, ITF. Quarterly Progress Report, 1 July to 30 September 2014
– Iraq UNDAF Trust Fund. 2014. Joint Programme/Project Revision Request Fund - Request for Additional Funding, 28 September 2014
– UNDG, ITF. Quarterly Progress Report, 1 January to 31 March
– UNDG, ITF. Quarterly Progress Report, 1 October to 31 December 2013
– UNDG, ITF. Quarterly Progress Report, 1 April to 30 June
– Iraq UNDAF Fund Steering Committee. 2013. Submission Form, 21 September 2013 (request for project approval - granted)
– IHEC - BOC, Minutes of Meetings (various, English & Arabic)
– Summary of Activities, 2010-2013. Excel workbook provided by a former UNDP project officer.

Project: **Technical Assistance to IHEC, Phase II (G11-20)**
- UNDP. No Date. Annual Work Plan 2011 (no specific date - no signatures/approvals)
- UNDG, ITF. 2010. Approval of Project Budget Revision (B) - Final Extension (dated 25 August 2010, approved 26 Aug 2010 (1 year extension & budget increase by USD 1,805,214)
- UNDG, ITF. 2008. Project Document (approved by Steering Committee on 4 December 2008)
- UNDG, ITF. Annual Programme Narrative Progress Report, 1 January – 31 December 2010

Project: **Peace and Development Analysis in the DIB's**
- UNDP Iraq, UNDAF Trust Fund. No Date. Project Document

Project: **Empowering CSOs in Iraq (p1-01)**
- Iraq UNDAF Fund. 2012. Project Document
- UNDP, Iraq. No Date. Annual Work Plan 2013: Version A (signed by Project Manager and Country Director).
- UNDP, Iraq. No Date. Annual Work Plan 2014 (signed by Project Manager and Country Director).
- UNDP Iraq, UNDAF Trust Fund, Program Revision Request. (dated 1st of August 2012, approved by Head of Coordinating UN Organisation on 5th of August 2012)
- UNDP Iraq, UNDAF Trust Fund, Approval of Program Revision Request for extension with 9 months/until 30th June 2014. (Request dated 15th of August 2012, approved by Co-Chair of Iraq UNDAF Steering Committee-DSRSG on the 26th of August 2012 and by Co-Chair of Iraq UNDAF Steering Committee-GoI on the 4th of September 2012)
- UNDG, Iraq UNDAF Fund – Program Revision Request (dated 21st of April 2014. No approval)
- UNDG, Iraq UNDAF Trust Fund, MPTF Office Generic Annual Programme Narrative Progress Report, Reporting Period: 1st January – 31st December 2012
- UNDG, Iraq UNDAF Trust Fund, Annual Programme Narrative Progress Report, Reporting Period: 1st January – 31st December 2013
- UNDG, Iraq UNDAF Trust Fund, Quarterly Progress Report, 1st April – 30th June 2013
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- UNDG, Iraq UNDAF Trust Fund, Quarterly Progress Report, 1st October – 31st December 2013
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- UNDP Iraq. No Date. UNDP Current Progress in KRG (part of the 2011 CPAP Review)
- UNDP Iraq. 2012. UNDP Country Programme Action Plan 2011-2014 - 2012 Review with Kurdistan Regional Government. March 8, 2012.

Project: **Support for the Rights of Minorities and Vulnerable Groups in Ninewa (76819)**
- UNDP Iraq. No Date. Project Document
- UNDP Iraq. *Draft* of Project Final Report, drafted on 5th November 2012
- UNDP Iraq, Local Project Appraisal Committee (LPAC) - Virtual Consultation on Project Amendment, 21st February – 4th March 2012.
- UNDP, LPAC Meeting Minutes, held on 7th March (no year)
- UNDP, Ninewa Minorities Dialogue and Conflict Development Analysis (CDA) Board Meeting, held on 29th October 2011 in Amman/Baghdad. Document dated with 2nd November 2011

Project: **Enhancing Transparent Participatory Governance and Human Rights (P1-04)**
- UNDP Iraq. 2012. Enhancing Transparent Participatory Governance and Human Rights: Project Document. 5 April 2012

Project: **Strengthening Participatory and Accountable Governance (SPAG) (75294)**
- UNDP Iraq. 2014. Strengthening Participatory and Accountable Governance (SPAG): Project Document, 15 September 2014
- UNDP Iraq. Strengthening Participatory and Accountable Governance Project: First Quarterly Progress Report, 1 January 2015 to 30 April 2015
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