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THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME'S CONTRIBUTION TO IMPROVING THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN IRAQ

DAVID BRANCA, RACHEL GOLDWYN AND GARY MILANTE

WORKING PAPER
January 2020

STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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Methodology and disclaimer

The Iraq case study is one of four country case studies in the first phase of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute–World Food Programme Knowledge Partnership. For each case study, a joint team of staff from SIPRI and WFP conducted in-country research for approximately two weeks to identify the possible contributions to improving the prospects for peace that result from WFP programming. The methodology for this analysis involved a literature review of the country context and of WFP and other programming; key informant interviews with WFP country office staff, beneficiaries and local experts; focus group discussions with beneficiaries; and consultations with partners and experts in the country. Each country visit culminated in a presentation of the findings and a discussion with the managers of the country office on possible ways forward. This included a discussion on the contemporary political, social and technical challenges of incorporating a conflict lens, conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding work into WFP programming. The country report was then written up in consultation with the country office, incorporating clarifications and additional evidence as these became available. As a result, this analysis is not independent of context. The findings of all four country case studies informed the Preliminary Report on Phase 1 of the partnership, which was published in June 2019.

The findings and recommendations and any errors or omissions are those of the authors and do not represent the position of SIPRI, WFP or the management, executive directors or boards of these institutions.

Contents

Acknowledgements

The Iraq country visit took place in March 2019. The research team consisted of: Rachel Goldwyn (Senior Conflict-Sensitivity and Peacebuilding Advisor, WFP); David Branca (Programme and Policy Officer, WFP); Suyoun Jang (Researcher, SIPRI); and Gary Milante (Director of Studies, Peace and Development, SIPRI).

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Abbreviations

AAF	Amriyeat Al Falujah
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
FFA	Food for assets
FGD	Focus group discussion
FSOM	Food security outcome monitoring
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross domestic product
GFA	General food assistance
GOI	Government of Iraq
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IMEP	The Iraq Monitoring and Evaluation Project
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IS	Islamic State
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
KRI	Kurdistan region
NIF	Network of Iraqi Facilitators
PDM	Post-distribution monitoring
PDS	Public Distribution System
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces
PMU	Popular Mobilization Units
SMARTE	Simple, measurable, achievable, relevant, trackable and extended
SO	Strategic Outcome
T-ISCP	Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan
TOC	Theory of change
USIP	United States Institute for Peace
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary

This case study is part of a wider initiative between the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which aims to better understand and strengthen WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace. Iraq was one of four case studies in phase 1, along with El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan and Mali. The objectives of this case study were to understand WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace, identify how WFP could enhance its contributions to improving such prospects and make recommendations on how all this could be measured.

This research sought perspectives from WFP staff and partners, as well as critical friends and conflict specialists, on whether WFP has a role to play in peacebuilding. It involved a desk review of programme documents and data, discussions with staff, field visits to three camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and a resilience project site in formerly contested areas, as well as eight focus group discussions with beneficiaries and a wide range of interviews across the United Nations, non-governmental groups, civil society, donors and partners.

Country context

Despite the defeat of the Islamic State group (IS) in most areas of Iraq, the road to stability remains highly challenging, amid myriad unresolved social and political issues. Many social and economic problems, such as corruption, unemployment, poor basic services and the lack of water and electricity, have been exacerbated by the impact of the war, and there are major obstacles preventing the return of the remaining IDPs to their communities of origin. In addition, the intense struggle against terrorism has exacted a heavy economic toll. There has been extensive damage to agricultural and other infrastructure linked to agricultural production and communities' livelihoods. The political balance has also been affected, most visibly through the growing influence of Iran and the linked Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs), leaving Iraq subject to proxy political interest and at increased risk of proxy conflict.

WFP's added value in contributing to enhancing the prospects for peace in Iraq

The research identified several areas where WFP adds value:

- **Unique operational reach and field presence.** WFP understands the communities it works with and is a trusted and recognized partner. WFP was a key humanitarian actor during the war against IS (2014–17) and maintains a broad presence in Iraq's IDP camps and areas of return.
- **Food as an entry point.** The provision of food creates opportunities to build relationships and trust at the community level, which can later be built on to work on more sensitive issues of relevance to peace.
- **Working at all levels of governance.** WFP works at the national, subnational, community and household levels, which creates opportunities to improve the prospects for peace in multiple areas.
- **Programmatic base.** WFP's wide focus area and intervention tools, which address food insecurity, improve livelihoods, mobilize communities for common goals, transfer knowledge, build resilience and respond to crises, provide the foundation for building peace and multiple opportunities for

integrating peace approaches into programming. For example, because control over natural resources is often contested, work on enhancing natural resource management can be a natural entry point for possible conflict prevention activities.

WFP's potential contributions to improving the prospects for peace in Iraq

Building relationships among divided communities by working on shared needs

There is anecdotal evidence from cooperating partners to indicate that the implementation of resilience projects has on occasion involved building relationships between divided tribes, resolving pre-existing conflicts and increasing freedom of movement. This can work best in places where WFP already has working relationships and is able to identify local priorities with partners, possibly as a follow-on to current programming. The approach could be developed further by creating a specific objective to bridge divides through programming. These could be tribal divides or sectarian divides, or could even mean supporting the return of perceived IS-affiliated families. Work to achieve the latter would require a significant change in programming to work with new partners that are involved in such return processes, or to gain access to flexible funds that allow support to be provided when windows of opportunity emerge as well as more holistic working with others to provide a wider rehabilitation package of support. The Iraq Country Office is exploring such possibilities.

Supporting reform of the Public Distribution System to enhance effectiveness and reduce diversion could contribute to enhancing state performance legitimacy, fostering citizen trust in the state

The Public Distribution System (PDS) is the government's main tool for improving the food security of its population. The PDS has significant dysfunctionalities linked to its blanket approach to distribution, the bureaucratic obstacles for citizens, corruption and the lack of meaningful complaint and feedback systems. Improving service delivery would strengthen contact and accountability between government and citizens, thereby building output-/performance-based legitimacy. WFP is currently providing technical support to an ongoing modernization of the PDS, which aims to enhance transparency and improve services. There is an expectation that this pilot could create an opportunity to discuss wider systemic reform of the PDS. Increasing efficiency and transparency—and reducing corruption—could contribute to enhancing the legitimacy of the state and the trust of citizens.

Measurement

WFP Iraq's existing monitoring mechanisms were not designed to measure contributions to improving the prospects for peace. Existing indicators are related to food security outcomes, rather than the quality of relationships or changes in attitudes to or perceptions of security. This report recommends a specific focus on the development of community-identified indicators as a way of capturing the thus far undocumented outcomes observed by the research team and, indeed, by country office staff members. Furthermore, there is a heavy reliance on surveys for data collection, which can be excellent for identifying whether something has changed but are weak at providing insights on why or how things have changed. A combination of methods, involving open-ended enquiry, such as focus group discussions (FGDs) or semi-structured interviews, are typically used to monitor peacebuilding programming

Recommendations for enhancing WFP's contributions to improving the prospects for peace in Iraq:

- **Build new partnerships.** WFP should engage in more strategic partnerships to tackle the complexity of the assistance-related context in Iraq. New relationships will enable WFP to access knowledge relevant to the political and social dimensions of programme design and planning, and to conflict-sensitivity. This would also entail learning from mistakes and from the lessons learned by partners that have been operating in the peacebuilding arena for much longer.
- **Scope out whether/how WFP could support nascent return processes.** This should include consolidating the lessons learned from previous peacebuilding/reconciliation programming in Iraq.
- **Draw on existing policy analysis of potential PDS reform** to assess whether WFP technical support could affect reforms.
- **Revise what is measured and how it is measured in order to capture potential contributions to enhancing the prospects for peace.** Develop new contextually derived quantitative and qualitative indicators of progress in contributing to improving the prospects for peace and expand the monitoring toolkit beyond surveys to use more open-ended enquiry, such as FGDs and semi-structured interviews. These indicators would not need to be complex from the outset, as long as they are collected regularly and used to monitor progress (or regress) at regular monitoring intervals.

1. Introduction

The World Food Programme (WFP) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) have established a knowledge partnership in order to build an evidence base to assess whether—and if so how—WFP's programming contributes to improving the prospects for peace, and to identify where—if anywhere—it has unintended negative effects. The partnership will support future operational refinement based on the research conclusions. It is expected that this work will inform an evaluation of WFP's policy that is planned for 2021.

WFP Iraq was one of four case studies, and similar research was conducted in El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan and Mali. The objectives of the case studies were to understand in each context: (*a*) WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace; (*b*) how WFP might enhance its contribution to improving the prospects for peace; and (*c*) how WFP can measure its contributions to improving the prospects for peace.

The case study research involved a desk review of programme documents and data, discussions with staff, and field visits to three IDP camps—Al Shahama, Abu Ghraib and Amriyeat Al Falujah—as well as the food assistance for assets (FFA) project in Ramadi. There were also two focus group discussions (FGDs) in each of these locations (a separate discussion for women and men), as well as semi-structured interviews with peer UN agencies and NGOs, donors, civil society, implementing partners and experts in conflict/peace in Baghdad.

The case study looked across WFP's entire programme portfolio in the Country Strategic Plan (CSP) concept note and the current Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (T-ISCP) to identify possible theories of change (TOCs) on how programming could be contributing to improving the prospects for peace through each Strategic Outcome (SO). These TOCs were discussed and refined with staff, and existing data collection tools were reviewed to determine the availability of relevant data on the proposed TOCs. A detailed methodology for the use of TOCs in the research is set out in the preliminary report, which was published in June 2019.[1]

The case study is the first step in a longer process of reflective learning for the Country Office, supported and accompanied by WFP Headquarters which remains available to support CO adaptation in the light of the findings thus far.

[1] Delgado, C. et al., *The World Food Programme's Contribution to Improving the Prospects for Peace* (SIPRI: Stockholm, 2019).

2. Conflict context analysis

There are several major drivers of conflict in Iraq. Collectively, these highlight the significant potential for escalation of conflict rather than stabilization.

Drivers of conflict

Governance and government formation

As a major oil exporting state, the Government of Iraq (GOI) generates a large revenue stream, but service delivery by the state is patchy and not commensurate with the revenues received. Widespread corruption, poor service delivery and a lack of investment in critical infrastructure have led the population to lose faith in the traditional political system and its leaders. This is particularly pronounced in the South, where protests have become a regular feature of each summer and been met with disproportionate levels of violence from the state. Protests in the summer of 2019 became increasingly organized, and as some Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF, or al-Hashd al-Shaabi) fighters return to Basra, and tribes are also heavily armed, there are concerns that there might be a significant escalation in violence and instability.

The low turnout in the parliamentary election of May 2018—44.5 per cent nationally, 33 per cent in Baghdad and only 14 per cent in Basra—is indicative of a profound loss of trust in the state. The election did not provide a clear winner and it took the new government more than a year to fill the four key ministerial roles.[2] The latter reflects the huge challenge of agreeing a division of roles between the coalition parties, which limits the effectiveness of government action. In October 2019, protests in Baghdad and the southern provinces, which led to a growing number of casualties, caused the resignation of Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi. However, it is unlikely that this will result in an end of the protests, which are mainly about the state of the job market and the lack of job opportunities, the level of corruption, inefficient services and the perception of Iranian influence on the Government of Iraq.

Security actors and the Islamic State Group

IS still exists as an insurgency in Iraq, and its targets have become more focused. It is understood to be regrouping not only at Rawa near the border with Syria, but also in Salahaldin, Ninewa and Kirkuk.

There is a wide array of paramilitary forces in Iraq, known as the PMF and Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), which are widely credited with the defeat of IS. These forces have never been under the control of the GOI. Indeed, many are linked back to the Government of Iran rather than the GOI and are seen as proxies of Iran. Their existence directly challenges the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Some pockets of land are solely controlled by PMF/PMU. In some areas, the PMF/PMU are increasingly questioning the jurisdiction of the GOI letters of authorization provided for humanitarian convoys, demanding that permission be sought from within their own chains of command.[3] PMU leaders formed an electoral bloc, the Fatah Alliance, which came second in the May 2018 elections, but they do not form a monolithic bloc. There are many sub-groups with significant differences in allegiance. The PMF/PMU have expanded significantly into the economic sphere, in particular in the areas

[2] The ministers for Interior, Defence, Justice and Education.

[3] Aziz, S. and Van Veen, E., 'A state with four armies: how to deal with the case of Iraq', War on the Rocks, 11 Nov. 2019.

of reconstruction and road building.[4] They have also expanded to operate outside state control, engage in criminal activities and exert economic and social influence throughout Iraq, and taken control of parts of the oil and gas trade in areas formerly controlled by IS. The activities of these actors not only undermine state authority and the legal economy, but also affect vulnerable communities and prevent the peaceful return of IDPs.

Treatment of IS suspects and their families

IS suspects suffer violence and torture while in detention. There is no fair assessment of their cases and they are not given a fair trial, which largely results in a guilty verdict and execution. The treatment of the families of these suspects takes the form of collective punishment. They are rejected by their communities and tribes, and threatened with death if they try to return to their homes, most of which have been destroyed by their communities. They are held in IDP camps, often with documents lost or removed by the authorities, without freedom of movement or the ability to secure a livelihood. Many of these 'perceived IS-affiliated families' are at some distance from the suspect—not just parents or children, but also uncles and cousins, and sometimes even further removed. The treatment of suspects and their families is widely understood as feeding so much resentment and anger that it will lead to a resurgence of IS in the long run.

Water and climate change

Climate change has resulted in prolonged heatwaves, erratic precipitation, increased temperatures and increased disaster intensity. Dams upstream in Turkey and Iran have contributed to a significant reduction in water flow on the Tigris and the Euphrates. Once the Ilisu dam in Turkey becomes fully operational, it is expected that it will reduce water supply to Iraq by 60 per cent. There are no functioning international agreements in place on water sharing. Poor irrigation techniques and damaged/outdated water infrastructure further compound water shortages, all of which combine to reduce agricultural production and livelihoods, and increase levels of soil salinity. Some argue that this will cause tensions between tribes as they compete for scarce resources, especially water. Others believe that this will trigger significant urban migration, which could increase instability as migrants compete with urban hosts for scarce resources. Some assert that IS could use water shortages as a campaign platform for recruitment.

Disputed internal boundaries

During the liberation of Mosul from IS, the Peshmerga were able to make considerable territorial gains from the GOI, including the oil fields of Kirkuk. Internal boundaries and political control over these disputed territories remain unresolved. Following the Kurdish referendum in 2017, Iraqi forces re-took disputed territories, including Kirkuk, from Kurdish control.

Does food insecurity have any bearing on recruitment to extremist or other armed groups?

The Islamic State Group

No links were found in the literature between food insecurity and radicalization or recruitment to violent extremist groups. This was confirmed in the expert interviews.

[4] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Iraq's Paramilitary Groups: The Challenge of Rebuilding a Functioning State* (IGG: Brussels, 30 July 2018).

Some argue that instability in Iraq is a result of sectarian differences, but many also highlight that prior to 2003 there was a high degree of coexistence between Sunni and Shia in Iraq, and that sectarian tensions have emerged as a result of manipulation rather than inevitable or primordial sectarian hatreds. For instance, the Ba'ath party, although more Sunni than Shia, had millions of Shia party members prior to 2003. However, the political system established following the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 was organized around sectarian identity (Muhasa). Sects were allocated quotas on the country's governing council, which led to corruption and the reinvention of sectarian identities, around which political actors mobilized to gain a powerbase. It is argued that the relevance of sectarian identity fluctuates and is driven by wider socio-economic and political conditions, as is sectarian harmony or discord:

While government oppression and instability have increased the importance of sectarian identity in the Middle East, large scale sectarian violence has invariably been the result of deliberate efforts by domestic and foreign actors to foment social conflict for their own political ends. These 'sectarian entrepreneurs' have successfully manipulated latent religious identities to cleave society along communal lines that they can better control.[5]

In general, there is wide agreement among experts that there are three key drivers of radicalization and violent extremism in Iraq:

- **Political exclusion by the state and poor governance.** Sunnis had long felt oppressed and marginalized.
- **Targeting of Sunnis by the security forces.** Abuses by the police, in particular in 2012–13 when peaceful protests for political reform in Sunni areas were met with violent responses from the government.
- **The de-Ba'athification programme.** This programme led to thousands of individuals losing jobs, leaving them more amenable to the appeal of IS.

Many Sunnis did not support IS but were not inclined to fight against it, while others, particularly in Mosul, were initially more welcoming of IS. When IS provided public services in the areas under its control it generated some degree of local support. Research conducted by Mercy Corps using opinion polls in 2013–15 showed that at the moment at which Prime Minister Maliki resigned in August 2014, support for armed opposition groups among Sunni Arab respondents fell from 49 per cent to 26 per cent.[6] Expectations of how the government would deliver for Sunni Arabs jumped significantly, even though the new prime minister was also a Shia. This highlights the role of governance and inclusion, rather than sectarian identity, in support for armed opposition.

Other localized research has highlighted other important drivers of IS support. In Anbar, these included forced recruitment, corruption in the justice system and high unemployment, in particular among youth who were offered economic incentives.[7] Faith in extremist ideology and the desire for material gain were cited more strongly in Ninewa.[8]

The Popular Mobilization Forces and Popular Mobilization Units

Nor were any links found in the literature between food insecurity and recruitment to the PMF. When the war against IS began in 2014, the GOI's security forces collapsed,

[5] Robinson, H. et al., *Sectarianism in the Middle East: Implications for the United States* (RAND Corporation: Santa Monica, CA, 2018), p. 3.

[6] Mercy Corps, 'How good governance can diminish support for violent extremism', Dec. 2015.

[7] Sanad Countering Violent Extremism Strategy for Anbar.

[8] Sanad for Peacebuilding and Social Inquiry, '"Ideas are more dangerous than deeds": Street-level perspectives of violent extremism in Ninevah Governorate, Iraq', Oct 2018.

leading many volunteers to join paramilitary rather than state security forces. Shia joined the PMF in significant numbers rather than the Iraqi military through the Ministry of Defence. Despite reports of widespread and systematic human rights abuses, a 2015 poll showed that 99 per cent of Iraqi Shia supported the PMF in the fight against IS, providing a substantial recruitment base.[9] Several reports claim that up to 75 per cent of Iraqi Shia enlisted in the PMF in the period 2016–17, although many remained inactive. A number of reasons have been identified for joining the PMF.[10] First, there was a perception that the Iraq army could not protect Shia, particularly given its collapse in June 2014 and following the Camp Speicher massacre when IS killed 1700 mainly Shia air cadets in the same month. There was also a degree of institutional support for the PMF from religious leaders, and a religious order (fatwa) was widely interpreted as instructing people to join as a religious duty. Other factors were the endemic corruption at the Ministry of Defence, a belief that the PMF could fight more efficiently and ease of recruitment compared to the Iraq military. Finally, some minorities joined in order to influence their position vis-à-vis the Kurds.

Amnesty International has also reported the forced recruitment of men and boys by paramilitary militias in IDP camps in 2018.[11] Referring to the 2014 fatwah, the International Crisis Group notes that:

> Joining the Hashd was the only way for many youths to earn a salary and benefits for their families if they died. Most who enrolled had been working as day laborers or in the lower public sector ranks, with no possibility of a decent living. Still, while income was an incentive, their motives cannot be reduced to material interest. The Hashd attracted many destitute youths in part because recruitment targeted the most densely populated, poorest areas (for example, Sadr City in Baghdad, Basra, Diwaniya and Amara) or was done near the frontline (for example, Shula and Hurriya neighbourhoods in Baghdad and Karbala). Young men continued to volunteer even when the government or militia defaulted on pay.[12]

Figures of $ 1500 per month were offered to Iraqis to travel to Syria to fight alongside Assad's forces.

The current drivers of recruitment into the PMF/PMU appear twofold: as a means to generate an income;[13] and to serve as a local protection force, in a context where the state security forces are not perceived as capable of providing protection. The threat from IS remains, albeit in a much-reduced form.

[9] Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, 'Lack of responsiveness impacts mood: Aug.–Sep. 2015 survey findings', National Democratic Institute.

[10] Mansour, R. and Jabar, F., *The Popular Mobilizatoin Forces and Iraq's Future* (Carnegie Middle East Centre: Beirut, 28 Apr. 2017).

[11] Amnesty International, 'Iraq Report, 2017–2018'; and Mansour and Jabar (note 10).

[12] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Fight or Flight: The Desperate Plight of Iraq's 'Generation 2000'* (ICG: Brussels, 2016), p. 16.

[13] In the FGD in Ramadi, for example, all the women had close male relatives receiving salaries for their engagement with militia forces.

3. WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace in Iraq

Resilience

WFP seeks to strengthen the resilience of food insecure households through the provision of conditional food/cash transfers linked to the rehabilitation/construction of community-level productive assets. This currently involves irrigation infrastructure in rural areas and a pilot of Tech for Food (now known as Empact) in an urban area, which provides tailored vocational training to build digital skills that can be marketed internationally. The Tech for Food pilot was not examined during this research.

Existing rehabilitation work is currently largely irrigation infrastructure rehabilitation, delivered through FFA interventions. For site selection the GOI provided a list of priority intervention sites, on which WFP overlaid additional selection criteria. Strict donor timelines meant that participatory planning could not be implemented at the community level. In future rounds, however community participatory planning processes will be conducted.

*TOC 1: **If** communities work together to identify common needs and to collectively respond to these needs, **then** relationships will be fostered across [ethnic/sectarian/tribal/other] divides.*

Evidence from programming

There is anecdotal evidence from the Mercy Hands canal project that resilience projects can contribute to building social capital and bridge divides between tribes, including tribes that had not previously worked together. This was said to result in tribes resolving their conflicts and agreeing to collaborate on the canal project. Similarly, freedom of movement was increased as members of tribes that had previously feared moving through other tribal areas were able to cross each other's territory.

The extent to which tribes worked collectively on different parts of the canal or worked on their own sections is unclear. If the latter, this was a missed opportunity for contact between groups. It should also be noted that where resilience activities are thought to have contributed to local social capital, these have involved resolving intertribal conflicts and, on at least on occasion, addressing tensions across two neighbouring Shia and Sunni communities.

Level of ambition

What level of ambition should be applied to resilience programming? Should the programme seek to bridge tribal divides and sectarian divides? Could it also help bridge divides where perceived IS-affiliated families have returned? There was management and team support for working with this TOC at all levels, with a particular interest in exploring the possibilities for supporting perceived IS-affiliated families to return, although the resilience team preferred not to highlight the status of these families and instead frame all returnees as 'vulnerable'. The level of ambition in promoting local peacebuilding in resilience programming is an example of the type of flexible planning that must be undertaken in complex environments (see complicated versus complex in chapter 4). In some cases, an ambitious objective of facilitating safe return may be warranted after consultation; in others, a more modest goal of bridging tribal divides may be the answer.

Increasing the level of ambition, such that resilience programming supports the return of perceived IS-affiliated families, could be built on future successes like the one the Network of Iraqi Facilitators (NIF, hosted by Sanad) enjoyed in negotiating returns

in Yathrib in Salahaddin. Through a facilitated negotiation, a significant number of Sunni IDP families were able to return to Yathrib in the spring of 2018.[14] This was not achieved overnight, however, but built on a long process of negotiation going back to 2015. Resilience activities could conceivably be attached to such negotiations to create repeated interactions between groups in support of reconciliation and rehabilitation among both communities. The Sanad experience in Yathrib highlighted that while their negotiation support was intrinsic to return, their funding dropped off at that point, even though there was a clear need to solidify reconciliation. Rehabilitation and resilience work designed to support reconciliation is a potential entry point for WFP. This would need to be part of a more holistic approach working with others to provide a wider package of support.

Targeting

To reach a level of ambition in which the resilience programme supports the return of perceived IS-affiliated families would require knowing when these nascent 'windows of opportunity' are open and which processes should be supported. Staff and implementing partners will need to monitor delivery in order to identify these opportunities. Partnerships with other groups, such as Sanad and the IFN, could also help to identify such opportunities. The design of such interventions could be linked to the nature of the negotiated agreements relating to return. WFP would not want to support returns that did not fully respect human rights.[15]

Conflict sensitivity concerns

As is the case in other country contexts in which WFP operates, targeting causes recurrent conflict sensitivity concerns. Extreme caution is needed in areas that have experienced a demographic shift following the departure of entire ethnic/sectarian groups, such as Bartella. WFP is well aware of this concern and factors it into decisions on possible resilience programming.

In other contexts where perceived IS-affiliated families have not yet been able to return to their communities, care is needed to ensure that community-based planning of resilience programmes does not result in a consolidation of power and the capture of benefits by specific parts of the population. There has been confusion at the community level over targeting criteria.[16] In one non-WFP case, an agency selected the most vulnerable community members, those with destroyed houses. This inadvertently selected returnees who were perceived IS-affiliated families, leading the community to assume that all aid is biased.

In many cases targeting is not reaching the most vulnerable, which affects attitudes to aid. Many people assume that they have not been targeted due to their identity. There is a wider perception among communities that those who fled to the IDP camps did not face the same hardships as those who stayed and fought IS, and that IDPs have received considerable amounts of assistance. It is worth flagging up that WFP resilience programming provides significant support to returnees (75 per cent of all beneficiaries are returnees).

There has been an uptick in assassinations by IS of tribal leaders who might be willing to negotiate these types of returns. This trend should be monitored and is a

[14] SANAD for Peacebuilding, '400 internally displaced families return home to Tikrit City, Salahaddin Province in Iraq', [n.d.].

[15] The International Committee of the Red Cross informant highlighted that some agreements involved requirements such as paying compensation, severing all ties with a family member in detention, or possibly even disavowing him, and the possible destruction of housing. Any negotiated agreements will need to be vetted by WFP.

[16] Social Inquiry identified that there is confusion and that targeting criteria are often inappropriate to the context.

risk that needs attention if WFP is to provide resilience programming to support the return of perceived IS-affiliated families.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1.
Build new partnerships. Due to the complexity of the environments in which it is operating in Iraq, WFP should invest in relationships with possible partners. These partners might include Sanad, the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), Social Inquiry, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and PAX.[17] WFP should use such partnerships to draw on their deep knowledge of, and contacts across, the political and social terrain, because of the potential for these partners to act as a sounding board for targeting and programme design, and to obtain feedback on implementation and perceptions, including formally through consultative processes. These formal consultative processes would include focus group discussions and surveys linked to more difficult to monitor issues such as building local governance and social capital.

Recommendation 2.
Scope out how WFP could identify these nascent processes and better engage. Many NIF members are also researchers and may be able to undertake scoping analysis to help the country team work out the possible role of WFP in supporting nascent processes of return. Entry points might include negotiated settlements, such as those identified by Sanad among others, and will require adaptive, flexible responses through resilience programming.

Recommendation 3.
Draw lessons from previous peacebuilding/reconciliation programming. There are a range of agencies already implementing conflict prevention/ peacebuilding/ reconciliation programming in Iraq, and many lessons can be learned to inform the new programming in support of reconciliation being developed by WFP. For instance, Sanad, UNDP, IOM, Social Inquiry and USIP all implement relevant programming, and the Protection, Social Protection and Priority Working Group has the potential to reach many other relevant agencies. A desk review of any lessons learned documents or evaluations from these sources, as well as follow-up calls to discuss them, should pull out the key lessons. This short assignment (potentially one week) could be contracted to a consultant, or be supported by WFP Headquarters or a Temporary Duty.

Climate change

WFP Iraq is working with the GOI on a Green Climate Fund (GCF) proposal. Climate change is a threat/risk multiplier that exacerbates existing risks to human security. The programme has yet to be fully designed, and three competing perspectives on the possible link between climate change and conflict/peace were put forward by staff, any one of which could form the assumptions that would underpin the theory(ies) of change to be developed as part of the project design. A short desk review was conducted following the visit to explore the validity of these perspectives.

Perspective 1: Climate change undermines rural livelihood opportunities, resulting in rural populations (especially youth) moving to urban/peri-urban areas where they engage in protests.

[17] Pax, 'Iraq', [n.d.], Utrecht, the Netherlands.

In the southern provinces of Iraq, climate change is currently manifesting itself as prolonged heatwaves, decreased rainfall, higher than average temperatures and increased disaster intensity, putting pressure on basic resources and undermining livelihood security for the local population. The current protest movement originated in Basra and the instability it created is of concern across Iraq, as Basra's oilfields and sea export terminal account for an estimated 95 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).[18] The effects of climate change in Iraq are expected to put further strain on water resources, agriculture and living conditions: 92 per cent of the total area of the country is at risk of desertification.[19] In contrast to the technologically advanced dam projects upstream in Turkey and Iran, Iraq's water infrastructure is heavily damaged and outdated.[20]

Additional budget constraints and a failure to implement strategic, effective or efficient infrastructure and irrigation programmes could result in further protests in the region that might eventually spread across the country. Many PMF fighters come from Basra and have returned home armed and with military training and experience, increasing the risk of violence.[21] In addition, a number of informal settlements have grown up in the city, creating a space for militias and criminal networks to grow.

In line with humanitarian principles, protests against harsh living conditions and the lack of basic services including water supply are a basic democratic right and should not be suppressed. If the response to protest is a military one, this could push an already frustrated and struggling segment of the younger population into armed groups as a major shift in the manifestation of protest.

The literature review indicates that this is a realistic scenario. However, much of the literature frames this as 'instability' or 'destabilization', which does not acknowledge—and implicitly undermines—the democratic right to protest. Care is therefore needed on language, as well as assumptions and activities.

Perspective 2: A climate change-induced lack of income opportunities leaves rural populations at greater risk of being recruited into armed groups.

Although not specifically focused on the South, a report by the Expert Working Group on Climate-related Security Risk found that opportunities for a terrorist group such as IS to gain support could increase due to climate change, especially among neglected and marginalized communities already affected by terrorist activity. Previous flawed water and agriculture policies have repeatedly marginalized certain sections of the population, creating tensions between groups.[22] These communities were known to be hotspots for IS recruitment and support in exchange for access to basic resources, temporary income opportunities or other services not provided by the state. In the specific situation of the South, recruitment to the PMF/PMUs may be a more realistic proposition, contributing to a wider problem of uncontrolled and proliferating security forces in Iraq.

[18] 'Iraq energy profile: OPEC's second-largest crude oil producer, analysis', Eurasia Review, 28 Apr. 2016.

[19] Hassan, K., Born, C. and Nordqvist, P., *Iraq: Climate-related Security Risk Assessment, August 2018* (Expert Working Group on Climate-related Security Risks: Stockholm, 2018).

[20] Luchtenberg, K., 'Iraq's watershed moment: Hydropolitics and peacebuilding', London School of Economics Middle East Centre Blog, 19 July 2018.

[21] Schweitzer, M., 'Protests in southern Iraq intensify: is instability to follow?', International Peace Institute Global Observatory, 24 July 2018.

[22] Previous projects have involved draining the Mesopotamian Marsh Lands in the South, which despite re-flooding has resulted in heavily salinated water. Many Shia farmers migrated to Basra due to the draining. While the northern agricultural zones are mainly rainfed, the South has a high dependency on irrigation systems, making it more dependent on government investment and resource management systems. IS spread rumours that the GOI was delaying payments for crops and cutting off water supplies in order to force farmers to abandon arable land.

Perspective 3: Climate change-induced resource stress will result in increased conflicts between tribes.

The same Expert Working Group noted that deteriorating livelihoods and reduced incomes coupled with food and water insecurity put pressure on remaining scarce resources, risking increased tensions within and between communities. This is particularly the case in rural and marginalized communities where sufficient adaptive and mitigation policies and actions have not been put in place.[23]

Other comments on the GCF proposal

At the time of the visit, the current draft of the GCF proposal stated that there were no conflicts taking place in the project sites or among the affected population.[24] It also framed the current situation as relatively stable.[25] While the proposed interventions certainly require an absence of open conflict and a certain level of stability, the assessment contradicts the three perspectives identified by staff and does not seem to take account of existing grievances and conflict-related dynamics. Conflict sensitivity concerns could be discussed in this section of the proposal instead, and community-based participatory planning processes need to be sensitive to possible nascent or underlying conflicts in the communities.

Public Distribution System

WFP is providing technical expertise and support to the GOI to modernize the Public Distribution System (PDS)—a huge social safety net programme provided by the GOI to most Iraqi citizens, which reaches 39 million people. The PDS is notorious for its systemic problems and inefficiencies. Recipients do not receive their full entitlements, but the PDS involves enormous resources. It is also a highly visible part of the state, along with the police and the security services. In 2018, WFP and the GOI began a pilot to test technical solutions for a digitalization of the PDS, as part of a wider endeavour by the GOI to modernize the PDS. WFP is providing technical support to the government as it starts to use identification technology and a citizen database to reduce processing times, improve services, maximize resources and provide greater transparency. The first phase will demonstrate the benefits of using new technologies, define requirements and test the digital and biometric solutions available for modernization of the system. This first phase is being rolled out to over 30 000 people in the Baghdad, Duhok, Salah Al-Din, Al-Qadissiya, Anbar and Al-Muthana governorates, and in one IDP camp, involving testing in rural and urban environments. A second phase of expanded pilots in all the governorates of Iraq is in preparation.

There is hope that a successful pilot will create an opportunity for discussion of wider systemic reform.[26] This could lead to a shift from near blanket provision to a more prioritized approach, which might ensure that the most vulnerable receive a larger distribution, thereby helping to strengthen the PDS as a social safety net. It could also ensure that the most vulnerable IDPs in camps receive PDS allocations, including families perceived to be affiliated with IS which are currently largely no longer able to access their PDS entitlements. Donor interest in supporting PDS reform

[23] Hassan, Born and Nordqvist (note 19).

[24] The proposal states: 'Will there be risks posed by the security arrangements and potential conflicts at the project site to the workers and affected community?'; and the response given is 'No'.

[25] 'This project comes in at an optimal time where the conflict in Iraq has ended and the country is embarking on reconstruction and on building its institutions'.

[26] The peacebuilding literature refers to this supposed linkage as a 'hope line' as it is not clear that success in the pilot will lead to an entry for discussion of other areas of reform.

appears mixed. If the Country Office decides to embrace a wider PDS reform ambition, the following theory of change may be of relevance.

*TOC 3: **If** the government is seen to tackle corruption and increase the effectiveness of the PDS, **then** this will improve performance legitimacy, thereby fostering citizen trust in the state.*

Evidence from the peacebuilding field relevant to this theory of change

This theory of change relates to a widely held assumption that improving service delivery can strengthen contact and accountability between government and citizens, thereby building output/performance-based legitimacy. This assumption has underpinned a vast spread of donor-funded state-building programming globally, although the evidence base for it is limited. Questions have arisen as to whether strengthening service delivery in one sector (such as education) can affect attitudes to performance-based legitimacy in others.[27] Service delivery models with built-in grievance redress mechanisms, and which foster relationships between service providers and users appear to have greater success in shifting attitudes; that is, the process of multi-stakeholder engagement is more important than the output of improved services in enhancing legitimacy.[28] Recent analysis by the UK's Stabilization Unit has cautioned that there are 'too many variables to demonstrate a causal link between increased service delivery and increased state legitimacy' and highlights the importance of other variables, such as constitutional change and the extent to which population segments identify with the regime.[29] While this position broadly reflects the growing critique of state-building programmes, it is not reflective of the wider position of donors. In the Iraq context, however, it has been highlighted that mistrust of the state is so profound that PDS reform may not have a significant effect on attitudes to the state.

There are other useful lessons to be learned from the state-building field. Reforms of service delivery that focus excessively on technocratic capacity building and ignore the politics that drive state decisions and directions often fail.[30] Major institutional barriers to reform might exist, particularly given the systemic problems in existing systems. An upcoming Public Expenditure Review by the World Bank will look further at government expenditure, including the PDS. It is worth flagging that a PDS reform that focused resources would result in some—and potentially many—people losing their entitlements. This could mean a loss in performance legitimacy due to frustration at losses of eligibility. It mighty also contribute to protests, which could be framed as 'instability'.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4.
Conduct a political economy analysis to better understand the scope for reform. Understanding the potential blockages to and levers of change will be key to the success of PDS reform. The World Bank may be well placed to support such an analysis.

[27] See Slater, R., Mallett, R. and Carpenter, S., 'Social protection and basic services in conflict-affected situations: what do we know?', *Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) Working Paper* no. 8. (Overseas Development Institute, ODI: London, 2012).

[28] See Slater, R. et al., *Service Delivery in Fragile Settings* (SIPRI and ODI: Stockholm and London, 2016).

[29] See Stabilisation Unit, *The UK Government's Approach to Stabilisation: A Guide for Policymakers and Practitioners* (Stabilisation Unit: London, 2019), p. 113.

[30] See e.g. Bennett, J. et al., *Aiding the Peace: A Multi-donor Evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities in Southern Sudan, 2005–2010* (ITAD: London, 2010).

General food assistance and potential contribution to stabilization

During the visit, no links were found between general food assistance (GFA) and stabilization. Subsequent to the visit, further interviews were held with staff who had been involved in/present at the earlier phases of the IS conflict response, in particular the fall of Mosul, to further probe the issue. The critical issue is how to define 'stabilization'.

According to the British Government's Stabilization Unit, a thought-leader in this field: 'Stabilization seeks to support local and regional partners in conflict affected countries to reduce violence, ensure basic security and facilitate peaceful political deal-making, all of which should aim to provide a foundation for building long term stability'.[31]

The UN does not have an agreed definition of stabilization, even though it has established four missions with a stabilization mandate.[32] Stabilization appears to mean a shift from peacekeeping operations to missions that operate in the midst of ongoing conflict with a mandate to protect a government against an insurgency, and missions tasked with undertaking robust operations, including offensive actions.[33] Stabilization missions differ from other missions by not being strictly impartial.

In the Iraq context, people fleeing IS were compulsorily channelled through screening processes to identify possible IS fighters, and WFP provided food at these screening centres and then in the IDP camps. Follow-up interviews suggested varying interpretations of the term stabilization and how GFA could be linked to it:

- **Nutritional stability.** People were able to eat after long periods of extreme lack of food; (stabilizing food intake).
- **A return to normalcy.** People arrived in a state of desperation and food provision dealt not only with their basic needs, but also with the psychological sense of threat now that the siege was over; (reduced sense of threat).
- **Avoiding risky practices.** Provision of food could reduce the likelihood that people would engage in risky practices, such as sex work or joining a militia to earn an income; (meeting basic needs prevents risky behaviour, including recruitment to armed groups).
- **Preventing secondary displacement.** The further people move from their point of origin, the harder it may be for them to find work and the slower their pace of return, and they may also encounter bias. Long-term displacement in camps could make people increasingly disaffected, and camps can be a place of recruitment for fighters. GFA helped prevent displacement further afield; (preventing future recruits).
- **Perpetuate a situation of lack of freedom of movement.** For the perceived IS-affiliated families in particular, which face severe movement restrictions, the provision of food has helped to sustain the lack of a durable solution; (allowing a non-solution to persist).
- **Dependency**. When food aid was not provided fast enough, this resulted in tensions in the camp; (stabilizing but dependent).
- **A controlling force**. Camp authorities have used the withholding of food assistance to harass IDPs.

[31] Stabilisation Unit (note 29), p. 7.

[32] The Central African Republic, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Haiti

[33] 'The essential difference between peacekeeping and stabilization seems to be that in peacekeeping the aim is to arrive at and maintain a cease-fire and/or implement a peace agreement among the parties to a conflict, whilst in stabilization the theory of change is to achieve peace by managing or removing an aggressor'. de Coning, C., 'Do we need a UN stabilization doctrine?', Complexity 4 Peace Operations, 27 Nov. 2014.

Note that for 1 and 2, GFA has no bearing on the wider conflict context or the meaning of stabilization from a conflict/peace perspective. The role of food was found to be more positive in the initial immediate response phase but potentially negative in the longer term (in 5, 6 and 7).

4. Challenges and opportunities

Integration of peace/conflict into processes and capacities

A full institutional capacity assessment of conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding was neither envisaged nor feasible as part of the visit. However, key observations on whether systems, processes and capacities enable or inhibit conflict-sensitive practice are captured in box 4.1.

Recommendations

Recommendation 5.
Clarify responsibilities and accountability for conflict sensitivity, and ensure staff have the skills to fulfil these roles. WFP Headquarters should help to articulate which competencies are needed for which roles. This would be a useful exercise for informing other country offices. Where capacity gaps are identified, headquarters could also support through capacity-building exercises. Where capacity building events/training are conducted, cooperating partners should also be included.

Recommendation 6.
Identify existing gaps in conflict analysis and how to fill them. As a critical foundation for conflict sensitivity, and to help improve the prospects for peace, conflict analysis must underpin all work in and on conflict. Much of this analysis is already happening intuitively among staff and some further analysis is available externally, such as from the wider UN Country Team and cooperating partners.

Complicated versus complex

In difficult environments such as Iraq, where strategic planning, adaptive management and problem-solving are required, it is useful to distinguish between 'complicated' and 'complex' challenges.

Complicated problems are problems that can be broken down into elementary parts. They can be resolved through reductionist approaches but often require highly technical solutions. Many of WFP's challenges, such as logistics chains, emergency response, assessing food security, designing infrastructure interventions, and modelling droughts and market conditions, are complicated. WFP is very good at delivering on all of these challenges because it has a high degree of technical knowledge that can be applied to these challenges.

Complex challenges, however, require systems analysis and a different approach to problem-solving.[34] Such systems must be understood holistically as they involve collections of actors that produce one or multiple outputs. Systems are dynamic; they may seek equilibrium but never reach it due to cycling, chaotic interactions and exponential behaviour—systems are rarely linear processes.[35] Solutions to complex challenges are usually internal to the system; they are rarely exogenous to the system and must be owned by the actors in the system. (WFP is an actor in these systems. It is not 'outside' implementation.) Examples of the complex challenges that WFP encounters in Iraq include negotiating the return of IDPs to communities that may not want them back; negotiating with local government on sustainable resource or

[34] Senge, P. M., *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (Doubleday: New York, 2006).

[35] Other features of systems include feedback loops and finality. Feedback loops within a system can be both amplifying (reinforcing) and stabilizing (balancing). Equifinal systems work to produce the same outputs (convergence). Multi-final systems work towards multiple different outputs, which can lead to divergence.

Box 4.1. Systems, processes and capacities for conflict-sensitive practice

Staff capacity and interest in conflict sensitivity

There has been no specific training on conflict sensitivity or peacebuilding, and staff members' conceptualizations of the relationship between programming and conflict/peace seem to be spread on a wide spectrum from strong to weak. The capacity of staff to identify and handle protection issues was raised by senior staff as a point for action. Conflict sensitivity is not currently a feature of anybody's job description.[a]

Integration of conflict analysis into design and implementation

Conflict analysis is not a formal process step in programming, although staff are intelligent and clearly think about the issues. At the more detailed level, developing an understanding of tribal dynamics has largely been delegated to cooperating partners, and there do not appear to be any quality standards on or quality control of what is considered 'good enough' analysis. Staff can draw more extensively on cooperating partners' contextual understanding, and the upcoming Community Based Participatory Planning (CBPP) will be an excellent opportunity to gain more detailed insights into community-level dynamics. However, care will be needed on the design of such processes. Some of the focus group discussions (FGDs) convened for this research mission in both the IDP camps and the village did not create appropriate space for open discussion. Building trusting relations takes time.

Monitoring of the impacts on conflict/peace

Current post distribution monitoring (PDM) tools do not include questions relating to conflict, tensions or sense of security. Concerns were raised that staff gathering data do not go beyond the detail in the survey tools to see the bigger picture, and that important insights at this level might be being missed. By extension, if bigger picture concerns were to arise, it is not clear whether staff felt they could raise these with management.

Cooperating Partners

Cooperating partner selection criteria include local contextual knowledge and connectivity. Cooperating partners described successful negotiations across tribes in rehabilitation programming, indicating some powerful peace supporting capacities, although WFP is outside these processes and does not appear to have an assurance role in the nature of the agreements reached. Cooperating partner capacity in terms of conflict sensitivity was not entirely clear and mixed signals were found. This would appear to warrant further probing, given how critical cooperating partners are for understanding context. The above question on appropriate FGDs is also related to cooperating partners' capacities.

Donor requirements

Food for Peace includes a standardized special clause on Do No Harm.

[a] Since the SIPRI study was conducted, the Country Office has organized training sessions on conflict-sensitivity for all field monitors.

infrastructure management; and resolving larger systemic issues such as the PDS or targeting in the presence of ministries and donors that earmark and have their own political objectives.

Some of these complex challenges may be wicked problems.[36] Wicked problems have six important features: (*a*) the problem is not understood or defined until a solution is found; (*b*) there is no stopping rule for formulating a solution; (*c*) there is no right or wrong solution, often because different solutions may be preferred on different dimensions; (*d*) every wicked problem is, by definition, unique and novel; (*e*) every solution is unique (one shot); and (*f*) there are no given alternative solutions. The concept of wicked problems is useful because knowledge that a problem may be wicked liberates practitioners from trying to find the 'first best' solution and enables them to look for practical 'second-best' or 'best-fit' solutions, thereby avoiding ceaseless cycling by setting stopping rules and commitment devices. When 'good enough' solutions are discussed, this is often a tacit acknowledgement of the presence of a wicked problem.

Differentiating between problems that are complex and problems that are complicated helps the strategic planner to understand where technical solutions—and staff skilled at engineering technical solutions—can be used or where more adaptive responses will be necessary, such as more consultation, more piloting and

[36] Conklin, J., *Dialogue Mapping: Building Shared Understanding of Wicked Problems* (Wiley: West Sussex, 2006).

experimentation, and increased feedback loops to ensure 'do no harm'.[37] Not all complexity is due to violence. Complexity can also be due to latent conflict or the implicit threat of violence, which can lead to prolonged periods of uncertainty and instability.[38]

Some of the above insights are basic, but systems mapping and other approaches can produce further powerful insights on complex development.[39] This systems mapping will require the building of a common construct of the system—a common understanding between multiple actors over the problem and the solution space. Because of the subjective nature of defining both a system and a problem, interactive mapping can help to identify the differences between stakeholders on what the problems are and which solutions might work. This can help practitioners to reject importing 'one-size-fits-all' solutions and thereby perpetuating isomorphic mimicry—the fallacious assumption that every similar problem can be resolved in the same way—in favour of considering the many solutions possible. Polymorphic approaches can involve equifinality, a particular end state that can be achieved by multiple means; or multi-finality, a system that can have multiple end states. Many development practitioners do this intuitively. Through consultations, meetings with stakeholders, political economy and fragility assessments or even just over multiple cups of tea or coffee, they explore the solution space through consultation. It is in these settings where an experienced practitioner will start to develop something that is not an isomorphic solution, but rather a polymorphic understanding of which solutions might work with the various stakeholders involved—an acknowledgement that there may be many outcomes possible and of who within the system is working towards which outcome. This understanding is used to create the coalitions necessary to resolve complex challenges.[40]

Finally, for strategic planning in complex situations, it is important to consider endgames and exit paths: when WFP's work will be done; and, more specifically and practically, when WFP's delivery of food assistance will end. What are the exit strategies for IDP support? How will emergency assistance transition to livelihoods? In an environment like Iraq, it is not sufficient to say a 'return to normal'. Much of the language around fragility and conflict involves 'escaping'. Peace, stability and development are often characterized as equilibria or steady states that can be attained (or returned to) if only the right conditions can be met. Meanwhile, an entire generation of Iraqis has grown up without any such equilibria and previous generations experienced a stable equilibrium in the form of a dictatorship to which few aspire to return. If complex development systems cannot reach equilibrium, planners must prepare for conditions that are constantly in flux and transition. Indeed, the only equilibria attainable may

[37] Enshrined in the humanitarian principles of United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 46/182 and 58/114 and the first principle of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) principles for good engagement in fragile states.

[38] This uncertainty and instability, fear of violence and absence of positive peace may also be interpreted as structural violence as opposed to direct violence, after Galtung, J., 'Violence, peace, and peace research', *Journal of Peace Research,* vol. 6, no.3 (1969), p. 171.

[39] Samji, S., Andrews, M., Pritchett, L. and Woolcock, M., 'PDIA toolkit: A DIY approach to solving complex problems', version 1.0, Oct. 2018; CDA, *Designing Strategic Initiatives to Impact Conflict Systems: Systems Approaches to Peacebuilding, A Resource Manual* (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects: Cambridge, MA, 2016).

[40] These findings are not new. Beyond Samii, Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock (note 40) on problem driven iterative adaptation (PDIA), many have argued for the application of systems thinking (or complexity theory or other similar nomenclature) to development practice, particularly in fragile settings. See Brinkerhoff, D. W., 'State fragility and failure as wicked problems: beyond naming and taming', *Third World Quarterly,* vol. 35, no.2 (2014), pp. 333–44; Kleinfeld, R., 'In development work, plan for sailboats, not trains', *Stanford Social Innovation Review,* Dec. 2015; McCandless, E., 'Wicked problems in peacebuilding and statebuilding: making progress in measuring progress through the new deal', *Global Governance,* vol. 19, no. 2 (2013), pp. 227–48; and Call, C. T., 'The fallacy of the "failed states"', *Third World Quarterly,* vol. 29, no. 8 (Dec. 2008), pp. 1491–1507. Jeffrey Sachs advocated the development of a 'clinical economics' to better understand the complexity of development challenges in *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities of Our Time* (Penguin Books: New York, 2005).

be bad ones—state collapse, atrocities or other systems failures. Practitioners living in a world without equilibria need to consider contingencies and scenarios for a number of possible outcomes and be prepared to adapt to changing conditions from within the system and outside. As a result, programming and strategic design should involve contingency planning, multiple feedback loops for iteration and adjustment as necessary, constant consultation and partnerships that can provide additional perspectives.

Recommendations

Recommendation 7.
Programme design and delivery should be informed by consultation with partners.

Recommendation 8.
Programming and strategy should be adaptive to a changing environment. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, such as contingency planning (if x transpires, then we will adjust our programming in y ways) and scenario work.

Recommendation 9.
In a complex, fluid environment, projects and programming need shorter feedback loops (more frequent, often simpler, metrics) to allow for course change and adaptation. Programming can be experimental and allow testing of different approaches in different environments. Team leaders need to be empowered to adapt delivery to context and to demonstrate how, even if they deviate from industry standards or organizational norms, iteration and adaptation increase impact.

Partnerships

The many complex challenges in Iraq call for an increased role for partners and partnerships. These can contribute in four major ways to gaining a better understanding of and addressing such challenges, by providing knowledge, wisdom, credibility and critical distance.

Knowledge. First, partners, by virtue of their diverse mandates and experience, have additional technical knowledge that can be highly informative. Environments like Iraq are often characterized by limited or incomplete information and partners may have, for example, contacts in the local government that can help to navigate the bureaucracy in ways that move a project forward, as well as knowledge of demographic shifts that preceded the conflict and might affect the return of IDPs or technical resources that might serve as a foundation for programme design and planning.

Wisdom. In addition to the technical knowledge that partners bring, they may have additional perspective of the context that can help better explain the challenges and identify workable solutions. Examples include the ability to convene multiple stakeholders in order to broker agreements (such as the IFN), an understanding of deep-rooted tribal grievances that could affect perceptions of targeting, and knowledge of which stakeholders in a complex environment might be allies of or obstacles to reform and progress.

Credibility. Each entity has its own networks and access. WFP's technical knowledge and skillset might be insufficient on its own to create the coalition needed for delivery in highly divided and contentious political environments. Partners can connect WFP with other actors and can vouch for WFP to create the personal connections and endorsements necessary to create coalitions. By building these networks, WFP can identify new champions and allies for successful delivery.

Critical Distance. As noted above, WFP is an actor in the existing systems of Iraq. Even given the principles of neutrality and independence, it cannot be completely objective in such a politically complex environment. To monitor neutrality and independence, partners can serve as a 'sounding board' to provide feedback on design and problem-solving, and advise WFP where it might be lacking conflict sensitivity, biased or blind to other stakeholders' objectives. In environments with incomplete information, triangulation through consultation with partners that can provide critical perspective is essential for understanding the complex political context.

It is important to remember that partner relationships need not be contractual. Partners providing the above services might have their own interests in collaboration, including brokering agreements as part of their mandate or exchanging information on delivery. In other cases, partners could be hired as advisers or external to delivery processes to provide feedback and guidance, conceivably through country office relationships that transcend individual programmes/projects. (Social Inquiry, Sanad or PAX, for instance, might be partners in multiple regions on multiple types of project.)

Recommendations

Recommendation 10.
Establish a wider circle of partners that can provide knowledge, wisdom, credibility and critical distance. These should go beyond implementation partners and the relationship need not be contractual.

Measurement

Measuring contributions to improving the prospects for peace is complicated by both the breadth of what is meant by peace and the challenges of attribution. Many social, economic, political and security factors combine to create a sustainable peace, which means that individual contributions cannot be ascribed explanatory power (i.e. 'attribution'). Nonetheless, evidence can be assembled to measure contributions to improving the prospects for peace and the unintended consequences that might manifest as grievance or violence. Given the importance of changes in individual attitudes, perceptions and relationships, the evidence will typically involve perceptions-based data, which can include perception surveys that track cultural shifts over time.

Measuring contributions to improving the prospects for peace typically involves both quantitative and qualitative indicators. These are heavily context-dependent, aligned with relevant conflict analysis and capture local and subjective dimensions of peace, which are often articulated by the communities themselves. As an example of quantitative indicators being used to measure social cohesion, WFP Egypt has developed a social cohesion score to assess the level of acceptance of Syrian nationals by host communities.

Any indicators or metrics should be simple, measurable, achievable, relevant, trackable and extended (SMARTE). 'Extended' has been added to reflect the importance of designing metrics that are properly calibrated to the likely time impact of the intervention. If an intervention is expected to decrease conflict over natural resources during the dry season, then monitoring must be extended to include one or more dry seasons beyond the original project. If an intervention is designed to increase government capacity through technical assistance and reform, then monitoring must be able to assess impact years down the line.

There is a recognition of the limitations of indicators in peacebuilding. The lack of clear and controllable causality means that when unanticipated and unintended events happen that either support or undermine peace, these are likely to be missed by indicators. It is therefore best practice in peacebuilding to use a mixed methods methodology to assess whether findings remain constant across different methods, for instance by combining a survey with semi-structured interviews.

WFP monitoring mechanisms are predominantly surveys—both post-distribution monitoring (PDM) and food security outcome monitoring (FSOM). Surveys can be excellent tools for understanding whether something has happened or changed. However, they are weak at providing insights on how or why things have happened or changed, which requires more open-ended enquiry. Surveys can be usefully combined with other methods to achieve this. For example, key informant interviews can be used to articulate the key questions to go into a survey, the survey can be used to help gather data on what has happened, and further interviews can then be conducted to help unpack and explain the findings of the survey. WFP Mali has undertaken a Social Cohesion Study, using extensive focus group discussions in programming areas conducted by an external agency, to understand the programme's potential contributions to improving the prospects for peace and possible conflict-sensitivity risks.

There is a large body of external data on which WFP can draw not only to understand changes in a macro conflict context, but also to help understand and describe the organization's contribution to improving the prospects for peace, regardless of whether attribution is possible.[41] Data on conflict and violence is collected by a number of local, national and international actors; often by states themselves, but also by academic facilities, non-governmental organizations or civil society. Some are primary sources, or entities that are directly involved in the collection or recording of events. Others, those that compile data from a range of different sources, are secondary sources. Primary sources include surveys and public perceptions studies on issues such as social cohesion, prospects for the future or trust in government.[42] The Iraq Monitoring and Evaluation Project (IMEP), which is funded by USAID to support Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance and Food for Peace funded programming, could have some relevant data or might be willing to cost-share on relevant data collection, or simply to add one or two questions of interest to WFP to planned survey processes.

Recommendations

Once WFP Iraq has determined which theories of change it will focus on:

Recommendation 11.
Develop new contextually derived indicators of progress with contributing to improving the prospects for peace. WFP will need to develop new indicators, such as enhanced relationships between returnees and remainers, or between different tribal groups working collectively on rehabilitating shared infrastructure, in order to measure potential contributions to improving the prospects for peace. These should be developed on the basis of a local conflict analysis that involves the communities of concern in its design. The indicators should be both quantitative and qualitative.

[41] Some major donors, such as the British Department for International Development, frequently include impact indicators that refer to these large external datasets in programme log frames.

[42] See Brück, T., et al., 'Measuring Conflict Exposure in Micro-Level Surveys', LSMA-ISA Integrated Surveys on Agriculture, Aug. 2013; and Afrobarometer, <http://www.afrobarometer.org/>, as well as the polling questions in the Gallup World Values Survey, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>.

Recommendation 12.
Expand the monitoring toolkit beyond surveys to utilize more open-ended inquiry. While indicators have their uses, they only have limited utility for peacebuilding. It is best practice to use mixed methods, which combine surveys with other forms of data collection such as semi-structured interviews. There is a wealth of practice in the peacebuilding field. WFP does not need to reinvent the wheel. WFP Mali contracted a Social Cohesion study that used focus group discussions, which is an excellent example of such open-ended enquiry.

Data visualization and communication

Conflict data can be a useful exogenous measure of the degree to which a particular region, province or area is affected by conflict and, therefore, complex. This feeds directly into the differentiated approach (see above) and affects narrative frames, strategic planning and programming.

Statistics on where WFP works (for example, x per cent of the portfolio is delivered in provinces affected by conflict, y per cent is in regions recently recovering from conflict) can be useful to remind donors and partners of the complex conditions in which it operates, although at this level it is not convincing to claim that programming has contributed to any changes observed. This data can also inform strategic planning if additional resources for consultation, participatory planning, negotiation, securing government buy-in, or monitoring and communications are needed for implementation in places affected by or recovering from conflict.

Finally, trends in these statistics can tell a story about peace-related trends—'three years ago, x per cent of the WFP portfolio was in provinces affected by or recently affected by conflict. Today it is only y per cent, with pockets of remaining violence in A, B and C province'. This could be linked to shifts in portfolio, from emergency assistance and general food distributions to livelihoods and resilience. Again, it is not possible to attribute the decline in violence to WFP, as it is not causal, but that should not preclude WFP from noting where positive trends for peace are correlated with positive trends in sustainable food security outcomes.

Conflict analysis

In order to be conflict sensitive and to contribute to peace, conflict analysis must be robust, programme-relevant, at an appropriate level of granularity and sufficiently up to date. Being at an appropriate level of granularity means recognizing the regional variations in conflict/tensions in Iraq. It is useful to consider that there are several distinct conflict zones in Iraq, each with unique challenges and requiring a differentiated approach. This is a critical element in ensuring that WFP's programming in Iraq is context-specific. Overlaying maps such as conflict events (signalling where post-conflict needs are most pressing), IDP camps (and regions with the most persons displaced) and food security needs (following the WFP food security zones of Iraq methodology) will be helpful in articulating these different zones. Although much may already be intuitively recognized, such analysis would be useful for ensuring that the entire team and all partners are working with the same mental model to find common solutions. For example:

- **South.** In the south, there are increasing pressures associated with climate change. In the recent past this has led to protest and unrest. This political instability is different from radical extremism but could also result in increased violence. As some PMF fighters return home, there will be

increasing numbers of armed ex-combatants in the area. There are limited economic opportunities and livelihoods in the south.

- **North-west.** Following the defeat of IS, a number of areas in the north-west are recovering from conflict and require agricultural and infrastructure revitalization. This could be an entry point for resilience and other investment work. It might also serve as an entry point for local governance and community building through participatory processes, particularly if attached to negotiated returns and other conflict resolution mechanisms.
- **Kurdistan region–GOI.** Relations between the Kurdistan region (KRI) and the GOI complicate work and delivery in the KRI. It requires a different skillset, including languages and political acumen, to navigate working in the KRI, which differentiates it from the other regions and needs discussed here.
- **IDPs.** Among the IDPs remaining in camps, some are families that are perceived to be IS-affiliated, which have additional protection concerns and additional social safety net gaps, as well as reconciliation needs if they are to return to their point of origin.

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