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Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Country programme document

Iraq

Summary

The country programme document (CPD) for Iraq is presented to the Executive Board for discussion and approval at the present session, on a no-objection basis. The CPD includes a proposed aggregate indicative budget of \$7,710,000 from regular resources, subject to the availability of funds, and \$185,004,000 in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the period March 2025 to December 2029.

* [E/ICEF/2025/1](#).



Programme rationale

1. Iraq is a founding member of the United Nations and is currently classified as an upper-middle-income country. The country has endured decades of prolonged conflict and humanitarian crises. A newly elected Government was formed in October 2022 and provincial elections were held in December 2023, which can be seen as positive steps towards renewed stability.
2. The population of Iraq grew from 27.9 million in 2004 to 43.3 million in 2023 and is projected to reach 52.8 million by 2030.¹ People under 25 years of age accounted for 57 per cent of this figure in 2023, and the needs of this young population exert strong demands on the country's resources. Despite a decreasing trend, fertility levels are among the highest in the region (in 2023, the total fertility rate was 2.9 per woman, down from 4.6 in 2004).
3. Approximately 22 per cent of the population lives below the national poverty line and poverty rates are higher in the southern governorates.² Forty-seven per cent of children in Iraq are multidimensionally poor.³ Only 11 per cent of women participate in the labour force as compared to 68 per cent of men.
4. While 7.7 million people are covered by the Social Safety Net scheme, groups in vulnerable situations continue to face significant difficulties in receiving adequate support. The social protection sector remains fragmented and faces challenges in responding effectively to deprivations and shocks. One of the main challenges is the absence of reliable and up-to-date information, compounded by an inadequately trained workforce in the social protection sector.⁴
5. The launch of the National Child Protection Policy and signing of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism Action Plan on Monitoring and Reporting on Grave Violations in 2023 have helped to promote child rights in Iraq. The Child Welfare Commission coordinates the Government's response to children's issues and formulates child rights policies. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs also recently committed to establishing a national childhood directorate with subnational childhood units staffed by qualified social workers for prevention and response to child protection violations.
6. The National Development Plan, 2024–2028, identifies how to maintain the progress that led to the achievement of 5 child-related indicators and accelerate action on the remaining 43.⁵ A commitment to data collection, as well as innovative and accelerated programme implementation approaches, is needed.
7. The National Strategy on Early Childhood Development (ECD), 2022–2031, outlines multidisciplinary approaches to accelerate results for child survival and development, while digital investments in the Health Management Information System, including birth registration, the nutrition information system and vaccine management, have improved primary healthcare in Iraq. The under-5, infant and

¹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Population Division, World Population Prospects 2022, New York, <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/MostUsed/>, accessed on 25 August 2023; and Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Statistical Collection 2022–23, 2023, https://cosit.gov.iq/ar/?option=com_content&view=article&layout=edit&id=1470, accessed on 24 October 2024.

² United Nations Iraq, Iraq Common Country Analysis 2024, Baghdad, 2024.

³ CSO and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Iraq National Multidimensional Poverty Index and Child-Adjusted Multidimensional Poverty Index Analytical Report, unpublished draft, 2023.

⁴ Ministry of Planning, Iraq's National Social Protection Strategy, unpublished draft, 2024.

⁵ Data from Ministry of Planning, Iraq.

neonatal mortality rates continue to decline, standing at 22, 18 and 13 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively, in 2021.⁶ Teenage pregnancy also puts young mothers and their babies at risk: in 2018, there were 70 births per 1,000 females aged 15–19 years.⁷ The universal health coverage index for Iraq has remained static at around 60 in recent years.⁸ Access to essential health and nutrition services is high (first antenatal care visits: 83 per cent among women aged 15–49 years and postnatal care for newborns: 78 per cent), yet the use of these public services remains low.⁹ Health expenditure per capita in 2021 was \$249, one of the lowest figures in the region.¹⁰ Out-of-pocket payments for healthcare average 50 per cent of total health expenditure.¹¹

8. The rate of wasting among children under 5 years of age is low (3 per cent). However, the level of stunting is higher (10 per cent).¹² The prevalence of anaemia among women is high, at 29 per cent.¹³ Only 1 in 4 infants are exclusively breastfed, and infant and young child feeding practices are poor, with low rates of initiation of early breastfeeding (32 per cent).¹⁴ More than 1 in 2 children lack minimum dietary diversity.¹⁵ Six per cent of children under 5 years of age are reported as being overweight, with some studies showing significantly higher rates among school-age children.¹⁶

9. The Iraq National Strategy for Education, 2022–2031, advances efforts to accelerate results and specifies the investments needed to produce enough skilled teachers, administrators and learning facilities to meet escalating demand. In 2023, the gross school enrolment rate was high, at 94 per cent in primary education and 70.3 per cent in secondary.¹⁷ However, 2 million children and young people (aged 6–17 years) were out of school in 2018; of these 484,000 were of primary school age.¹⁸ Results from the 2019 learning assessment at Grade 4 level highlighted weaknesses in reading, mathematics and science.¹⁹ Only 10 per cent of children enrolled in Grade 1 attended preschool or kindergarten, with lower participation in rural areas.²⁰ In 2024, nearly 160,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq faced school enrolment challenges.

⁶ CSO, Statistical Collection 2022–23, 2023, https://cosit.gov.iq/ar/?option=com_content&view=article&layout=edit&id=1470, accessed on 24 October 2024.

⁷ CSO, Kurdistan Region Statistics Office (KRSO), Ministry of Health and UNICEF, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) Iraq 2018.

⁸ World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Observatory, UHC Service Coverage Index (SDG 3.8.1), 2022, www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/uhc-index-of-service-coverage, accessed on 22 October 2024.

⁹ MICS Iraq 2018.

¹⁰ WHO, Global Health Observatory, Current Health Expenditure (CHE) per capita in US\$, 2021, [www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/current-health-expenditure-\(che\)-per-capita-in-us-dollar](http://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/current-health-expenditure-(che)-per-capita-in-us-dollar), accessed on 22 October 2024.

¹¹ WHO, Global Health Observatory, “Domestic private health expenditure (PVT-D) as percentage of current health expenditure (CHE) (%)”, [www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/domestic-private-health-expenditure-\(pvt-d\)-as-percentage-of-current-health-expenditure-\(che\)-\(-\)](http://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/domestic-private-health-expenditure-(pvt-d)-as-percentage-of-current-health-expenditure-(che)-(-)), accessed on 4 November 2024.

¹² MICS Iraq 2018.

¹³ WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, Nutrition Country Profile: Iraq, 2023, <https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/WHOEMNUT295E-eng.pdf>.

¹⁴ MICS Iraq 2018.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ UNICEF, WHO and World Bank Group, *Levels and trends in child malnutrition, Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates: Key findings of the 2023 edition*, 2023, p. 20. Sulaiman, Saad J. and AlAni, Mourge H. ‘Prevalence of obesity and physical activity among primary school children in Erbil City/Iraq’, *Mosul Journal of Nursing*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2020, pp. 6–17.

¹⁷ Ministry of Education, Analysis of School Dropout and Unenrolment, Baghdad, 2023.

¹⁸ MICS Iraq, 2018.

¹⁹ Ministry of Education, National Assessment Report of Grade 4 Mathematics and Science Federal National Learning Report, Baghdad, 2019.

²⁰ MICS Iraq, 2018.

10. In 2021, 37 per cent of young people aged 15–24 years were not in education, employment or training.²¹ The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic increased this proportion, as Iraq experienced one of the world’s longest school closures (including full and partial closures) affecting more than 11 million children.²² The 2024 youth unemployment rate (36 per cent) is more than three times that of adults (11 per cent).²³ By the end of 2030, Iraq is likely to face a 52 per cent increase in the youth labour force compared with 2015, bringing 1.3 million new entrants into the labour market.²⁴ While Iraq has been a leader in implementing the Global Framework for United Nations Support on Syria/Iraq Third Country National Returnees, many of the child returnees lack access to national identification documents that are required to enrol in school and access services.

11. The National Child Protection Policy launched in 2023 defines mechanisms to protect all children from violence, abuse and exploitation. However, the country’s social and allied workforce is in the early stages of development and this constrains child protection systems. Child protection laws fall short of international standards. Over 80 per cent of children reported having experienced some form of violent discipline in 2018 – a 2 percentage point increase over 2011. Nearly 40 per cent of women and girls (aged 15–49 years) believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife for any reason.²⁵ Harmful practices such as child marriage are still common, with an estimated 1 in 4 girls married before 18 years of age.²⁶ Intersecting factors, including harmful practices and restrictive social norms, compound girls’ deprivations in education and health and their overall well-being and require a multidimensional response.

12. Civil society, which was nearly non-existent 20 years ago, is growing, and there are many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that focus on women, children and youth operating in Iraq.

13. The country’s accession to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (the “Water Convention”) in 2023 and the government’s approval of a three-year costed action plan for internal drinking water and sanitation management, 2024–2026, offer opportunities to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal 6. In 2018, 40 per cent of households had access to safely managed water and 95 per cent to safely managed sanitation.²⁷ Thirty-one per cent of health facilities lack basic water services and 52 per cent lack sanitation services. Forty-eight per cent of primary and secondary schools lack basic water services and 35 per cent lack sanitation services.²⁸

²¹ CSO, KRSO and International Labour Organization (ILO), *Iraq Labour Force Survey 2021*, July 2022, www.ilo.org/publications/iraq-labour-force-survey-2021, p. 54.

²² Lahire, N., E. Sedmik and H.A. El Ghali, *Building Forward Better to Ensure Learning for All Children in Iraq: An Education Reform Path*, World Bank Group, Washington, D.C., October 2021, pp. 4 and 11.

²³ ILO, *Iraq Labour Force Survey 2021*, p. 6.

²⁴ UNICEF Division of Data, Research and Policy and Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa, *MENA Generation 2030 Report*, Amman, April 2019, p.82.

²⁵ MICS Iraq, 2018.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ WHO, UNICEF and Ministry of Health (MOH), Joint Monitoring and Analysis for WASH, IPC, Environment, and Waste Management Services of the Health Care Facilities in Iraq, 2021, [UNICEF-WHO-MOH-WASH-IPC Assessments in HCFs in Iraq – August 2021](#); and WHO, UNICEF and MOH, Joint Monitoring and Analysis for WASH, IPC, Environment, and Waste Management Services of the Schools in Iraq, 2022, [UNICEF-WHO-MOH-WASH IPC Assessments in Schools in Iraq-2022](#), both accessed on 27 October 2024.

14. Children in Iraq are among the most heavily exposed to the effects of climate change globally. As a signatory to the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action, Iraq has committed to the meaningful participation of children and youth in climate change processes. The country has a severe water pollution problem, with around 6 million cubic metres of untreated sewage dumped directly into rivers and other waterways daily.²⁹ The Water Stress Index, issued by the World Resources Institute, ranked Iraq 42 out of 165 countries in 2019, and predicts that by 2040 the country's water scarcity will reach a level of 4.6 points out of 5. Increased air pollution also poses health hazards to the population, especially children and groups in vulnerable situations.

15. In 2013, the Government adopted Law No. 38 on the Care for Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs, but children with disabilities still face barriers in accessing inclusive basic services. Although recent data availability is limited, in 2018, 22 per cent of children aged 5–17 years had functional difficulties in at least one domain, including psychosocial disabilities that are prevalent especially among children who have experienced violence and abuse.³⁰

16. As a result of programme evaluations and research, three strategic shifts that aim to address key bottlenecks and barriers are proposed:

(a) to progress through the humanitarian-development-peace nexus towards development, focusing on systems strengthening;

(b) to support evidence-based decision-making, model area-based approaches, and support policies and implementation for nation-wide scale-up of successful approaches;

(c) to expand partnerships for advocacy and programme implementation, exploring opportunities with Iraqi private and public institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), academia and children and young people, especially the most vulnerable.

Programme priorities and partnerships

17. The country programme was designed in partnership with the Government and is aligned with, and contributes to, the National Development Plan, 2024–2028; the Iraqi Vision 2030; the child-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Six Transitions; the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2025–2029; and the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child of 2019.

18. The country programme's theory of change is that all girls and boys in Iraq, including the most vulnerable, will overcome restrictive social and economic barriers to progressively realize their human rights and participate in building an equitable, green and resilient society and economy, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals:

(a) *If* data, evidence and knowledge are generated and analysed through digital technologies and adopted for decision-making to transform policies and budgets into action for the most vulnerable children and young people;

²⁹ UNICEF and Iraq Ministry of Environment, *Executive Summary, UNICEF in Iraq, Climate Landscape Analysis for Children and Young People in Iraq*, UNICEF, Baghdad, 2023.

³⁰ MICS Iraq, 2018; Al Juboori, R., 'Violence and Child Mental Health Outcomes in Iraq: Mapping Vulnerable Areas', *Psychiatry International*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2024, pp. 39-52.

(b) *If* national and subnational systems are strengthened to improve the quality of services, advance equity and climate-resilient programmes, and increase opportunities for young people to access skills and employment;

(c) *If* front-line public sector employees have increased capacities at individual and institutional levels to deliver child-focused quality public services;

(d) *If* policies, laws and coordination mechanisms focus on equitable, inclusive and child-sensitive social policies for the promotion of the rights of all children and young people;

(e) *If* children and their caregivers, young people and communities have increased awareness and skills to demand and access public services;

(f) *If* national partners have the knowledge and skills to implement child-responsive planning and budgeting, resulting in efficient and effective spending on child-relevant sectors;

(g) *If* new partnerships with the Government, United Nations entities, academia, civil society and the private sector are built and guided to improve services, and children and young people genuinely participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of services;

(h) *If* modelled area-based innovations and efforts to inform and demonstrate national laws, policies and guidance are scaled up;

(i) *If* the Government strengthens supply chains and invests in the rehabilitation and construction of health, education and protection service infrastructure.

19. The country programme aims to achieve results in five areas to address deprivations:

(a) early childhood development and care;

(b) learning, skills for life and work for children who are not in school;

(c) child protection case management;

(d) climate change, with a focus on water scarcity, renewable energy for child and family services, and youth as agents of change;

(e) social protection, with a deliberate focus on working with and for adolescent girls.

Child survival and development

20. Under this component, and as part of the programme focus on ECD, UNICEF will strengthen equitable access to and use of quality primary healthcare services, nutritious diets, essential supplies and nurturing practices in support of attaining the child-related targets of Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 3. The programme component will strengthen the health system by enhancing resilience to shocks and emergencies, accelerating the reduction of newborn, child and maternal morbidity and mortality. The programme is in line with UNSDCF priority 1 and the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region's primary healthcare and nutrition accelerators, and will be carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Health, United Nations entities, NGOs, the private sector, international financial institutions (IFIs), academia, CSOs and beneficiaries, especially girls.

21. The programme will focus on improving access to quality primary healthcare, including full immunization coverage for children, early childhood care and nurturing practices, addressing demand and uptake of mental health services, and improving

healthcare services for adolescents. The programme will also focus on improving the nutritional status of children under 2 years of age, school-age children and adolescents (with a particular focus on infant and young child feeding practices and anaemia control programmes). A human-centred design will support increased demand and the participation of communities, closely linking Iraqi institutions and delivery platforms to promote healthy behaviours and develop community-based solutions to tackle barriers to a safe and clean environment.

22. Emphasis will be placed on policy and advocacy to improve the health, nutrition and overall well-being of adolescent girls, and to improve early recognition and appropriate referral of children living with disabilities and on ensuring nurturing care as part of ECD.

23. To increase equitable access to quality health and nutrition services and ensure adequately financed, coordinated and evidence-informed services, the country programme will support the Government to:

(a) strengthen multisectoral health and nutrition systems delivered by front-line workers and institutions, including the private sector;

(b) model evidence-based, high-impact primary healthcare interventions in newborn, perinatal and postnatal care;

(c) sustain efforts to ensure a resilient supply chain system for vaccines, essential medicines and nutrition products;

(d) advocate for digitization to improve the use and analysis of data for decision-making and improve the quality of services, while promoting international privacy standards;

(e) advocate for efficient and effective public financing for health and nutrition;

(f) support government public health emergency preparedness and response;

(g) improve multisystem approaches to promote and protect healthy diets and care and practices for optimal growth and development, including for school-age children;

(h) generate evidence relating to the impact of climate change on children's health and the behavioural determinants of health – both protective and harmful – and on breastfeeding, infant feeding practices and the nutritional status of children and adolescents;

(i) provide advocacy and policy support to promote and protect good infant and young child feeding practices and nurturing care;

(j) partner with private stakeholders, including academia, to update food regulations and policies to improve diets and the food environment, including wider food fortification and micronutrient supplementation (especially iron and folic acid supplementation for women and girls).

Learning and skills for children and young people

24. This component will further the right of every child to learn and gain foundational skills at school. Under this programme, more children and young people will be able to access relevant learning, especially out-of-school children, children who have missed one year of pre-primary education, and girls who have not transitioned from primary to secondary school. The Government will be supported to address foundational literacy and numeracy skills in primary education and skills for life and work, in line with Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 8.

25. The programme aligns with UNSDCF priorities 1 and 2; the National Education Strategy for Iraq 2022–2031; the National Statement of Commitment for the 2022 Transforming Education Summit; the 2030 National Youth Vision; and the MENA regional accelerator on learning to earning. It will be delivered in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and other line ministries, United Nations entities, NGOs, CSOs and beneficiaries. The programme will have a continued focus on advocating for the right of all children to education, including girls, internally displaced children and refugees, children with disabilities and children lacking civil documentation.

26. Other country programme interventions will include:

(a) working with national and subnational partners to build capacity on data generation and analysis, including the Education Management Information System and a national learning assessment system for Grades 4–8;

(b) demonstrating how sector coordination and school-based management can improve inclusive learning and promote equality between girls and boys;

(c) taking part in policy dialogue, advocacy and evidence generation on flexible alternative education pathways for out-of-school children.

27. The above interventions will address the multilayered challenges of access, quality and equity of skills development and participation at all levels, as well as enhance the capacity of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and other duty bearers to better prepare children and young people for equitable civic engagement and meaningful participation.

Child protection

28. This programme component aims to reduce the risk of children and women being exposed to violence (at home, school and online), exploitation, abuse and neglect, and harmful practices, including child marriage among girls, to attain targets 5.3, 16.2 and 17.18 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The programme will include social norm change strategies, sector-specific interventions and referrals and links to other sectors.

29. The programme is in line with the National Child Protection Policy, UNSDCF priorities 1 and 4, and the 2015 concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It will also support the Government in implementing the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism Action Plan and the Global Framework for United Nations Support on Syria/Iraq Third Country National Returnees.

30. Working with the Ministries of Planning, Interior, Labour and Social Affairs, Justice and other ministries; the Child Welfare Commission; the United Nations; IFIs; NGOs; CSOs; academia; and beneficiaries, the programme will:

(a) strengthen the child protection workforce by modelling community structures for scale-up, including the child welfare directorates of the governorates with their child protection units;

(b) provide evidence-informed work models for the child protection workforce and allied front-line workers to improve the quality of services, including intersectoral case management and referral mechanisms;

(c) strengthen digital information management to enable data generation, collection and analysis to inform reporting on child rights and improve the quality of case management and advocacy, including through the use of information management systems for child protection and gender-based violence;

(d) support digital birth registration and access to national identification documents for children in vulnerable situations;

(e) accelerate efforts to scale up interventions to attain targets 5.3, 16.2 and 17.18 of the Sustainable Development Goals and advocate for justice between boys and girls.

31. UNICEF will support the Government in applying disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness by:

(a) supporting nationally owned child protection coordination mechanisms to address child protection;

(b) supporting the implementation of the Global Framework for United Nations Support on Syria/Iraq Third Country National Returnees, with a focus on the special needs of children;

(c) working with the Higher Judicial Council, the Ministry of Migration and Displacement and the Office of the National Security Advisor to demonstrate and advocate for international standards and evidence-informed interventions for north-east Syria returnees, IDPs, Syrian refugees and other groups in vulnerable situations.

Water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental sustainability

32. This programme component aims to ensure that more children, young people and caregivers – especially the most vulnerable – will have equitable and inclusive access to, and use, safe, sustainable and affordable WASH services (including in institutions) and live in a safe environment. This component will contribute to the achievement of UNSDCF priorities 1 and 3 and the child-related targets of Sustainable Development Goals 6, 11 and 13. The component is in line with the national road map for a sustainable and inclusive water management action plan, as well as the MENA accelerator on climate change and water scarcity. It will support the “Water Convention”, which the Government acceded to in 2023, and the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action, which was signed in 2023. To achieve these outcomes, UNICEF will work with the Prime Minister’s Advisory Commission on Climate Change, Water Scarcity and Renewable Energy, the Ministries of Construction, Housing, Municipalities and Public Works; Water Resources; and Environment; line ministries, United Nations entities, NGOs, IFIs and beneficiaries, especially young people.

33. Informed by the UNICEF 2023 Climate Landscape Analysis for Children and the principles of disaster risk reduction, UNICEF will support the Government and partners to:

(a) generate evidence on the impacts of climate and environmental hazards on children and young people, and use the evidence to inform policies and demonstrate cost-effective models for scale-up;

(b) address the scarcity of water for human consumption through efficient and effective planning and budgeting, innovation and partnerships with the private sector;

(c) demonstrate climate-resilient WASH services in schools, learning centres and health-care facilities, with a focus on meeting the needs of girls, in particular, and employing renewable energy options;

(d) empower young people and communities as agents of change to mitigate and adapt to climate change;

(e) promote the greening of WASH services related to children, including in UNICEF programmes and operations.

Social inclusion

34. By 2029, systems will be strengthened to improve the coverage, adequacy, integration, funding, inclusivity and shock-responsiveness of social protection interventions, including social assistance. This component is in line with UNSDCF priorities 1, 2 and 4, and the child-related targets of Sustainable Development Goal 1. It will be carried out in partnership with line ministries, United Nations entities, multilateral and bilateral development partners, NGOs, civil society, academia and beneficiaries.

35. The programme will be grounded in a rights-based legal and policy framework. It will aim to cooperate with the child protection, health, nutrition and education sectors to improve the allocation of resources for children and to help the most vulnerable children and their families secure access to essential services through social protection schemes. Social protection systems will be strengthened by:

(a) advancing evidence-informed decision-making and the digitization of social safety net information management systems;

(b) building the capacity of national statistical counterparts, the social welfare workforce and social protection agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of social protection schemes;

(c) strengthening national social assistance programmes by providing technical advice and piloting innovative cash plus programmes to link cash with social services;

(d) supporting efforts to apply context-specific, shock-responsive social protection approaches to address the needs of children and families in vulnerable situations, particularly girls, children with disabilities, out-of-school children, individuals impacted by climate-related events, IDPs, and returnees and refugees;

(e) advocating for international best practices to reduce multidimensional child poverty.

36. UNICEF will participate in the government's budgeting process to inform social sector allocations and help to enhance the effectiveness of public spending by improving the government's capacity for planning and monitoring, particularly of child-relevant expenditure. To address local governance challenges, UNICEF will strengthen the capacity of local government officials on child-responsive budgeting and scaling up inclusive social protection interventions.

37. Working with the Government and other partners, UNICEF will help to create tools and approaches to improve institutional preparedness, partner coordination and response capacity for deploying humanitarian cash transfers.

Programme effectiveness

38. This component will support cross-sectoral priorities that promote programme efficiency and effectiveness through strategic and results-based design, coordination, planning, monitoring, learning, evaluation, financing and management. External advocacy, partnerships and communication will be included to support the UNICEF mandate to advocate for child rights.

39. Social and behaviour change interventions will adopt an integrated approach, ensuring consistent messaging across families and communities. Positive behaviours and practices, including in health, education, child protection and WASH, will be addressed through a human-centered lens, leveraging partnerships, including with caregivers. A community engagement strategy will be designed to develop and

implement social and behaviour change initiatives and will involve young people, women’s organizations and other key stakeholders.

40. Programme effectiveness will foster synergies across all five country programme components to advance integrated approaches and accelerate results. It will also support the Government’s disaster risk reduction efforts and coordinate responses for groups in vulnerable situations across the country.

Summary budget table^a

<i>Programme component</i>	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
	<i>Regular resources</i>	<i>Other resources</i>	<i>Total</i>
Child survival and development	400	24 840	25 240
Learning and skills for children and young people	400	49 140	49 540
Child protection	400	25 920	26 320
Water, sanitation and hygiene and environmental sustainability	400	48 600	49 000
Social inclusion	190	11 232	11 422
Programme effectiveness	5 920	25 272	31 192
Total	7 710	185 004	192 714

^a The other resources (emergency) requirement for 2025–2029 is estimated at \$247 million.

Programme and risk management

41. This country programme document outlines UNICEF contributions to the National Development Plan, 2024–2028, as part of the overall results framework of the UNSDCF, and serves as the primary unit of accountability to the Executive Board for the alignment of results and resources assigned to the programme at the country level. Accountabilities of managers at the country, regional and headquarters levels to country programmes are prescribed in the organization’s programme and operations policies and procedures.

42. UNICEF will coordinate across the United Nations system on the harmonized approach to cash transfers, strengthening accountability to affected populations and the implementation of measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.

43. UNICEF will support national and local authorities to strengthen contingency planning and emergency preparedness and response. UNICEF will continue to meet all minimum preparedness standards, including business continuity. The organization will continue to strengthen the capacity of local actors to link development and humanitarian programming with peacebuilding and social cohesion efforts and engage in disaster risk reduction and deliver on the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action when required.

44. UNICEF will continue to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations through its governance and management system, its stewardship of financial resources and its management of programmatic risks. Key risks identified include the impact of global and regional instability, and shrinking and unpredictable resource allocations for the country programme. The country programme will “do no

harm” in all its operations, including in actions taken to safeguard children from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Monitoring, learning and evaluation

45. The Ministry of Planning will coordinate planning, implementation and monitoring of the country programme with line ministries and departments responsible for implementation and management of programme components at the national and decentralized levels. Partnerships will be reinforced with academia, the private sector and CSOs to enhance the generation, analysis and use of knowledge and evidence for child rights monitoring.

46. Joint monitoring activities and programme reviews will be organized with the Government and other partners to examine progress, with a focus on systemic and outcome-level change.

47. While continuing to build the evaluation capacity of partners, UNICEF will carry out independent evaluations of programmes, including joint evaluations with other United Nations agencies, to support learning, strengthen accountability and inform national policies and programmes.

Annex

Results and resources framework

Iraq – UNICEF country programme of cooperation, March 2025–December 2029

Convention on the Rights of the Child: Articles 1–40
National priorities: Sustainable Development Goals 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10; and National Development Plan 2024–2028
United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) outcomes involving UNICEF: Outcomes 1 to 4
Related UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 Goal Areas: 1 to 5

UNSDCF outcomes	UNICEF outcomes	Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)	Means of verification	Indicative country programme outputs	Major partners, partnership frameworks	Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)		
						RR	OR	Total
Outcome 1: By 2029, people in Iraq, particularly women, girls, children, youth, and groups in vulnerable situations, benefit from improved access to high-quality, inclusive, accessible, and equitable social services and a functional, responsive, and rights-based social protection system.	1. Young children, adolescents, women and caregivers have equitable access to and utilize quality and inclusive primary healthcare, nutritious diets, essential medicines and supplies and nurturing practices	Percentage of children vaccinated against measles B: 88% T: 95%	World Health Organization/United Nations Children’s Fund (WHO/UNICEF) Estimates of National Immunization Coverage, Multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS), Health Management Information System (HMIS)	1.1 National and subnational health systems are effectively governed and led to adequately finance, plan and implement evidence-informed health and nutrition interventions. 1.2. The primary health-care system is strengthened to deliver quality, integrated, high-impact health and nutrition interventions to reduce newborn, child and maternal	Ministries of Health and Education; WHO, World Food Programme, United Nations Population Fund, CSOs.	400	24 840	25 240
		Percentage of births attended by skilled birth attendants (public and private facilities) B: 78% T: 95%	MICS, HMIS					

<i>UNSDCF outcomes</i>	<i>UNICEF outcomes</i>	<i>Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)</i>	<i>Means of verification</i>	<i>Indicative country programme outputs</i>	<i>Major partners, partnership frameworks</i>	<i>Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
						<i>RR</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Total</i>
		Percentage of children (aged 6–23 months) who have access to minimum dietary diversity B: 45% T: 55%	MICS	ill health, deaths and stillbirths. 1.3. Multisectoral approaches are adopted to provide and promote integrated essential healthcare services, diets, nutrition services and practices.				
Outcome 1 and Outcome 2: By 2029, people in Iraq, particularly women, girls, youth, and groups in vulnerable situations, benefit from more resilient livelihoods and decent work opportunities resulting from a more diversified, inclusive, sustainable, green, and equitable economic development.	2. Children and young people have access to inclusive, equitable and relevant quality learning opportunities, allowing them to learn, acquire skills for the future and to participate.	<i>Participation rate in organized learning:</i> Percentage of children attending an early childhood education programme, or primary education (adjusted net attendance ratio), who are one year younger than the official primary school entry age at the beginning of the school year. B: 32.0% Female: 31.8% Male: 32.1% (MICS 2018) T: 41.5% Female: 41.5% Male: 41.5%	MICS	2.1. National institutional capacity at all levels has enhanced governance to plan, budget, finance, utilize evidence and coordinate inclusive formal, non-formal and early learning services. 2.2. The strengthened education system delivers equitable, inclusive quality education for children's acquisition of foundational and transferable skills in formal and non-	Ministry of Education	400	49 140	49 540

<i>UNSDCF outcomes</i>	<i>UNICEF outcomes</i>	<i>Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)</i>	<i>Means of verification</i>	<i>Indicative country programme outputs</i>	<i>Major partners, partnership frameworks</i>	<i>Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
						<i>RR</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Total</i>
		<p>Out-of-school rate for girls and boys of (a) primary school age, and (b) lower secondary school age.</p> <p>B: Primary: All: 8.2% Girls: 9% Boys: 7% (MICS 2018) Lower secondary: All: 21.5% Girls: 28% Boys: 15% (MICS 2018)</p> <p>T: Primary: All: 3% Girls: 3% Boys: 3% Lower secondary: All: 17% Girls: 22% Boys: 12%</p>	<p>MICS Education Management Information System</p>	<p>formal settings, and early childhood education for their meaningful participation in their community and society.</p> <p>2.3. Children and young people access equitable, multiple quality learning opportunities and flexible education pathways in formal, non-formal education and early childhood education</p> <p>2.4. Young people are empowered with skills for life and work, and with opportunities for economic and social inclusion</p>				
		<p>Proportion of children in Grade 4 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics, (disaggregated by sex, age, disability status and governorate)</p>	<p>National Learning Assessment Report</p>					

UNSDCF outcomes	UNICEF outcomes	Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)	Means of verification	Indicative country programme outputs	Major partners, partnership frameworks	Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)		
						RR	OR	Total
		B: 39.5% (2019) T: 45%						
		Percentage of young people not in formal/informal education, employment or training B: All: 37% Female: 52% Male: 22% T: All: 30% Female: 45% Male: 20%	Iraq Labour Force Survey					
Outcome 4: By 2029, people in Iraq, particularly women, girls, youth, and groups in vulnerable situations, benefit from transparent, accountable, inclusive, and effective governance in institutions that enhance peace, the rule of law, and human rights.	3. Girls, boys and women in Iraq, particularly the most vulnerable and those at risk of or exposed to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect, are protected in accordance with international standards.	Percentage of mothers (or primary caregivers) who think that physical punishment is necessary to raise/educate children, by location/geography B: 39% T: 35%	MICS	3.1 Laws and relevant policies protecting child rights are in place for strengthening systems, institutions, governance and budget allocations	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Child Welfare Commission, Directorates of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, High Judicial Council NGOs	400	25 920	26 320
		Percentage of women (aged 20–24 years) who were first married (a) before age 15 years (b) before age 18 years	MICS Iraqi Women Integrated Social and Health Survey	3.2. Social service workforce is strengthened 3.3 Protective environment is in place for children and women				

UNSDCF outcomes	UNICEF outcomes	Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)	Means of verification	Indicative country programme outputs	Major partners, partnership frameworks	Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)		
						RR	OR	Total
		<p>B: 25% (under 18 years of age) 5.2% (under 15 years of age)</p> <p>T: 23% (under 18 years of age) 4% (under 15 years of age)</p>						
		<p>Percentage of girls and boys aged 15 to 17 years who have ever experienced any sexual violence and sought help from a professional</p> <p>B: 72.5% T: 69%</p>	MICS					
Outcome 3: By 2029, people in Iraq, particularly women, girls, youth, and groups in vulnerable situations, live in a clean, healthy, safe, and resilient environment and have increased resilience to climate change	4. Children, young people and caregivers, especially the most vulnerable, have equitable and inclusive access to and use sustainable, safe, and affordable WASH services (including in institutions) and live in a safe and	<p>Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services</p> <p>B: 60% T: 80%</p>	<p>Environmental survey for water and sanitation services</p> <p>MICS</p> <p>WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP)</p>	<p>4.1. National water sector and institutions are better positioned to ensure universal access to safe water services</p> <p>4.2. National and local sanitation service networks are empowered to ensure universal access to safe and inclusive sanitation services</p>	<p>Council of Ministers Secretariat, Ministries of Planning; Finance; and Construction, Housing, Municipalities and Public Works; private sector, academic institutions, CSOs</p>	400	48 600	49 000
		<p>Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services, including a hand-</p>	<p>Environmental survey for water and sanitation services</p> <p>MICSJMP</p>					

UNSDCF outcomes	UNICEF outcomes	Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)	Means of verification	Indicative country programme outputs	Major partners, partnership frameworks	Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)		
						RR	OR	Total
impacts and disaster risks.	clean environment.	washing facility with soap and water B: 37% T: 60%		4.3. Climate risk-informed and child-sensitive policies and programmes are implemented				
		Number of child-sensitive climate policies and programmes developed, financed and implemented at national and subnational levels B: 0 T: 3	Government documents, official statements, programme documents					
Outcomes 1, 2 and 4	5. Most children and young people in Iraq, particularly the most vulnerable children, benefit from inclusive, integrated, shock-responsive and adequately funded social protection interventions, including social assistance.	Extent to which measurement, analysis or policy advice has informed policies and programmes to reduce child poverty B: 2 (2023) T: 3	Government documents, official statements, programme documents	5.1. Reformed social protection policies, laws and strategies have strengthened social safety nets 5.2. Key national and subnational stakeholders improve their capacity to routinely generate, utilize and disseminate high-quality data and evidence	Ministries of Planning; Labour and Social Affairs; and Finance, Central Statistical Office	190	11 232	11 422
	6. The country programme is efficiently designed, coordinated, managed and	Percentage of management and programme indicators on track B: N/A	Internal reports	6.1 Effective implementation and coordination programmes, change strategies and enablers	Ministry of Planning	5 920	25 272	31 192

<i>UNSDCF outcomes</i>	<i>UNICEF outcomes</i>	<i>Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)</i>	<i>Means of verification</i>	<i>Indicative country programme outputs</i>	<i>Major partners, partnership frameworks</i>	<i>Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
						<i>RR</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Total</i>
	supported to meet quality standards in achieving results for children and young people.	T: 100%						
Total resources						7 710	185 004	192 714