

# **ACCESSING SOCIAL PROTECTION IN IRAQ**

## **MAPPING OF PROGRAMS AND ANALYSIS OF BARRIERS**

April 2023

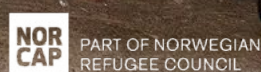
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# ACRONYMS

<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GOI</b>	Government of Iraq
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IQD</b>	Iraqi Dinar
<b>ISIL</b>	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>KRG</b>	Kurdistan Regional Government
<b>KRI</b>	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
<b>MOE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MOF</b>	Ministry of Finance
<b>MOLSA</b>	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
<b>MOMD</b>	Ministry of Migration and Displacement
<b>MOP</b>	Ministry of Planning
<b>MOT</b>	Ministry of Trade
<b>MSMES</b>	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
<b>NGOS</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>PDS</b>	Public Distribution System
<b>PWDS</b>	People with Disabilities
<b>SP</b>	Social Protection
<b>SPSF</b>	Social Protection Strategic Framework
<b>SSN</b>	Social Safety Net
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNOCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>USD</b>	United State Dollar
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

**Social protection programmes play a key role in addressing poverty, inequality, and vulnerability in societies.** In Iraq, a range of social protection initiatives have been implemented to support diverse segments of the population, including women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and displaced persons. However, despite these efforts, many individuals and households continue to face challenges in accessing and benefiting from these programmes.

**This research aims to explore the experiences and perceptions of communities and key informants involved in social protection programmes in Iraq.** Through a comprehensive analysis of their insights and perception, the study seeks to identify the key challenges and barriers faced by different population groups in accessing these programmes. The findings of this research will **help policymakers and stakeholders to better understand the issues faced by the intended beneficiaries** and inform the development of more effective, inclusive, and accessible social protection interventions.

The research examines **various aspects of social protection programmes**, including eligibility criteria, outreach efforts, registration processes, the capacity of human resources, and the barriers faced by specific vulnerable groups. Through a detailed exploration of these dimensions, this study **highlights the key areas for improvement** and provides recommendations for **enhancing the overall effectiveness of social protection initiatives** in Iraq. Some of the central themes emerging from the analysis include the need for increased financial support, improved infrastructure and services, capacity building, and greater collaboration between government and organisations.

The recommendations provided by participants and key informants emphasise **a comprehensive approach to strengthening social protection programmes**. By focusing on financial support, capacity building, expanded coverage, and targeted support for vulnerable groups, as well as improvements in government involvement, infrastructure, digital access, and policy measures, this research contributes to the ongoing efforts to enhance the effectiveness and reach of social protection initiatives in Iraq.



## 2. CONTEXT

For an extended period, Iraq has undergone various forms of internal and external strife, significantly impacting the nation's social and economic welfare. The country has experienced a series of conflicts. The most recent conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) resulted in a **large-scale displacement**, with more than 6 million Iraqis displaced at the height of the military operation<sup>1</sup> internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 2015 and nearly 5 million<sup>2</sup> have returned to date. Additionally, the Syrian conflict has exerted further strain on Iraq, as the nation is **hosting approximately 250,000 Syrian refugees**, predominantly in the Kurdistan Region. Concurrently, there was a **substantial surge in humanitarian assistance**, primarily due to the conflict from 2014 to 2017. *The Humanitarian Response Plan* for 2022 estimated that over 2.5 million<sup>3</sup> people, including 1.1 million<sup>4</sup> children, continue to need humanitarian assistance. Households and displaced individuals displaced outside of camps, as well as recent returnees and host communities, continue to **struggle with disruptions to their daily lives** caused by the conflict. These groups require sustained support to help them overcome the challenges they face and rebuild their livelihoods.

Although the intensity of conflicts has notably diminished and Iraq is widely considered to be phasing out from the humanitarian response, **the country remains at a very high risk of humanitarian crises**.<sup>5</sup> According to IOM, **Iraq is facing three main overlapping crises concurrently**. Years of violent conflict have led to protracted displacement and significant humanitarian challenges; political challenges and unrest compounded by regional tensions, including on natural resources, has heightened fragility; COVID-19 has compounded these issues exacerbating accumulated challenges and acting as a threat multiplier. At the same time, armed groups and UN-sanctioned groups, namely ISIL and affiliated groups, are reportedly still operating in Iraq.<sup>6</sup>

**The impact of COVID-19** (where around 2.5 million people affected and resulted 25,375 recorded death cases) **affected the economy and livelihoods**, increasing the poverty rate to 25% and unemployment to 14.9%. While the immediate impact of COVID-19 seems to be stabilising and oil prices have recovered, long-term economic challenges remain. Moreover, Iraq has been ranked by the United Nations as **the country fifth most vulnerable to climate change risks in the world** and the effects are already evident. Iraq is also experiencing a **devaluation of the local currency**, which directly affects imports and the inflation of prices in the market. Together with the direct impact on the prices of basic commodities since the war in Ukraine started, the purchasing power of the population has been diminished.

<sup>1</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-humanitarian-bulletin-july-2021>

<sup>2</sup> <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/>

<sup>3</sup> [UNOCHA 2022: Humanitarian Response Plan](#)

<sup>4</sup> [UNICEF Iraq Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2](#)

<sup>5</sup> Iraq is ranked 18 out of 191 on the INFORM Risk Index.

<sup>6</sup> [https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1481/files/appeal/pdf/Iraq\\_Crisis\\_Response\\_Plan\\_20222023\\_summary.pdf](https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1481/files/appeal/pdf/Iraq_Crisis_Response_Plan_20222023_summary.pdf)

According to the World Bank, **poverty in Iraq has been significantly impacted by the dual crises of 2014**, which involved the rise of ISIL and the collapse of oil prices. Prior to these events, Iraq had been making progress in reducing poverty rates, which had fallen from 22.4% in 2007 to 18.9% in 2012. However, the dual crises led to a sharp increase in poverty, with the rate reaching 22.5% in 2014. By 2017-18, the poverty rate had slightly improved to 20.0%, but living standards were still below 2012 levels.<sup>7</sup> The recently released data from the WFP on poverty rates in Iraq shows a decline in poverty levels. In 2021, the poverty rate dropped to 24.8 %, a decrease of 6.9 % compared to the 31.7 % rate recorded in 2020.<sup>8</sup>

**While the Iraqi economy is showing signs of improvement, significant challenges still need to be addressed.** According to IMF and World Bank data, the high unemployment rate and dominance of the state in the labour market are areas that need **improvement to support the growth of the private sector**. Additionally, the reliance of Iraq's budget on oil prices and the increase in inflation suggests that the markets in Iraq may not be as stable and robust as desired. The Iraqi government, with international partners such as UN and World Bank, is working on implementing reforms and attracting investment **to secure the long-term stability and growth-of-the-economy**.

Both the Government of Iraq (GoI) and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) have undergone **planning and revision exercises to improve the efficacy and reach** of social safety net programmes in the last 10 years; though, the domestic political and administrative division between the Government of Iraq (GoI) in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Erbil has resulted in **a dual administrative system for social protection programming**. Governance structures have also created siloed approaches to engagement with humanitarian and development actors with limited coordination between administrative areas.

**Government programmes (both GoI and KRG) make a major contribution to family income in Iraq.** Overall, non-labour income accounts for 32% of the total income for Iraqi families. For households in the poorest income decile, it is as high as 51% of total family income.<sup>9</sup> In the report released by the *Social Protection Authority* of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) in third quarter of 2022, it was disclosed that **1.5 million households in Iraq benefited from social assistance**. This figure represents 17.2% of the country's overall population, also considering the universal nature of the Public Distribution System (PDS), which provides the vast majority of Iraq's citizens with monthly subsidised food items,<sup>10</sup> showing **a high degree of reliance on government support**. Substantial dependence on government assistance requires collaborative efforts to address economic fragility, alleviate poverty, and foster the development of robust systems and social cohesion.

The humanitarian focus in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and the GoI is **transitioning from a solely humanitarian response to a development-oriented approach**, emphasising the management and support of IDPs in camps and informal sites. Acknowledging that underdevelopment issues underlie ongoing needs, **the strategy now centres on development initiatives**. UNHCR and IOM collaborate with partners and authorities in KRI and GoI to coordinate efforts, make strategic decisions, and advocate for the displaced population. The GoI and the UN have launched the *UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)*<sup>11</sup> to advance this approach, transferring humanitarian operations to the government and ensuring the provision of essential services to conflict-affected populations. **The objective is to secure dignified, safe, and voluntary durable solutions for displacement in Iraq.**<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> [World Bank 2020: Iraq's Universal Public Distribution System Utilization and Impacts During Displacement](#)

<sup>8</sup> [WFP Iraq: Country Brief - January 2023](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Livani & Graham, 2018: Do-social-protection-programs-improve-life-satisfaction](#)

<sup>10</sup> [WFP Annual Country Report: 2021](#)

<sup>11</sup> The UNSDCF is a strategic framework guiding UN development assistance, focusing on priority areas such as durable solutions for displacement, social cohesion, economy, governance, and the environment to support sustainable development in a country.

<sup>12</sup> UNOCHA: Iraq Humanitarian Transition Overview 2023

The following tables present an overview of the social protection programs offered by both GoI and KRG. These programs cover a range of services, targeting different demographics in the population, from the poor and vulnerable to individuals with disabilities, to older people, and more. Various delivery mechanisms are employed to reach the beneficiaries, including electronic smart cards, in-kind contributions, and bank transfers. The reach of these programs varies widely, from initiatives serving a small group of individuals to those affecting millions. For instance, the Social Safety Net (SSN) Programme by the GoI reaches approximately 9 million people. Conversely, the Livelihood Support Programmes target a more specific group, having provided vocational training to 51 individuals and promoting 15,000 loans to beneficiaries. Please refer to the tables for detailed information about each programme.

**Table 1: The summary of social protection programmes in Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government**

GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ						
No.	Programmes	Actor/Type	Targeted Population	Criteria	Delivery Mechanism	Reached (Individuals)
1	Social Safety Net (SSN) Programme	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and Ministry of Planning	1.5 million Iraqi households in poverty	Households with consumption levels below the poverty line; targeted vulnerable groups	Cash transfer through electronic smart cards	9 million people (1.5 million households)
2	Grants for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)	MoLSA	Caregivers of Persons with Disabilities	Persons with Disabilities; based on disability assessment carried out by MoH	Monthly cash benefit to caregivers through electronic smart cards	149,700 caregivers
3	Public Distribution System (PDS)	Ministry of Trade (MoT)	Universal	Nearly universal coverage includes most of Iraq's population	In-kind	Over 40 million people
4	Livelihood Support Programmes	MoLSA	Youth and jobseekers	Eligible persons, such as job-seeking youth seeking training and engagement in job markets	Vocational training, loans for MSMEs, and business incubator loans	51 <sup>13</sup> individuals participated in vocational training/ 15,000 loans were promoted to beneficiaries
5	State Employees' Pension System	MoLSA and Ministry of Finance (MoF)	State and public sector employees	State and public sector employees	Bank Transfers	4,610,666 <sup>14</sup>
6	Social Security for workers	MoLSA and MoF	Workers in Private, cooperative, and mixed sectors	Work-related injuries Sickness or illness benefits, Survivor benefits, End-of-service benefits (Severance pay) and Pension benefits	Direct cash	38% of the total labour force
7	Conditional Cash Transfer - Pilot Programme	MoLSA, UNICEF, and World Bank (WB)	Households with children under 5 years and school students aged 10-14 years in Al Sadr	Al Sadr households with kids <5yrs & students 10-14yrs, from SSN database, meeting health/education criteria	Cash transfer (top-up to the SSN benefit)	2,000 households

<sup>13</sup> MOLSA annual report 2021

<sup>14</sup> Based on the most recent information released by the Ministry of Finance as of December 31, 2017.

8	"1 million food baskets for the poor" initiative	Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD)	Poor and vulnerable households in Iraq	Poor and vulnerable households in Iraq	In-kind	708,360 households
9	Minha emergency grant	The Higher Committee for Health and National Safety	Iraqi citizens aged 18-55 (for women) and 18-66 (for men) with no government salary, pensions, or benefits	Iraqi citizens aged 18-55 (for women) and 18-66 (for men) with no government salary, pensions, or benefits	One-time cash payment through an internet-based application	600,000 households (from 12-13 million eligible)

## KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

No.	Programmes	Actor/Type	Targeted Population	Criteria	Delivery Mechanism	Reached (Individuals)
1	Social Safety Net Programme	MoLSA, MoP	12 categories of PwDs, 9 vulnerable groups	Targets PwDs (Persons with Disabilities) due to financial constraints	Electronic Smart Cards	81,000 PwDs
2	Public Distribution System	MoT (at the GoI level)	Universal, but aims to target vulnerable households	Universal, but the government is considering reform to target vulnerable and food-insecure households	In-kind through food ration agents	Over 40 million people
3	Social Security Scheme (Private Sector)	MoLSA	Private sector workers	Covers old age, disability, survivorship, health, and work injury for private sector employees	Monthly contributions and benefits through MoLSA	50% of the labour force <sup>15</sup>
4	Pension (Public Sector)	MoF	Public sector employees	Covers public sector employees	Bank Transfers	50% of people aged 65 and above <sup>16</sup>
5	COVID-19 Support	MoLSA	Vulnerable households	In-kind support (food and fuel) for self-identified vulnerable households	In-kind support (food and fuel) through MoLSA	N/A
6	Social Benefit for Victims of Wars	MoLSA	Civilian victims of war and conflict	Support for the vulnerable civilian population affected by war and conflict	Electronic Smart Cards	N/A
7	Vocational Training Programmes	Directorate of Vocational Training under MoLSA	Unemployed persons, PwDs	Targets unemployed persons and PwDs for skill development and labour market integration	In-person training sessions under MoLSA	2,216 training sessions in 2021
8	Small Loans for Entrepreneurs	MoLSA	Entrepreneurs aged 15-45	Targets entrepreneurs aged 15-45 to develop existing or start new businesses (discontinued)	Financial support through MoLSA (discontinued)	N/A

<sup>15</sup> [Government of Kurdistan \(2016\). Social Protection Strategic Framework](#)

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*





## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted from January to April 2023, led by Action Against Hunger through *CashCap* support and with the collaboration of the *Iraq Cash Forum*. The following are the **list of partners** supported this research with data collection:

1. Action Against Hunger (ACF)
2. People in Need (PIN)
3. Sorouh for Sustainable Development Foundation (SSDF),
4. Women Empowerment Organization (WEO)
5. Aid Gate Organization (AGO)
6. Youth Activity Organisation (YAO)

Throughout the research period, the team undertook **a series of activities to gather and analyse data, generate reports, and disseminate findings**. In January, a Secondary Data Review was conducted to gather existing information. In February, the team designed tools and provided orientation sessions to data enumerators for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). March was dedicated to collect data, analysing, and initiating report writing. April involved revising and refining the report, ensuring its coherence and accuracy. Finally, the team disseminated the findings to the coordination system in Iraq, sharing the study's outcomes and recommendations with relevant stakeholders.

### 3.1. Objective

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The purpose of this study is **to identify the obstacles that hinder the enrolment of humanitarian caseloads** into government social protection schemes.

### 3.2. Research questions

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The primary research questions address **two key aspects**:

- What are Social Protection Schemes currently in place in Iraq?
- What are the principal barriers that prevent different population groups from benefiting from the various social protection programmes?

### 3.3. Research methods

The research methods consist of **two main stages**:

- **Secondary Data Review:** Examining the existing reports, articles, and Government websites was conducted to **compile relevant information**. The review encompassed studies from international organisations, researchers and governmental reports.
- **Primary Data Collection:** FGDs with community members in locations with ongoing humanitarian interventions served as the primary data collection method. Participants' demographic characteristics included internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, host communities, female-headed households, the elderly, people with disabilities, and members of different ethnic groups. In addition to the **focus group discussions, KIIs were carried out** with social protection stakeholders, such as government officials at the governorate and district levels, and representatives from UN agencies. *Tables 2 and 3* display the number of FGDs by gender (Female and Male) and location, as well as the number and the type of stakeholders for KIIs in each governorate. **Data collection** has been carried out by ACF in Duhok and Ninewa, PIN in Ninewa and Salah Al-Din, SSDF in Anbar, WEO in Ninewa, AGO in Salah Al-Din and Anbar, finally, YAO in Anbar governorate.

**Table 2: No. of KII by Governorate**

Governorates	No. of KII	Stakeholders type
Anbar	10	Government
Salah al-Din	9	Government
Ninewa	13	Government
National	5	Social Protection Actors
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	

**Table 3: KII details**

Position	Location	Ministry	Level
Department of Women's Empowerment	Anbar	MoLSA	Governorate
Planning and Follow-up Section	Anbar	MoT	Governorate
Follow-up and evaluate director	Anbar	MoT	Governorate
Director of PDS issuance	Anbar	MoT	Governorate
Director of the Vocational Training Center	Anbar	MoLSA	Governorate
Legal adviser	Anbar	MoLSA	Governorate
Assistant of PDS Manager	Ramadi	MoT	District
Chairman of the Social Welfare Committee	Falluja	MoLSA	District
PDS Manager	Falluja	MoT	District
Director of Youth and Sports Forum	Falluja	MoS	District
Mayor	Balad	Mol	District
Director of the Social Welfare Department	Telafar	MoLSA	District
Director of the Youth Forum	Telafar	MoS	District
Organization Affairs Officer	Telafar	Mol	District
Director of the Foodstuff Department	Duhok	MoT	Governorate
Director of the Chamber of Commerce	Duhok	MoT	Governorate

Responsible for the Family Protection Department \ Social Welfare Department	Duhok	MoLSA	Governorate
Director of the Social Welfare Department	Salah Al-Din	MoLSA	Governorate
Social Welfare Officer	Salah Al-Din	MoLSA	Governorate
Director of the Youth and Sports Forum	Toz Khurmato	MoS	District
Head of the Nutrition Department in the Department of Commerce	Toz Khurmato	MoT	District
Mukhtar	Ba'aj	Mol	District
Mayor Office Manager	Ba'aj	Mol	District
Mayor	Hawija	Mol	District
Director of the Social Welfare Department	Hawija	MoLSA	District
Responsible for the Popular Teams Committee	Hawija	MoS	District
Male Research Officer	Ninewa	MoLSA	Governorate
Female Research Officer	Ninewa	MoLSA	Governorate
Administrative Assistant \ Department of Labor and Social Affairs	Ninewa	MoLSA	Governorate
Assistant Director \ Department of Immigration and Displacement	Ninewa	MoMD	Governorate

**Table 4:** No. Of FGDs by gender and location

	Al-Ba'aj	Falluja	Hatra	Ramadi	Sumel	Tuz Khurmato	Total
Female	4	1	3	3	3	3	<b>17</b>
Male	4	2	3	2	2	3	<b>16</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>33</b>

### 3.4. Study constraints

- **Geographical limitations:** Due to the vastness of Iraq and the diversity of its regions, the study may not have been able to capture the complete range of experiences and perceptions related to social protection programmes across the country. As a result, **the findings may not be entirely generalizable to all regions and communities**, but rather prioritised locations of conflict-affected populations as recommended by UNOCHA.
- **Limited access to certain populations:** Some vulnerable populations, such as those living in hard-to-reach areas, may have been underrepresented in the study. This could have led to **an incomplete understanding of their specific needs and challenges** related to social protection programmes.
- **Sample size and selection bias:** The study's sample of key informants and community members may **not be large enough to capture the full range of experiences and perceptions**. Additionally, participants who agreed to participate in the study may have certain characteristics or experiences that **are not representative of the broader population** involved in social protection programmes.
- **Time constraints:** Due to the time constraints of the study, there may have been **limited opportunities to thoroughly validate and cross-check the data collected** from key informants and community members. This could potentially **affect the accuracy and reliability of the findings**, as inconsistencies or discrepancies in the data may not have been adequately addressed or resolved.

- **Inconsistencies in data quality:** Although data enumerators received training on the research tools and standard guidelines for data collection, **the quality of the data received in some instances did not meet the expected standards.** This could be attributed to a variety of factors, such as enumerator performance, respondents' comprehension of questions, or other external factors. ACF with support from MEAL department continuously cross-checked all forms submitted by enumerators to ensure correct information and data had been collected from FGDs and KIIIs.



## 4. SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES IN GOI

According to the governmental social protection actor, currently, **there is no national social protection strategy or policy guideline for the country that consolidates all programmes towards a key vision for the social protection sector.** Presently, social protection policies are represented by a set of programmes distinguished by a structure spread out among various ministries: the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), the Ministry of Trade (MoT), and the Ministry of Planning (MoP).

**In Federal Iraq, the social protection system focuses on five key areas:** Social Assistance, Health Insurance, Pension, Food Security, and Livelihood Support.<sup>17</sup> The GoI has been working to grow and enhance these policies by **joining forces with international organisations and development partners.** This has been demonstrated in the new EU-supported programme involving UNICEF, WFP, and ILO, which collaborates with the Iraqi government to **reform social protection and improve responses to socio-economic shocks.** The initiative aims to expand social protection, enhance GoI and KRG capacities, address social insurance and assistance gaps, and make schemes nutrition-sensitive while aligning safety nets with broader social protection systems.<sup>18</sup>

Analysing *Law No. 11 of the Social Protection in Iraq*, which was adopted in March 2014 **to provide financial and social support to individuals and families living below the poverty line**, reveals that it **strives to promote values of social solidarity and ensure psychological and material stability for those in need.**<sup>19</sup> To implement the law, the *Social Protection Authority* was established, which operates under the jurisdiction of MoLSA. The *Social Protection Authority* is composed of several departments and divisions and is responsible for providing **cash subsidies** to eligible individuals and families based on the number of family members. In addition, the authority offers **various social services**, including employment assistance, awareness programmes, capacity building to the labour force, education, and health services. The authority can form **committees and sub-committees** to review applications and make decisions. The *Social Protection Fund* is a legal entity associated with the *Social Protection Authority* and is overseen by a Board of Directors. Its revenue sources include GoI budget allocations, explained in *the below table*. The fund is responsible for **disbursing social assistance to individuals** in accordance with the law. Additionally, the Council of Ministers can allocate **a specific percentage of the fee and fine revenues** to the fund based on the Minister's proposal.

<sup>17</sup> [Oday S.Ali \(2012\) Towards an Effective Social Protection System in Iraq](#)

<sup>18</sup> ILO April 2021: [Leveraging Effective Response and Accelerating Reform](#)

<sup>19</sup> [LO: Law No. 11 of 2014 on Social Protection in Iraq](#)

**Table 5: Social Protection Fund and its revenue sources**

Association	Social Protection Authority
Oversight	Board of Directors
Revenue Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gol budget allocations</li> <li>- Subsidies</li> <li>- Grants</li> <li>- 50% of unclaimed estates</li> <li>- 1% of government company profits</li> <li>- 0.25% deductions from state employee and public servant salaries</li> <li>- Investment returns</li> <li>- 1% of tourism revenue</li> </ul>
Responsibilities	Disbursing social assistance to individuals in accordance with the law

## 4.1. The Social Safety Net (SSN)

*Social Safety Net (SSN)* is a **non-contributory programme aimed at assisting vulnerable groups who meet certain criteria and it used to be applied during crises, disasters, or wars**. It helps improve income-earning abilities and human capital accumulation, ultimately alleviating poverty.<sup>20</sup> The SSN was started by MoLSA in 2004 with **technical support and funding from USAID 2004** through a pilot exercise, and **in 2007 the World Bank** started to support the programme. The SSN programme relies on **proxy means-tested targeting methodology** to estimate poverty through consumption indicators, with unique weights assigned to each province according to context. **Households with consumption levels below the poverty line** are eligible beneficiaries and receive **monthly payments** at a minimum level pegged on par with the national poverty line.<sup>21</sup>

**There are two methods for enrolling in SSN programmes:** digital and paper-based registration. Upon completion of registration, beneficiary data is collected by the MoLSA and stored on their respective servers or devices. Stakeholders such as PDS office and MoLSA have reported that registration for new enrolments has been **closed since 2015 because of limited budget and economic crisis** affected the country and it is not clear if there are plans to increase the caseload. On another note, KIIs with stakeholders revealed that **no centralised information management system (MIS) or unified registry system** is currently in place. United Nations agencies, including UNICEF and WFP, are collaborating with the government (MoT and MoLSA) to improve the MIS and establish a single registry system. This proposed system is **expected to foster robust connections** among all ministries implementing social protection programmes and other key ministries, such as the Ministry of Interior, which oversees national identification cards. Streamlining these linkages is intended to alleviate restrictions and reduce the documentation necessary for enrolment in various programmes.

**Beneficiary data** will be transferred via a hard drive to the Ministry of Planning (MoP), where **a scoring system** will be applied to determine the eligibility of families for inclusion. The information pertaining to selected beneficiaries will then be shared with MoLSA for the **verification process**. Social workers subsequently conduct **household visits** to verify the details provided in the registration application and proceed with the distribution of benefits. MoLSA generally **updates beneficiary data annually** in April, which involves updating households' information and verifying their eligibility for benefit receipt.

<sup>20</sup> IDS December 2015: Social Protection and Safety Nets in Iraq

<sup>21</sup> UNICEF 2022: Mapping and Assessment of Social Protection Information Systems in Iraq

**Table 6: Social Safety Net programme details**

Aspect	Information															
Programme	Social Safety Net (SSN)															
Beneficiaries Covered	Approximately 1.5 million Iraqi households															
Target Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unemployed persons</li> <li>- Persons with Disabilities</li> <li>- Minor orphans</li> <li>- Married students</li> <li>- Families of inmates and missing people</li> <li>- Those unable to work due to old age or illnesses</li> <li>- Heads of families affected by terrorism</li> <li>- Widows and divorcees</li> <li>- Displaced populations</li> </ul>															
Law	Social Protection Law 11 (2014)															
Ministries Involved	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), Ministry of Planning (MoP)															
Responsibilities - MoLSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collection and verification of personal data</li> <li>Storage, hosting, and maintenance of data</li> <li>Communication with beneficiaries and managing enrolment</li> <li>Beneficiary management and keeping information up to date</li> </ul>															
Responsibilities - MOP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definition and updating of the National Poverty Line</li> <li>Estimation of household consumption</li> <li>Application of selection criteria for SSN through proxy means testing</li> </ul>															
Coverage and Benefits	Households below the poverty line and targeted groups receive monthly payments.															
Benefit Amount	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>No. of HH Members</th> <th>Female HH</th> <th>Male HH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>100,000 IQD</td> <td>100,000 IQD</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>150,000 IQD</td> <td>125,000 IQD</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>200,000 IQD</td> <td>150,000 IQD</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 or more</td> <td>225,000 IQD</td> <td>175,000 IQD</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	No. of HH Members	Female HH	Male HH	1	100,000 IQD	100,000 IQD	2	150,000 IQD	125,000 IQD	3	200,000 IQD	150,000 IQD	4 or more	225,000 IQD	175,000 IQD
No. of HH Members	Female HH	Male HH														
1	100,000 IQD	100,000 IQD														
2	150,000 IQD	125,000 IQD														
3	200,000 IQD	150,000 IQD														
4 or more	225,000 IQD	175,000 IQD														
Transfer Delivery	Every three months via electronic smart cards															
Targeting Mechanism	Proxy means testing (PMT) based on household characteristics and verified against MoLSA and MOP databases.															

## 4.2. Public Distribution System (PDS)

Iraq's *Public Distribution System (PDS)* is **one of the world's largest food subsidy programmes** managed by Ministry of Trade (MoT) funded by Iraqi government providing **six essential food commodities**, including wheat flour, rice, vegetable oil, sugar, pulses, and tomato paste (not covering 100% of the basket planned for Iraqi households). Most of Iraq's citizens are entitled to PDS assistance and receive their food assistance **based on the number of individuals in the household** through the programme's loosely fitting targeting criteria.<sup>22</sup> The selection criteria were put in place in 2006 by Iraqi government with support from WFP, allowed **to target each household having valid identity documents** ensuring that they are Iraqis living in the country. However, between 2017 and 2018, the Iraqi government decided to **exclude households who have employees receiving a monthly salary of approximately 2 million IQD** (equivalent to around \$1,400 USD) from the assistance. The KIs revealed that the targeting approach is primarily universal.

PDS distributions also **manage the market demand** for these items and **control essential food commodities' prices**.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Loosely-Fitting Targeting Criteria: Refers to a set of guidelines or conditions used to identify and select beneficiaries for a program, intervention, or assistance that are not very strict or precise. These criteria may be broad, inclusive, or vague, resulting in the potential inclusion of a wider range of individuals or groups than intended.

<sup>23</sup> Iraq Market Monitor Report: WFP 2022

**Table 7: The composition of the food ration**

PDS Item	Quantity per individual per month
Wheat Flour	9 Kg
Rice	3 Kg
Sugar	1 Kg
Vegetable Oil	1 Litre
Lentils	0.5 Kg
Tomato Paste	200-300g

Source: WFP Market Monitor 2022

The MoT is the responsible entity for the administration of the distribution of the food basket. The Ministry comprises **several public corporations** responsible for the production and procurement of the basket's components. The *Foodstuffs State Company*, *Grain Manufacturing Company*, and *Grain Trading Company* collaborate in **preparing the technical and administrative arrangements** necessary to ensure the comprehensive provision of the food basket for the distribution cycle prior to its rollout to agents and centres across all of the country's governorates and districts. MoT has adopted **a streamlined preparation procedure to deliver food items**, which is emphasised in its marketing strategy for the year.<sup>24</sup> In essence, the ministry is responsible for the complete supply chain management for the PDS.

To obtain a ration card in Iraq, as per the ministry's guidelines, the citizen must **visit the local ration distribution centre** and acquire **an application form** from a nearby photocopying office. With the assistance of an agent, the form should be filled out, including essential documents such as the unified national card or civil status identity for each family member, the residence card or confirmation from the local Mukhtar, and a copy of the old ration card is also required. Following this, the applicant must **sign a written pledge**, ensuring that no deceased individuals or travellers outside of Iraq are listed on the ration card. Upon completing the application, the individual will be given **an alternative voucher along with rations** starting the month after registration. The new ration card can be expected at the beginning of the subsequent year. **A fee of 1,000 IQD applies** for renewing the ration card while obtaining a replacement PDS card costs 10,000 IQD. The displaced population needs to go to **their areas of origin** to change their food ration agents and update their area of residence in the official records, which might expose them to risk if they don't prefer to return, according to PDS governorate office. Upon completing the process and obtaining the required letter, the displaced population can receive **a ration basket from agents** in their new geographical locations. However, they must first acquire and present **a letter from the Ministry of Migration and Displaced (MoMD)** confirming their displacement status. Subsequently, they should follow **the previously outlined process** to obtain a ration card and update their location information. Furthermore, research proves that the PDS has played a role in mitigating the welfare loss of forcibly displaced households following the wave of violence and displacement in 2014.<sup>25</sup> It was found that displaced households that received the PDS benefits were more food secure, less poor, and less vulnerable to poverty than displaced households that lost access to the PDS.<sup>26</sup>

**The PDS consumes 1.4 % of the GDP and covers almost the entire population.** The IMF consultation press release recommended that the PDS implement **a significant downsize** (and gradually phase it out) by limiting eligibility to those in the social security database (SSN) and using the savings to **augment the budget for targeted cash transfers** (SSN). Coverage of the latter should be expanded to include **all eligible households**

<sup>24</sup> [IRAQI NEWS Agency: Press Release 2023](#)

<sup>25</sup> Phadera et al. (2020) Iraq's Universal Public Distribution System Utilization and Impacts During Displacement

<sup>26</sup> Phadera et al. (2020) Iraq's Universal Public Distribution System Utilization and Impacts During Displacement  
\*A replacement voucher for a ration card is a substitute document issued when the original ration card is lost, damaged, or becomes obsolete. It's a temporary arrangement that allows families to continue receiving their entitled benefits until a new ration card is issued.



with regular updates of the population registry and the targeting criteria, including to avoid downsizing the PDS affecting the most vulnerable. The report also recommended introducing **automatic indexation of cash transfers to inflation** to preserve adequate protection on an ongoing basis.<sup>27</sup>

In 2020, WFP piloted an **electronic distribution platform** as part of a PDS modernisation programme, including assisting with the **biometric registration** of approximately 35,000 food-insecure Iraqis eligible for PDS assistance. The programme makes it **easier for displaced persons** to update their location information and collect rations in areas where they are currently sheltering.<sup>28</sup> Recently, the MoT announced that technical and oversight committees had **updated the data** for the ration card automation programme. Under the supervision of the *Undersecretary for Administrative Affairs and Public Administrations*, the technical committees installed the necessary **applications on over 1,000 mobile devices** to be distributed to ration branch employees. This will facilitate updating citizens' data and issuing electronic ration cards, aligning with the government programme and ministerial direction, meeting the current stage's technological requirements, -reducing-corruption, -and-streamlining-the-process.<sup>29</sup>

### 4.3. Livelihood support programmes

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In April 2022, the MoLSA and UNDP signed a *Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)* to **promote sustainable economic growth and employment opportunities** in Iraq. The partnership aims to **support small enterprises, create a start-up ecosystem, and improve the monitoring of small businesses** that have received loans and incubation services from the Ministry. The partnership builds on the ongoing technical and training support UNDP has provided to MoLSA since December 2021. This collaboration will involve **policy, institutional, and individual-level support** to boost innovative small businesses and start-ups in Iraq.<sup>30</sup>

**IDPs are citizens of Iraq and have equal rights to other citizens.** Still, in practice, they face **additional barriers** to accessing the labour market, such as a lack of civil documentation and exploitation by employers.<sup>31</sup> This often results in IDPs being employed in the **informal economy with few protections**.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, The Director General of the *Labour and Training Department* of MoLSA emphasised<sup>33</sup> the need to provide **modern training services to returnees** in order to help them develop their skills and integrate into the labour market. It also stressed the importance of providing soft, income-generating loans for them **to establish their own projects** and the need for robust coordination among communities.

According to UNICEF, the provision of livelihood support programmes for youth and job seekers in Iraq is legally mandated by Law No. 37 of 2015, which grants **the right to work for all adults in the country**. In Iraq, MoLSA administers vocational training and employment opportunities. MoLSA's Vocational Training and Employment Directorate offers eligible individuals, particularly young people seeking employment, training programmes to **facilitate their entry into the job market**. Other than training, there is also **the provision of loans** for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) up to 8 million IQD and **business incubator loans** of 20 million IQD (one time), both of which can be paid back in monthly instalments over five years. The loan assistance is issued by MoLSA and administered by the publicly owned *Rafidain Bank*.

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<sup>27</sup> IMF: 2022 Article IV Consultation-Press Release; and Staff Report

<sup>28</sup> [Iraq: Food Assistance Fact Sheet 2020](#)

<sup>29</sup> [MoT press release: April 2023](#)

<sup>30</sup> [MoLSA and UNDP partner to boost employment opportunities in Iraq](#)

<sup>31</sup> ILO, 2022: Review of national policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks, and practice in Iraq

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> [MoLSA, October 2022 - Press release](#)

## 4.4. Grants for people with disability

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Another major non-contributory social assistance programme in Iraq supports Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). The programme is led by MoLSA and is administered by the *Special Needs Directorate* under the ministry. The programme provides a **monthly benefit to caregivers of PwDs** and covers 149,700 caregivers. The benefit provided under the programme is dependent on a **disability assessment** carried out by MoH at the district level, which is verified by a **health committee** also at the district level.

According to the *United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Iraq has **one of the largest populations of persons with disabilities in the world**. Despite the existing programmes to support PwDs and their caregivers, IOM conducted interviews with PwDs which concluded<sup>34</sup> that many persons with disabilities are **unable to receive social protection payments**. Reasons stated included ineligibility; the medical test or government facilities being inaccessible; high cost of transportation; the sponsor being required to accompany them; medical test results being delayed due to long processes and complicated procedures. When persons with disabilities do receive social protection payments, they are **very low**. Thus, persons with disabilities are **unable to meet their needs and become dependent on charities** to for basic needs, including associated additional disability costs such as mobility devices, personal assistance, and inaccessible public transportation.

## 4.5. Social security programmes

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Iraq's social security system covers both public and private sector workers. The public sector fund achieves **almost universal coverage** of the public sector labour force, with generous benefit levels. The fund for private-sector workers covers a **low share of the private-sector workforce**. It provides a limited range of benefits, with employers remaining liable for maternity, work injury and disability benefits. The coverage of **informal sector workers is not guaranteed** under the existing system which might cause the following issues-for-workers:

- **Financial Insecurity:** Without access to social security, informal workers lack a safety net. They may face difficulty meeting basic needs if they become unemployed, sick, or too old to work.
- **Healthcare:** Without social security benefits, informal workers often lack access to affordable healthcare. This can lead to a cycle of poverty and poor health, with workers unable to afford care for themselves or their families.
- **Retirement Savings:** Social security often functions as a form of enforced saving for retirement. Without it, informal workers may struggle to save enough for their later years, leading to financial insecurity in old age.
- **Gender Inequality:** The lack of social security for female workers may disproportionately affect the participation and representation of women, which could exacerbate gender inequality.
- **Child Labour:** In the absence of social protection, families may resort to child labour to sustain themselves. This results in a lack of education for these children and perpetuates a cycle of poverty.

The *International Labour Organisation* has developed a diagnostic report examining the drivers of informality in Iraq's labour market highlights the **multiple and wide-ranging factors contributing to informality** and the burdens imposed on the formalisation of enterprises and workers in the country. For more information the report is accessible through the ILO website.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> [IOM: 2021, PWD and their representative organisations in Iraq: Barriers, Challenges, and Priorities](#)

<sup>35</sup> [A diagnostic of the informal economy in Iraq](#)

#### 4.5.1 State employees' pension system

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The **first pension law** in Iraq was issued on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1922. More recently, the following laws have been introduced:

1. *Law of Civil Pension No. 33 of 1966*
2. *The Unified Pension Law No.27/2006*, covering state employees
3. *The Unified Pensions Law No.9/2014*, covering state employees

The **recent provisions of the retirement law** (2014) apply to **all state and public sector employees**, temporary staff, those in charge of public service, and state employees in the mixed sector who have retired (or are retiring) due to illness or disability, old age or death. The most important gains implied by the law were to **double the minimum pension** (400,000 IQD) and the provision of new gains for working mothers.

Even though laws and regulations relating to social protection gave citizens **additional rights and privileges** and **increased the number of beneficiaries** eligible for social protection, the application of the programmes was not nearly as perfect as it looked on paper. This was especially true for those working **outside the public sector** as the Iraqi mandatory public pension system covered only 15% of the labour force, which comprises mostly of the public sector workforce.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4.5.2. The social security system for workers

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**Social security** in Iraq has been covered under several laws over the years, which sequentially expanded the scope of social security. These include:

1. *Social Security Law No.27 of 1956*
2. *Social Security Law No.140 of 1964*
3. *Social Security Law No.112 of 1969* covered public and private sector employees but excluded those working in the informal sector.
4. *Law of Pensions and Social Security No.39 of 1971*, which expanded the scope of social security regardless of the number of employees in a certain organisation
5. *Social Insurance Law* (draft)

The currently relevant *Law of Pensions and Social Security No.39 of 1971* provides **legislative protection for formal sector workers** through standards for coverage under health insurance, maternity benefit, old age benefits/pension, work-related injury benefits, and other social security provisions for workers. While *Law No.39* is the latest legislative provision of social security in the country, there is also an updated *Social Insurance Law* from 2021 currently pending approval by the government. Redrafting of the *Law No.39* will see to **provide better coverage for all employees in the public, private, cooperative, and mixed sectors**.

The **contributory social insurance system** in Iraq is administered under MoLSA and MoF, and it **covers 38% of the total labour force**, with public sector enrolment accounting for 96% of the covered population.<sup>37</sup> For insured workers, there is the provision of an old age pension, workplace injury compensation, and a survivor's benefit.

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<sup>36</sup> World Bank (n.d.) Pensions in Iraq: Issues, General Guidelines for Reform and Potential Fiscal Implications

<sup>37</sup> UNICEF consultation with stakeholders (2022)

## 4.6. Previously established initiatives and programmes

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### 4.6.1. Conditional cash transfer (pilot)

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In 2018/19, MoLSA, with the support of UNICEF and World Bank (WB), piloted a **conditional cash transfer programme** in Al Sadr city neighbourhood of Baghdad with the objective of incentivising access to social services in education, health, and housing and increasing the agency of women. The programme provided an additional cash transfer to eligible categories of SSN beneficiaries. The programme was targeted at households in Al Sadr with children under 5 years and school students between 10-14 years who were selected from the SSN beneficiary database.<sup>38</sup> The cash transfer was provided **in compliance with the following conditions:**

- To enrol into school any household member of the school age and to support their regular school attendance to complete the target school year.
- To register the family at their assigned health centre.
- To attend the scheduled health-related appointments for the corresponding members of the household (children under five years old and pregnant and breastfeeding women).

**The eligible and complying households** received a benefit of 10,000 IQD (as a top-up to the SSN benefit).<sup>39</sup> Households with school children received an extra 60,000 IQD over eight months if the child was not (reasonably) absent from class for more than three days per month.<sup>40</sup> The pilot covered 2000 households in the city during the two years it was available.<sup>41</sup>

### 4.6.2. Responses to shocks

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The “1 million food baskets for the poor” initiative (one time distribution) was launched on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and targeted **poor and vulnerable households** in Iraq **to alleviate the effect of COVID-19**.<sup>42</sup> The basket cost was 15 USD per household, and the programmes were reported to have reached 708,360 households.<sup>43</sup> Under the initiative, in July 2020, the Ministry of Migration and Displacement delivered around 250,000 relief packages to IDPs in Iraq. The packages included 104,551 food baskets.<sup>44</sup>

**Another notable response during the COVID-19 crisis** was the launch of the *Minha emergency grant* as a top-up to SSN recipients. The programme had an **internet-based application** and was limited to Iraqi citizens aged between 18 and 55 (for women)/66 (for men), who received no government salary, pensions or benefits. Beneficiaries received a **one-time payment** of 330,000 IQD (about 253 USD).<sup>45</sup> While there is limited information on the implementation and coverage of the programme, from a pool of 12-13 million eligible households, only 600,000 (5%) were reported to have received the transfer.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> IPCIG (2022) Child Sensitivity Assessment of the Social Safety Net Programme of Iraq (Draft)

<sup>39</sup> UNDP (January 2021). The Impact of Covid-19 on Social Protection in Iraq

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> IPCIG (2022) Child Sensitivity Assessment of the Social Safety Net Programme of Iraq (Draft)

<sup>42</sup> Iraq Reform Recovery and Reconstruction Fund I3RF Trust Fund Annual Progress Report 2021

<sup>43</sup> [UNDP \(January 2021\). The Impact of Covid-19 on Social Protection in Iraq](#)

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*



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## 5. SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES IN KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ (KRI)

In 2016, KRG as a part of *vision 2020* developed its *Social Protection Strategic Framework (SPSF)* as a road-map **to reform KRI's social protection system**. The strategy outlined **three main pillars of social protection** - *Social Safety Nets, Pensions and Social Insurance, and Labour Market Programmes*. The SPSF elaborated a vision for ensuring equity, expanding opportunity, and building resilience, focusing on expanding education and employment opportunities (mainly in the private sector) and protecting the most vulnerable individuals. It also emphasised establishing the necessary systems for identifying vulnerable groups and the resources and mechanisms to reach them with better coordination and integration at the policy, programmes, and administrative levels.

The 2016 SPSF responded to **the following key challenges**:<sup>47</sup>

- A small private sector and an expanding public sector, which led to very high public spending on wages and transfers overall and a great risk of further expansion.
- Rising female labour participation rate and the high numbers and rapidly rising numbers of educated unemployed individuals, especially amongst women.
- Very high spending on pensions, even though the schemes did not cover 80% of the labour force in the private sector and 50% of people above 65 years old did not have a pension-related income.
- The inefficiency of social assistance spending – at 1.3 % of non-oil GDP spent on cash transfers, only 11% of the poorest received the cash transfer at the time.

**The SPSF, therefore, focused on the following:**

- **Rationalising the SSN system** through poverty targeting and focusing on providing effective social care to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.
- **Expanding the pension and social insurance system** by integrating all public, private and other pensions and implementing an unemployment insurance programme to encourage private sector employment and reduce the wage burden on the government.
- **Strengthening the labour market** by strengthening the education system, improving the education to labour market transition through incentives, accelerated job creation and access to opportunities and enabling more women to participate in the labour market.

While the SPSF **strongly tackled the immediate vulnerabilities of the population**, especially the challenge of unemployment, it did **not adequately tackle the root causes** of these vulnerabilities, maximising capability

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<sup>47</sup> Government of Kurdistan (2016). *Social Protection Strategic Framework*

and productivity. While the strategy mentioned **the need to invest in early childhood and ensure access to health care and education**, it did not include mechanisms to respond to these needs in the strategic directions or action plan. The SPSF was also **relatively silent on tackling the lack of basic food security and the issue of gender disparities** (in earlier years and for those not in the labour market). Yet, to close the gender gap in the labour market, it is vitally important to address gendered norms and practices earlier in life and throughout life.

**The strategy proposed conditional and narrow poverty targeting** without proposing strategies to ensure that the most marginalised – who are often disproportionately excluded in strict poverty targeting and conditional programmes – are **protected against these challenges and limitations**. An acute focus on rationalisation of benefits, particularly when **early childhood** (which offers the government's highest return on investments) and **food security** (a precursor to any human capital investment), can be **counterproductive** and limit the impact of any investments later in life.<sup>48</sup> Studies have repeatedly demonstrated that “*early disadvantages can be the reason for skill gaps opening up over the life cycle, and they explain why early interventions can have significant long-term effects for individual human capital accumulation.*”<sup>49</sup> Evidence about path dependency and substantial and lasting effects of early childhood events that inhibit skill development – such as food insecurity, malnutrition and inadequate care – and sustained limitations in these areas throughout childhood emphasises **the importance of a holistic approach** to tackling Kurdistan's labour market challenges – in participation, productivity and prosperity.

**The SPSF highlighted the challenges with the social security system**, particularly the need for appropriate databases, record-keeping, and information technology systems. It also highlighted the **difficulties around the administration and assessment** of the schemes and the lack of adequate financial governance of administrative operations and social insurance benefits. The system was considered **financially unsustainable**, with an estimation that government expenditure would need to be scaled to meet the financing needs of the system. Most importantly, **the inequity of public and private sector pensions** created distortions and the lack of pension portability negatively affected labour mobility. While the SPSF proposed **significant changes** to address most of these challenges, **the role of maternity and other benefits in reducing the gender gap in labour market participation was insufficiently addressed**.

Finally, the SPSF made **sporadic references to the role of social protection in shock response** and the need to establish systems through a shock-responsive lens, despite a pillar of activities dedicated to building resilience. Shocks were more directly addressed under the *Resilience pillar*, which included “*insuring (individuals/households) against drops in well-being from a range of shocks.*” It articulated social insurance programmes as key sources of building resilience to “*minimise the negative impact of economic shocks on individuals and families.*”<sup>50</sup> **Shock responsiveness** was identified in the document through **reforms for systems development and enhancing technology infrastructure** in KRG under three areas, i.e., the establishment of *Labour Market Information Systems (LMIS)*<sup>51</sup> for supporting public administrative reforms through a timely supply of relevant data from different sources; the establishment of a *Unified Registry*<sup>52</sup> to be utilised during shocks to allow government agencies to channel coordinated assistance to the most vulnerable; and extension of coverage of insurance to those not covered by traditional type of schemes, such as self-employed, seasonal workers, etc. In conclusion, the shock responsiveness of the 2016 SPSF was **limited to technological and infrastructural reforms** for improving targeting and institutional capacity and inclusion of economic shocks in the social protection programming. Finally, the *Resilience pillar* focuses on **building the resilience**

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<sup>48</sup> Berger (2020). Self-productivity and Cross-productivity in the Process of Skill Formation. Working Papers 2027, Gutenberg School of Management and Economics, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz.

<sup>49</sup> Berger (2020). Self-productivity and Cross-productivity in the Process of Skill Formation. Working Papers 2027, Gutenberg School of Management and Economics, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz.

<sup>50</sup> Government of Kurdistan (2016). Social Protection Strategic Framework (pp. 13)

<sup>51</sup> Government of Kurdistan (2016). Social Protection Strategic Framework (pp. 36)

<sup>52</sup> Government of Kurdistan (2016). Social Protection Strategic Framework (pp. 48)

of the system through institutional and systems strengthening such as “transparent financing mechanisms” and “financial sustainability”. *The following table* presents the main social protection programmes in KRI and briefly describes the most important programmes.

**Table 8: Social Protection programmes in KRG**

Programme / Intervention	Implementing Agency	Target Group	Description	Status
Social Safety Net (SSN)	MoLSA	PwDs	Provides benefits to PwDs (81,000)	Active
Social Workers	MoLSA	Poor People (below the poverty line)	Provides support for beneficiaries under the SSN programme for PwDs	Active
Public Distribution System (PDS)	MoT (Gol level)	Universal	Provides food distribution; ongoing targeting reform	Active
Social Insurance	MoLSA	Private sector workers	Covers risks of old age, disability, survivorship, health, and employment injury	Active
Livelihood Support: Vocational Training	MoLSA,	Unemployed persons, PwDs	Provides job skills development and labour market integration	Active
Livelihood Support: Small Loans for Entrepreneurs	MoLSA	Entrepreneurs aged 15-45	Provided loans to develop existing or start new businesses	Discontinued
COVID-19 Support	MoLSA	Vulnerable households	Provided in-kind support (food and fuel) during the crisis in 2020	Completed
Social Benefit for Victims of Wars and Conflict	MoLSA	Vulnerable civilian population	Provides support to vulnerable civilians affected by wars and conflicts	Unclear
Child-targeted Interventions	MoE	Children who dropped out of school	Brings children back into the schooling system	Active

**The MoLSA-implemented SSN programme is KRI’s key non-contributory social protection programme.**

Before the financial crisis of 2014, the programme targeted different categories of PwDs and the following **nine vulnerable groups living in poor households**: older persons, patients (75 years and above/male and female who are unable to work), widows, separated wives, orphans, a family of prisoners (who are sentenced for not less than one year), divorced women, married students, and girls without parents (18 years and above). However, the delivery of social protection by the regional government **depends on budget transfers from the Gol**. Due to **irregular and insufficient funding** to reach all those eligible for the programme, the programme was **scaled back** during the crisis in 2015 and since then has been **covering only PwDs**.

**The social workforce is distributed between Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Duhok.** The social workers provide support for the beneficiaries under the SSN programme for PwDs. They pay visits to the beneficiary households to monitor the eligibility of the beneficiaries and to report any problems with implementation. The social workers also provide **counselling support** to the beneficiary households when needed. As reported, the **frequency of the visits is unclear** and depends on the needs or issues raised by the beneficiaries.

## 5.1. Public Distribution System (PDS)

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The MoT at the GoI level implements PDS in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, mirroring the programme at the GoI level. Despite the universality nature of the programme, there is **growing concern** among the government and other stakeholders about the **high coverage of the PDS**. This concern was underscored during a meeting with the ILO, particularly with regard to the inclusion of households that are financially better-off. In order to **rationalise PDS benefits**, the government is prioritising targeting reforms to the system. Discussions are ongoing to **review and redesign the targeting mechanism** for the PDS with a focus on only covering **the most vulnerable and food-insecure households**.

## 5.2. Social security programmes

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**Social Insurance coverage** in KRI for private sector workers derives from Iraqi *Social Security Law No.39* of 1971, which was amended in 2012 through *Law No.4* of 2012 in Federal Iraq. The main points of the amendment included the **expansion of the law** to cover “*all workers and personnel of private sector enterprises and companies operating in the region regardless of the number of staff members.*” However, the amendment “*exempted*” specific groups such as **a)** employees of state departments and enterprises or that are subject to *Civil Service Law*; **b)** workers in international organisations and foreign diplomatic delegations; **c)** workers for parties which stipulate compliance to a certain social scheme; **d)** members of national security forces and the Region’s guards.

MoLSA has administered the *Social Insurance Law* in KRI **since 2019**, which covers the risks of old age, disability and survivorship, health and employment injury. While *Law No.39* is **the latest legislative provision of social security** in the KRI, there is an updated *Social Insurance Law* from 2021 **currently under discussion**. The new law is supported by ILO and seeks to “*expand the scope of social security coverage, mainly to workers in the informal economy, and align social security legislation with ILO Recommendation 102 on Minimum Social Security Standards in Federal Iraq including KRI.*”

Currently, **two social insurance schemes** are implemented in KRI,<sup>53</sup> i.e., a pension scheme covering public sector employees under MoF and a social security scheme covering private sector employees. **The social security scheme** provides coverage for risks of old age, disability, survivorship (widows, orphans, etc.), health, and work injury implemented by MoLSA.<sup>54</sup>

## 5.3. Livelihood support programmes

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There are **two livelihood support programmes** that have been running in KRI, administered by the government.

In KRI, **vocational training programmes** are provided through the Directorate of Vocational Training under MoLSA. The sessions are provided in selected districts/sub-districts and **target unemployed persons** for the development of their job skills with the goal of labour market integration. It was also reported that vocational training is provided under MoLSA to PwDs with the same goal of **upskilling and labour market integration**. The vocational training provision is reported to be still ongoing. In the year 2021, MoLSA was reported to have organised 2,216 training sessions.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Government of Kurdistan (2016). Social Protection Strategic Framework

<sup>54</sup> Government of Kurdistan (2016). Social Protection Strategic Framework

<sup>55</sup> Information is sourced from Inception Consultations with national level stakeholders (in September 2022) and follow ups in October/November 2022.



**The provision of small loans for entrepreneurs** was another livelihood support programme available in KRI. **Before the financial crisis in 2014**, MoLSA had provisioned small loans for entrepreneurs between the ages of 15-45 to develop existing or to start new businesses.<sup>56</sup> While the intervention was discontinued due to financial challenges, **MoLSA supports the re-implementation of small loan support in the future.**

#### **5.4. Other social protection interventions in KRI**

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**Further information on social protection in KRI** was provided by government stakeholders at the national level during the Inception phase of the project.<sup>57</sup>

MoLSA provided **COVID-19 support to vulnerable households** during the crisis in 2020. The intervention was not organised under the SSN programme or any other existing SP programme. Identified vulnerable households were provided with in-kind support such as food and fuel (one time distribution). It was reported that the Ministry workers self-identified vulnerable households through home visits for the intervention.

**A social benefit for victims of wars and conflict** is provided under MoLSA in KRI. While the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs is responsible for the beneficiaries of war and conflict, MoLSA provides support to the vulnerable civilian population. It is not clear whether the benefit was provided in the past or is currently ongoing.

MoE reported running **child-targeted interventions in KRI**, where they are carrying out programmes to bring children who have dropped out of school back into the schooling system. While the details of the type of support provided by MoE for these interventions were not clarified in the consultations, this was reported as **one of their key priorities for social protection.**

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<sup>56</sup> Information is sourced from Inception Consultations with national level stakeholders (in September 2022) and follow ups in October/November 2022.

<sup>57</sup> All information is sourced from Inception Consultations with national level stakeholders (in September 2022) and follow ups in October/November 2022.



## 6. COMMUNITY AND INFORMANT PERSPECTIVES: EXPERIENCES AND INSIGHTS

A range of programmes mentioned by the participants is summarised in [Table 8](#), which explains these programmes, highlighting the programme name, targeted groups, modality, and delivery mechanism. Some programmes **mentioned by participants only once** were excluded from the table due to lack of clarity, such as: Shelter support for divorced and widowed females, Unemployment support, Support to displaced female-headed households or females with disabilities, Women’s empowerment, Women protection programme, Child protection programme, People with disability programme, and Psychological support.

Moreover, for most programmes, participants indicated the need to possess **the four following documents** to access Social Protection:

- **Civil Status ID/Identity** (31%)
- **Ration Card** (27%)
- **Iraqi Nationality Certificate** (23%)
- **Housing Card/Certificate** (19%)

**Certain programmes necessitated supplementary documentation** beyond the previously mentioned documents. For example, the returnee support programme requires a letter of the returnee and PwDs had to submit a medical committee evaluation. Widows needed to provide a deceased husband certificate, while divorced women needed a divorce certificate. To qualify for unemployment support programme, individuals had to be registered as unemployed and present proof of registration.

**Table 8:** *Social Protection Programmes captured through KII*

Programme name	Targeted Groups	Modality	Delivery Mechanism
Social Safety Nets	Returnees, IDPs, Poor families below the poverty line, Female Widows and Divorced, elderly, PWDs, Orphaned and unemployed	Cash	Money exchange shops
Ration card (PDS)	Universal (all citizens)	In-kind	Local Agents
IDP return programme	Returnees	Cash	Money exchange shops
Vocational training	Female and Male adults 18 - 50 years old	N/A	N/A

## 6.1. Registration

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The community members' experiences with social protection programme registration processes varied significantly, as described by FGD participants and key informants. Online registration was considered easy, clear, and smooth by 13% of FGD participants and 17 instances from key informants, while 33% of FGD participants encountered challenges like registering through multiple channels without feedback, 20% reported registration nepotism, and 13% reported complex registration procedures and extended waiting periods. Multiple registration attempts were also reported by 13% of FGD participants, and the cost of registration was a concern for 6% of them.

**Accessibility issues** were identified by 71% of FGD participants, with 29% reporting organisational challenges. The waiting times between registration and receipt of benefits varied, with 66% reporting extended waiting times, 22% reporting moderate waiting times, and 11% reporting short waiting times. **The use of proxies** in registration, especially for the elderly and people with disabilities, was confirmed by the majority of participants, and **local community leaders** such as Mukhtar played a key role in the registration process.

Key informants mentioned **two methods of registration**, including **online registration** through the ministry's website and **in-person registration** at designated offices or through field teams. Electronic registration has become increasingly popular, with the majority of key informants (60%) describing it as smooth, easy, and accessible. However, 25% of key informants still reported manual registration, especially in KRG locations, and 15% mentioned registration through home visits and a referral system, which includes camp administration, Mukhtars, or district officials.

During the initial registration for social assistance programmes, beneficiaries are required to **provide the personal details of the head of the household**. In order to finalise the registration process and receive benefits, **information on all household members is needed** because the payment structure depends on their family size and the gender of the head of the household. Similarly, the *Public Distribution System (PDS)* bases its allocation on the number of household members, as indicated on the ration card, affecting the number of items and quantity received and also affecting eligibility to special items they may be entitled to, such as infant milk.

The majority of key informants confirmed the availability of proxy arrangements for registration, **allowing caregivers to act on behalf of beneficiaries with exceptional cases**. Furthermore, it was noted that social workers could perform **home visits** to register beneficiaries upon request, particularly when certain programmes do not permit proxy arrangements. One participant provided an example of vocational training registration, which necessitates in-person registration to benefit from the programme.

Lastly, the discussion with key informants revealed that beneficiaries have **the opportunity to register for multiple social protection programmes**. For instance, women can simultaneously enrol in both the *Women's Empowerment Unit* and the *Reproductive Health Unit*. Moreover, individuals can benefit from the *Public Distribution System* and *Social Assistance Programmes* at the same time. On the other hand, a **mechanism to avoid overlapping** does exist and key informants explained that each beneficiary has a **unique number**, and their benefits can be acquired through a platform; for instance, a centralised database is mentioned managed by the Ministry of Migration and Displaced (MoMD). Also, **data privacy and protection** are prioritised, and information cannot be shared without official approval to ensure the confidentiality of programme participants.

## 6.2. Sufficiency and consistency of support

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The participants were asked about the sufficiency and consistency of social support, and the findings highlight **a general sentiment that the support provided is inadequate**. 76% of participants found the support to be insufficient, while 18% of participants described the support provided as leading to some relief but being inadequate. Only 6% of participants mentioned the support being sufficient but not continuous. Most participants shared that **the assistance fails to meet basic needs or address the unique requirements of people with disabilities**. Concerns about the PDS were also raised, with participants citing issues related to insufficient ration baskets, quality of items, and accessibility issues due to distance and the associated costs.

**Regarding support consistency**, 70% of participants reported fully provided support, whereas 30% indicated partially provided. A follow-up question was raised to understand what action was taken to claim the remaining entitlement. The results found that 50% of participants took no action, while the remainder reported attempts to claim entitlement without receiving a response/feedback.

## 6.3. Satisfaction with modality and delivery mechanisms

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**Participants demonstrated a strong inclination towards receiving cash support**, with 88% reporting a preference for cash over in-kind support. In contrast, only 12% of the participants reported in-kind support as their preferred modality. However, the preference for in-kind assistance is conditional on improving the quality and quantity of in-kind support. When it comes to **the participants' experiences with distribution and delivery mechanisms**, a majority of them (53%) reported positive experiences. However, a significant proportion of the participants (46%) shared that they encountered some challenges, such as distant cash-out points, transportation difficulties, and overcrowding. Participants expressed satisfaction with the smart card delivery system; however, issues were raised regarding the ration card distribution, which includes agents' distance, transportation difficulty, and complex procedures-to-change-agents-or-areas-of-residence-for-IDPs.

Participants were asked about **the reasons for not being included in the social protection programmes**; the most common reasons reported by 40% of participants were nepotism, lack of identification papers and documentation (28%), displacement (16%), and rejection or waiting for feedback (16%).

Participants offered **suggestions for enhancing distribution and delivery mechanisms**, such as improving targeting and verification processes (24%), enhancing delivery methods such as using electronic cards and better communications with beneficiaries (24%), increasing the number of social workers and enhancing distribution planning (19%), increasing in-kind support (14%), and improving accessibility for those in remote and rural areas (10%). Some participants (9%) found the current procedures satisfactory and saw no need for changes.

## 6.4. Eligibility criteria and access to information

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**This section summarises the findings from both the focus group discussion and key informants' perceptions and experiences** concerning eligibility criteria, communication channels used to access information, barriers to accessing information, and suggestions for improvement. In terms of **clarity of information on eligibility criteria**, 73% of focus group participants found the information clear, while 58% of key informants reported no challenges or difficulties. However, 17% of both groups identified challenges such as difficulty understanding the criteria (especially for the elderly and women), unclear registration methods, and favouritism. Participants from both groups agreed that the targeted beneficiaries should be those most in need, such as people experiencing poverty, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, with 41% of key informants mentioning this point.

When asked about **the channels used to access information**, focus group participants relied mostly on social media (41%), followed by relatives and friends (27%), government websites and electronic platforms (8%), TV channels (8%), community awareness campaigns (5%), Mukhtars (5%), social workers (3%), and newsletters (3%). Key informants similarly identified social media, brochures, awareness campaigns, community meetings, workshops, and home visits as primary methods and channels for raising awareness.

In terms of **barriers to accessing information**, 50% of focus group participants reported no barriers, while others cited poor internet services (10%), lack of awareness campaigns (5%), absence of a special department providing social services in the location (5%), language barriers (5%), difficulty in accessing certain locations (5%), obstacles for illiterate and elderly people (5%), lack of electricity (5%), lack of clarity from the responsible authority (5%), and lack of cooperation from government institutions (5%). Key informants also mentioned a lack of consistency in outreach activities, political interference, influence, and nepotism as challenges. Both groups suggested **various recommendations to address these challenges**, including eradicating illiteracy, increasing the number of social workers, opening branches of service providers, improving access to the internet, creating dedicated channels and campaigns to access information, and providing interpreters.

**The most common recommendations for improving outreach activities and campaigns** include increasing awareness campaigns (43%), focusing on youth, increasing staff and opening more branches in targeted areas (37%), intensifying the use of social media and social protection staff training (20%), facilitating coordination with security services, and ensuring the quality of provided items. Participants also emphasised the importance of field visits, continuous activities, and logistical support to enhance the effectiveness of outreach efforts.

When it comes to **the capacity of social workers**, government key informants emphasise their sufficient experience, competence, and skills. Several departments have integrated teams, including social researchers, mental and psychological health specialists, and mobile teams operating in various locations were reported three times in three locations. In order **to strengthen the capacity of social workers**, key informants indicated that various forms of training and development courses are desired, including psychological support, child protection, and other specialised courses (56%). Equipping social workers with technology, such as computers and printers, was another common recommendation (25%). Respondents also highlighted **the need for additional resources**, such as increasing staff, food distribution agents, and budget allocation for fieldwork (19%).

## 6.5. Social protection access challenges for specific groups

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The qualitative data analysis of **the increased barriers that a specific group of people faced** in accessing social protection programmes revealed different perspectives among the participants. Around 20% of participants reported that no specific group faces more barriers than others. However, other participants identified **various groups** as facing **significant challenges in accessing social protection programmes** as follows:

- People with disability and the elderly (20%)
- People in remote and rural areas (17%)
- IDPs (17%)
- Families lacking official documents and refugees (10%)
- Female-headed households, with women reportedly facing difficulties and barriers such as harassment and stigma (7%)
- Orphans were also noted as a group facing more barriers due to a lack of necessary documents (3%)<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The poor, widows and divorced individuals were each mentioned once, falling into the 'others' category.

The topic of **required documentation for enrolling in programmes** was discussed with key informants. The majority of participants (60%) revealed that there are no measures in place to support individuals or households lacking identification documents for enrolment in social protection programmes and that registration without documents is not possible. A few respondents of government key informants (18%) mentioned that their organisations or departments have no authority or plans to coordinate with government departments to issue required documents. On the other hand, some participants (13%) noted that certain programmes might facilitate registration for displaced persons or those missing some documents. Only a couple of participants (9%) reported coordinating with international organisations to help issue required documents. These responses highlight **the need for improved measures and coordination between agencies** to assist those lacking identification documents in accessing social protection programmes.

It appears that opinions are divided regarding **the difficulty with the necessary documents** to register for social protection programmes. While some key informants believe that there are no difficulties in the registration process and that it is available to everyone, a significant number of respondents indicate that certain individuals, particularly refugees, returnees, and displaced persons, face challenges to being enrolled due to the lack of documents or difficulties in obtaining them. These challenges can arise from losing documents during displacement, perception of affiliation with specific parties or entities, or simply not having official documents. In such cases, registering for social protection programmes becomes difficult for these individuals. One of the social protection actors indicated that the government's plan is to include these locations where such cases occur in the community. Another stakeholder from Ninewa mentioned that the Department of Immigration and Displaced takes steps to include all displaced families.

Furthermore, it is crucial to **highlight the array of measures mentioned by key informants to guarantee the enrolment of hard-to-reach families**. Field visits and house-to-house visits were methods underscored to reach out to these families. Mobile teams, distribution committees, and social workers play a role in reaching out to these families. However, some participants indicated that there are no special measures in place, while others were not aware of any measures.

## 6.6. Other support networks in the areas

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The analysis of qualitative data collected from study participants revealed that a significant number of respondents (40%) acknowledged **the presence of other support networks in their area**. These support networks comprising international NGOs were cited most frequently (21%), followed by local NGOs (19%) and civil society organisations (9%). Despite the recognition of these support networks, some participants, 9% of them, reported a lack of such support structures in their area. Furthermore, a majority of participants who acknowledged the existence of these networks also emphasised that **their presence-was-either-limited-or-had-a-relatively-small-impact-on-addressing-the-needs-of-their communities**.

## 6.7. Barriers to accessing social protection

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- **Community Perception:** The community participants' feedback on barriers to accessing social protection programmes is summarised in *Table 9*. **The barriers are ranked in order of frequency**, with **nepotism and administrative favouritism** being the most frequently mentioned barrier. Other common barriers include a lack of transparency in targeting beneficiaries, difficulties in accessing registration support, and the habit of not claiming rights. The table also includes less frequently mentioned barriers, such as biases towards specific population groups, access to technology, and inefficiency of the complaints/appeals mechanism.

**Table 10:** Barriers to accessing SP programmes by FGD participants

Barriers mentioned by participants	Barrier Mentions by Community (%)
Nepotism and administrative favouritism	14%
Frequent rumours about social protection programmes	11%
Lack of transparency in targeting beneficiaries	10%
Registration support for PwDs, the elderly, and illiterate	8%
The habit of not claiming rights	8%
A reduced degree of citizens' trust in the authority	7%
Required official documentation	6%
Constant mobility of the household	6%
Accuracy of the inclusion/exclusion system	5%
Geographic coverage of programmes (rural vs urban)	5%
Language barriers	4%
Biases towards specific population groups	4%
Access to technology (internet, social media, etc.)	4%
The inefficiency of the complaints/appeals mechanism	3%
Transportation and its cost	2%
Top-down decision-making process	2%

- Informants' Perceptions:** Key informants have identified **several barriers to accessing social protection programmes**, including geographical distance, transportation and cost, limited access to information, lack of people's trust in institutions, regular policy changes, funding constraints, and outreach activities. The most frequently cited general barrier was **geographical distance**, while the most frequently cited regulatory barrier was **people's limited trust in institutions**. The most frequently cited design and implementation barrier was **outreach activities**. *The following table* includes these barriers highlighted through interviews with key informants.

**Table 11:** Barriers to accessing Social Protection Programmes mentioned by KII

Barriers mentioned by Informants	Barrier Mentions by Informants (%)
<b>General barriers</b>	
Geographical (distance)	38%
Transportation infrastructure and cost	35%
Access to information	22%
Linguistic	5%
<b>Regulatory barriers:</b>	
People's trust in the institutions	33%
Constant changes in policy	24%
Structure of government programmes	22%
Funding constraints	20%
Top-down decision-making process	2%
<b>Design and implementation barriers:</b>	
Outreach activities and communications	23%

Inclusion/Exclusion system accuracy	19%
Access to technology (internet, social media...etc.)	19%
Registration support level to PWDs, Elderlies, illiterate	11%
Complaints/Appeal mechanism inefficiency	11%
Payment difficulties (e.g. documentation, proxy arrangement)	9%
Outdated BNFs data	8%

## 6.8. Recommendations by community and informants

### Community recommendations

Exploring the recommendations provided by participants for **improving their experience** with social protection programmes. The responses were categorised into **six main areas**:

- **Empower women and create job opportunities (25%)**: Participants urged establishing women's empowerment centres, creating job opportunities for unemployed graduates, and providing protection support to women in the area.
- **Improve infrastructure and services (21%)**: Participants highlighted the need to support facilitating the issuance of required documentation to access social protection programmes, especially for IDPs. They also mentioned the importance of enhancing essential services such as sewer networks, street paving, electricity, and water networks.
- **Increase financial and in-kind support (18%)**: Participants emphasised the need to expand the support by increasing the number of beneficiaries, increasing the amount of payment, and diversifying the food items offered through the PDS.
- **Enhance education and health sectors (15%)**: Recommendations focused on improving the overall quality of education and health services and providing free health insurance for vulnerable families.
- **Streamline registration and application processes (14%)**: Suggestions included forming specialised committees for beneficiary registration, expediting the procedures between registration and social worker visits, and providing a functioning electronic platform for complaints and appeal mechanisms.
- **Collaboration between government and organisations (7%)**: Participants advocated for collaboration between the government and various organisations to ensure fair distribution of assistance and social support.

### Informants recommendations

Based on information from key informants, several key themes emerge, reflecting their **recommendations and suggestions for strengthening social protection programmes**. The following recommendations were identified:

- **Financial support and subsidies (30%)**: Recommendations include increasing the value of cash assistance, enhancing the quality and quantity of food items, and providing financial assistance to various groups such as returnees, PWDs, female-headed households, and families below the poverty line.
- **Capacity strengthening and training (20%)**: Suggestions highlight the need for training workshops to equip beneficiaries with professional skills and provide capacity-strengthening activities targeting social workers as well.
- **Expanding coverage and support (19%)**: Participants recommend increasing the number of beneficiaries in the programmes, increasing the number of social workers, on the other hand, provide non-food items and transportation subsidies, and improving the services of health and education



sectors as well as supporting small businesses, and provide loans to beneficiaries and expand access to remote areas.

- **Facilitating access to official documents (14%):** Participants suggest simplifying the process of obtaining official documents, particularly for those who have lost them.
- **Government involvement (8%):** Participants encourage the government to establish special systems and committees with competence and experience in research and evaluation.
- **Infrastructure and logistics (6%):** Suggestions include rehabilitating and equipping warehouses for proper storage and distribution of food items and providing social workers with equipment and means of transportation.
- **Digital and remote access (3%):** Transforming the registration process into a digital format to streamline the process and make it more accessible for those in rural and hard-to-reach areas.

These recommendations demonstrate **a need for a comprehensive approach to strengthening social protection programmes**, focusing on financial support, capacity building, expanded coverage, and targeted support for vulnerable groups. Additionally, improvements in government involvement, infrastructure, digital access, and policy measures can **enhance the overall effectiveness of these programmes**.





## 7. CONCLUSION

The key informants and community members who participated in this study have identified various barriers that hinder access to social protection programmes. These barriers encompass geographical distance, transportation and cost, access to information, people's trust in institutions, policy changes, funding constraints, and outreach activities. **Both the community members and key informants have provided valuable recommendations for improving social protection programmes.** Community recommendations emphasise the need to empower women and create job opportunities, which include establishing women's empowerment centres and providing support to women in the area. They also highlight the importance of improving infrastructure and services, such as sewer networks, street paving, electricity, and water networks and facilitating the issuance of required documentation, especially for IDPs.

Increasing financial and in-kind support, enhancing the education and health sectors, and streamlining registration and application processes are other **key areas identified by the community.** Furthermore, they advocate for increased collaboration between the government and various organisations to ensure the fair distribution of assistance and social support.

**Informants' recommendations focus on several aspects,** including increasing financial support and subsidies for different vulnerable groups, such as returnees, people with disabilities, female-headed households, and families below the poverty line. They also emphasise the need for capacity strengthening and training workshops to equip beneficiaries with professional skills and improve social workers' capacities. Expanding coverage and support for the programmes, increasing the number of social workers, and improving the services of health and education sectors are other important areas mentioned by informants.

Facilitating access to official documents, particularly for those who have lost them, is another area that informants believe needs improvement. They also encourage the government to establish special systems and committees with competence and experience in research and evaluation. Infrastructure and logistics improvements, such as providing transportation for social workers and rehabilitating warehouses for proper storage and distribution of food items are essential aspects highlighted by informants. Lastly, they recommend transforming the registration process into a digital format to streamline the process and make it more accessible for those in rural and hard-to-reach areas.

**By addressing these recommendations, a comprehensive approach can be developed to strengthen social protection programmes,** focusing on financial support, capacity building, expanded coverage, and targeted support for vulnerable groups. Implementing improvements in government involvement, infrastructure, digital access, and policy measures can greatly enhance the overall effectiveness and impact of these programmes, benefiting a larger portion of the population in need.

Despite the previously piloted and introduced shock-responsive programmes, **it is imperative to systematically integrate shock-responsive measures into the overarching strategic direction**, particularly in light of Iraq's substantial reliance on oil revenues. In a dialogue with a social protection actor, it was observed that the existing shock-responsive mechanisms necessitate additional refinement. At present, the strategic definition of these mechanisms is insufficiently clear and well-formulated. Active discussions are underway to determine the most effective means of linking the shock-responsive approach with a strategic response, as well as incorporating it into an emergency preparedness plan.





## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

During the last week of April 2023, the consultant finalised **analysis of the study and produced the main finding**. These findings have been presented to cash and social protection actors at national level during *Iraqi Cash Forum* monthly meeting that was held on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. The same findings were presented to Ninewa Area Based Coordination (ABC) on May 17<sup>th</sup> where representatives of organisations and ABC leaders and sub-national level representatives contributed to the discussion about the study.

In parallel, at the beginning of May 2023, the consultant completed **recommendations parts of the study** and presented to ACF and *Iraqi Cash forum* on May 11<sup>th</sup>, both parties reviewed the recommendations and eventually approved.

### Coordination and collaboration

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- **We recommend that the government enhance its leadership role** within the *Social Protection Section Coordination Committee* through regular meetings and broadened stakeholder engagement. This approach facilitates ongoing dialogue and decision-making. Moreover, the active inclusion of diverse stakeholders, including NGOs and international partners, promotes a better understanding of on-the-ground realities and alignment, allowing for reciprocal support. This collaborative approach is key to fostering more effective social protection initiatives in Iraq.
- **To promote harmonisation and efficient resource utilisation, we recommend that stakeholders involved in social protection intensify the communication of existing programmes within relevant forums.** This practice not only prevents duplication of efforts but also aids in identifying potential areas for collaboration, thus strengthening the social protection framework.
- **Lastly, to facilitate information exchange and ensure streamlined coordination, we advocate for the interoperability of data among social protection agencies in compliance with data protection regulations.** This practice provides a comprehensive view of social protection efforts, aiding in the effective identification of gaps, overlaps, and potential collaboration opportunities, ultimately enhancing service delivery in the social protection sector.

### Strengthening the capacity of cash actors on social protection

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- **We suggest a concentrated effort on capacity-strengthening activities targeting actors implementing cash transfer programmes in Iraq.** Cash transfer is an instrumental tool for implementing social protection programmes; hence their understanding and capacity to effectively administer

these programs is vital. Tailored training and workshops could be used to enhance their understanding of the principles and practices of social protection. Such capacity-building initiatives will contribute to the development of a skilled and knowledgeable workforce capable of innovating and adapting to changes in the social protection landscape. This ultimately leads to the delivery of more effective social protection interventions.

- **We also recommend prioritising capacity-strengthening activities targeting government officials, focusing on crucial areas such as accountability, data collection, and targeting.** Enhancing skills and knowledge in these areas equips government personnel to effectively administer, monitor, and evaluate social protection programmes. Activities should be tailored to provide the necessary proficiency to collect and manage data accurately, ensuring that social protection programmes reach the intended individuals and communities. Furthermore, putting additional emphasis on accountability can reinforce public trust and enhance transparency in the social protection system.

## The transition of humanitarian caseloads

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- **We recommend fostering active dialogue between humanitarian agencies and the government to establish referral standards for transitioning from humanitarian projects to social protection schemes.** This discussion is vital to ensure a smooth, efficient, and effective transition, minimising potential gaps in service delivery. Establishing clear referral standards and procedures can also enhance coordination, promote understanding and alignment of objectives, and ensure that vulnerable groups continue to receive the support they need during and after the transition process.
- **We recommend that humanitarian agencies align their interventions with social protection programs, focusing on areas such as beneficiary selection and targeting, payment modalities, monitoring and evaluation procedures, and grievance redress mechanisms.** Aligning with government social protection programmes will ensure coherence in the design and implementation of programmes, making it easier for beneficiaries to navigate and access the support they need. It will also promote efficiency by minimising duplication of efforts and smooth the transition of beneficiaries into the social protection system.

## Access to civil documentation

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- **We recommend the support and implementation of projects that promote access to civil documentation, as it is a critical enabler for individuals to access a range of social protection programmes and other essential services.** Contributions from donors and humanitarian partners to projects facilitating civil documentation can help ensure that vulnerable populations are not excluded from social protection schemes due to a lack of necessary documentation, thereby increasing the inclusivity and effectiveness of social protection programmes. Simultaneously, we suggest that the government take proactive measures in facilitating civil documentation acquisition for displaced populations. Simplifying application processes, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, offering mobile registration services in hard-to-reach and rural areas, and providing options for fee waivers for vulnerable populations are crucial steps that can be taken. Finally, humanitarian agencies should continue investigating the barriers to civil documentation access for IDPs and other vulnerable groups.

## Enhancing transparency in process management

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- **We recommend that the government take active measures to ensure disseminating of comprehensive information on the selection criteria and targeting methods for social protection programmes.** This will not only enhance public trust and understanding but also ensures that potential beneficiaries are aware of eligibility requirements through clear and easily accessible criteria. On the other hand, this will reduce the burden on the government during the registration and verification process.
- **We also recommend that the government reinforce its zero-tolerance policy on corruption, with an emphasis on the beneficiary selection process in social protection programmes.** Alongside this, we suggest the government launch robust awareness campaigns to educate officials, potential beneficiaries, and the general public about the policy and the serious repercussions of corrupt practices. By reinforcing this policy and raising awareness, the government can further deter corruption, promoting fairer and more effective social protection services, which will eventually fortify the public trust in the social protection system.

## Enhancing accountability through monitoring and evaluation systems

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- **We recommend that the government strengthen existing grievance redress mechanisms and ensure accountability in social protection programs through the capacity building of government staff.** Training and workshops should be implemented to enhance the knowledge and skills of government personnel, particularly in areas such as conflict resolution, complaint handling, and transparency measures. By reinforcing these mechanisms and ensuring staff are equipped to manage them effectively, the government can ensure that complaints and grievances are handled promptly and effectively, thus bolstering accountability and trust in social protection programs.
- **We also recommend promoting learning and quality through the evaluation of government programs in the realm of social protection.** This can be achieved through collaboration between humanitarian agencies and government departments dedicated to social protection. Regular evaluations can provide valuable insights into program effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that social protection schemes are meeting the needs of the beneficiaries.

## Inclusion and prioritisation of vulnerable groups

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- **We recommend ensuring information on programmes' enrolment is accessible to vulnerable groups, with a particular focus on gender and protection aspects in outreach and distribution modalities.** Additionally, humanitarian actors should continue fostering social cohesion and advocating for the inclusion of excluded population segments in these programmes. This enhances the reach and effectiveness of social protection initiatives.



## 9. ANNEXES

## Key Informant Interview (KII) Tool

Informant Information Sheet:	
Name of interviewer:	اسم المحاور:
Name of organisation:	اسم المؤسسة:
Name of the Interviewee:	اسم الشخص الذي أجريت معه المقابلة:
Role:	الدور الوظيفي، واسم المؤسسة:
Location (governorate, district, city):	الموقع (المحافظة، الحي، المدينة):
Date of the interview:	تاريخ المقابلة:
Contact Details:	معلومات التواصل:
Do you work in any particular social protection programme within the entity? هل تعمل في أي برنامج حماية اجتماعية معين داخل المؤسسة؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes. Please specify .....	
<input type="checkbox"/> نعم. يرجى التحديد .....	
<input type="checkbox"/> No, I don't have any engagement with SP programmes.	
<input type="checkbox"/> لا، ليس لدي أي ارتباط ببرامج الحماية الاجتماعية.	
From which perspective would you like to share your perceptions on the social protection system? من أي منظور ترغب في مشاركة تصوراتك حول نظام الحماية الاجتماعية؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> National level	
<input type="checkbox"/> المستوى الوطني	
<input type="checkbox"/> Governorate level. Which Governorate? .....	
<input type="checkbox"/> على مستوى المحافظة. أي محافظة؟ .....	
<input type="checkbox"/> District level. Which District? .....	
<input type="checkbox"/> مستوى القضاء. يرجى التحديد .....	



Questions:	Instructions
<b>1. Mapping Social Protection Programmes:</b>	<b>1. تحديد برامج الحماية الاجتماعية:</b>
1.1. What Social Protection programmes, falling under the authority of the department where you are employed, are being implemented in the governorate/district? 1.1. ما هي برامج الحماية الاجتماعية، التي تقع تحت سلطة الدائرة التي تعمل بها، والتي يتم تنفيذها في المحافظة / المديرية؟	<p><b>*Ensure that you are recording information about each programme separately</b></p> <p><b>Examples of target population:</b> IDPs, people with disabilities, returnees, children, refugees, the elderly, female-headed households, Universal targeting, host communities below the poverty line</p> <p><b>Examples of periodicity:</b> monthly, quarterly, biannually, annually</p> <p><b>Examples of duration:</b> once, twice, thrice</p> <p><b>Examples of the Modality:</b> cash, in-kind</p> <p><b>Examples of the delivery mechanism:</b> bank transfers, electronic cash cards, cash-in-hand...etc.)</p> <p><b>* تأكد من أنك تقوم بتسجيل المعلومات حول كل برنامج على حدة</b></p> <p><b>أمثلة على السكان المستهدفين:</b> النازحين ، والأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة، والعائدين، الأطفال ، اللاجئين ، وكبار السن، والأسر التي تعولها النساء ، استهداف شامل على المستوى الوطني، والمجتمعات المضيفة تحت خط الفقر</p> <p><b>أمثلة على فترة التكرار:</b> شهري، ربع سنوي، نصف سنوي، سنوي</p> <p><b>أمثلة على المدة:</b> لمرة واحدة، مرتين، ثلاث مرات</p> <p><b>أمثلة عن نوع الدعم:</b> نقدي، عيني</p> <p><b>أمثلة عن آلية التسليم:</b> تحويلات بنكية، بطاقات نقد إلكترونية، تسليم نقدي يدوي...الخ)</p>

A)	الإجاباتAnswer
Programmes Name اسم البرامج:	
Targeted population السكان المستهدفين:	
Government department الدائرة الحكومية:	
Frequency فترة التكرار:	
Periodicity الفترة الزمنية للدعم:	
Modality and Benefit نوع وقيمة الدعم:	
Delivery Mechanism(for cash modality): آلية التسليم (للطريقة النقدية):	
Documents required الوثائق المطلوبة:	

B)	الاجاباتAnswer
Programmes Name اسم البرامج:	
Targeted population السكان المستهدفين:	
Government department الدائرة الحكومية:	
Frequency فترة التكرار:	
Periodicity الفترة الزمنية للدعم:	
Modality and Benefit نوع وقيمة الدعم:	
Delivery Mechanism(for cash modality): آلية التسليم (للطريقة النقدية):	
Documents required الوثائق المطلوبة:	
C)	الاجاباتAnswer
Programmes Name اسم البرامج:	
Targeted population السكان المستهدفين:	
Government department الدائرة الحكومية:	
Frequency فترة التكرار:	
Periodicity الفترة الزمنية للدعم:	
Modality and Benefit نوع وقيمة الدعم:	
Delivery Mechanism(for cash modality): آلية التسليم (للطريقة النقدية):	
Documents required الوثائق المطلوبة:	
D)	الاجاباتAnswer
Programmes Name اسم البرامج:	
Targeted population السكان المستهدفين:	
Government department الدائرة الحكومية:	
Frequency فترة التكرار:	
Periodicity الفترة الزمنية للدعم:	
Modality and Benefit نوع وقيمة الدعم:	
Delivery Mechanism(for cash modality): آلية التسليم (للطريقة النقدية):	
Documents required الوثائق المطلوبة:	

<b>2. Geographical coverage of social protection programmes:</b>	
2. التغطية الجغرافية لبرامج الحماية الاجتماعية:	
1.1. How do you evaluate the geographical coverage of the programmes you described, and does it cover all districts/sub-districts within the authority of the department where you are employed? 1.1 كيف تقييم التغطية الجغرافية للبرامج التي وصفتها سابقاً، وهل تغطي جميع المناطق في المحافظة / القضاء ضمن سلطة القسم الذي تعمل فيه بما في ذلك المناطق الريفية؟	*Ensure you record the rationale behind the current coverage system for the various programmes in the area. * تأكد من تسجيل الهيكل المنطقي لنظام التغطية الجغرافية الحالية مع تسليط الضوء على أي اختلافات بناءً على نوع البرنامج
1.2. <b>Follow up:</b> If Not, Can you explain why the programmes do not cover all the districts/sub-districts? What difficulties does your authority face in achieving full coverage? 1.2 يتبع: إذا لم يكن الأمر كذلك، هل يمكنك توضيح سبب عدم تغطية البرامج لجميع المناطق / النواحي؟ ما الصعوبات التي تواجهها سلطنتكم في تحقيق التغطية الكاملة؟	

<b>2. Eligibility Criteria</b>	
2. المعايير المؤهلة	
<b>يتم طرح هذا السؤال ضمن المقابلات على مستوى المحافظة أو المستوى الوطني</b> <b>This question is asked during interviews at the governorate or national level.</b>	
2.1. Can you explain how the eligibility criteria are applied in social protection programmes and any challenges that have been experienced in its practical implementation on the ground? هل يمكنك شرح كيفية تطبيق معايير الأهلية في برامج الحماية الاجتماعية وأي تحديات تمت مواجهتها في التطبيق العملي لها على أرض الواقع؟	*If possible, probe the following during the interview as you see appropriate within the context of dialogue: a. Does the interviewee believe that the current eligibility criteria are fair and equitable to all populations in need, taking into account IDPs, Returnees and host community enrollment? b. Is it a unified eligibility criterion for various programmes or multiple criteria? c. When was the last time the eligibility criteria were reviewed? d. Is there any plan to revise or update the eligibility criteria soon, and if so, what changes does the interviewee recommend? * إن أمكن، تحقق مما يلي أثناء المقابلة كما تراه مناسباً في سياق الحوار: أ. هل يعتقد الشخص الذي تمت مقابلته أن معايير الأهلية الحالية عادلة ومنصفة لجميع السكان المحتاجين، مع الأخذ في الاعتبار النازحين والعائدين والمجتمع المضيف؟ ب. هل هو معيار استحقاق موحد لبرامج مختلفة أم معايير متعددة؟ ج. متى كانت آخر مرة تمت فيها مراجعة معايير الأهلية؟ د. هل هناك أي خطة لمراجعة معايير الأهلية أو تحديثها قريباً، وإذا كان الأمر كذلك، فما هي التغييرات التي يوصي بها الشخص الذي تتم مقابلته؟
2.2. <b>Follow up:</b> To the best of your knowledge, what measures are in place to ensure that the eligibility criteria are taken into consideration? Such as rules, regulations and operational manual 2.2 يتبع: على حد علمك، ما هي التدابير المعمول بها لضمان مراعاة معايير الأهلية؟ مثل القواعد واللوائح ودليل التشغيل	

<p><b>3. Outreach to promote awareness and understanding</b></p>	<p><b>3. التوعية لتعزيز الوعي فيما يخص البرامج</b></p>
<p>3.1. Can you explain what type of outreach efforts were made to increase awareness and understanding of various social protection programmes among the targeted communities that are available to them</p>	<p><b>*If possible, probe the following during the interview as you see appropriate within the context of dialogue:</b></p> <p>a. What are the methods and channels used (i.e., meetings, brochures, social media, awareness and information campaigns)</p> <p>b. How often and for how long do the outreach activities take place?</p>
<p>هل يمكنك توضيح نوع جهود التوعية التي بذلت لزيادة الوعي والادراك في ما يخص برامج الحماية الاجتماعية المختلفة والمتاحة للمجتمعات المستهدفة</p>	<p>c. What methods were used to ensure that individuals in rural and hard-to-reach areas</p> <p>d. What measures were undertaken to cover illiterate people and cater for different languages?</p> <p>e. What could the interviewee recommend or suggest to improve the outreach activities/campaigns</p> <p>* إن أمكن، تحقق مما يلي أثناء المقابلة كما تراه مناسبًا في سياق الحوار:</p> <p>أ. ما هي الأساليب والقنوات المستخدمة (مثل الاجتماعات والكتيبات ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وحملات التوعية والإعلام)</p> <p>ب. كم مرة ومتى تتم أنشطة التوعية؟</p> <p>ج. ما هي الأساليب التي تم استخدامها للتأكد من أن المعلومات متاحة للأفراد في المناطق الريفية والمناطق التي يصعب الوصول إليها</p> <p>د. ما هي الإجراءات التي تم اتخاذها للتأكد من أن المعلومات متاحة للأشخاص الأميين والمتحدثين بلغات مختلفة وذوي الإعاقات؟</p> <p>هـ. ما الذي يمكن للمضيف أن يوصي به أو يقترحه لتحسين أنشطة / حملات التوعية</p>

<p><b>4. Registration Process</b></p>	<p><b>4. عملية التسجيل</b></p>
<p>4.1. According to our information, there have been various registration processes for the different social protection programmes, including online or in-person registration by visiting the designated offices in each area. Can you describe the process applicants must follow to register for each programme under your department's authority?</p> <p>4.1 وفقًا لمعلوماتنا، كانت هناك عمليات تسجيل مختلفة لبرامج الحماية الاجتماعية، بما في ذلك التسجيل عبر الإنترنت أو التسجيل الشخصي من خلال زيارة المكاتب المخصصة في كل منطقة. هل يمكنك وصف العملية التي يجب على المتقدمين اتباعها للتسجيل في كل برنامج تحت سلطة إدارتكم؟</p>	<p><b>*If possible, probe the following during the interview as you see appropriate within the context of dialogue:</b></p> <p>a. Are all household members required to register, or is only the head of HH?</p> <p>b. What are the opening and closing hours for the registration offices in the area?</p> <p>c. Is it possible for beneficiaries to register for multiple SP programmes at one office?</p> <p>d. Is there a mechanism in place to avoid overlapping between different agencies and programmes</p> <p>e. Is there a mechanism in place to ensure the data protection of beneficiaries' information?</p> <p>f. if PwD or other specific populations can identify a proxy to do the registration.</p> <p>* إن أمكن، تحقق مما يلي أثناء المقابلة كما تراه مناسبًا في سياق الحوار:</p> <p>أ. هل يتم جمع معلومات جميع أفراد الأسرة للتسجيل أم معلومات رب الأسرة فقط؟</p> <p>ب. ما هي ساعات فتح وإغلاق مكاتب التسجيل في المنطقة؟</p> <p>ج. هل يمكن للمستفيدين التسجيل في عدة برامج في مكتب واحد؟</p>

	<p>د. هل توجد آلية لتجنب التداخل بين الوكالات والبرامج المختلفة</p> <p>هـ. هل توجد آلية لضمان حماية بيانات معلومات المستفيدين؟</p> <p>و. هل بإمكان الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة أو مجموعات سكانية محددة أخرى تحديد وكيل للقيام بالتسجيل.</p>
<p>4.2. Can you describe if there are measures to support individuals/households who do not possess the required documents to enrol in the social protection programmes?</p> <p>4.2 هل يمكنك وصف ما إذا كانت هناك تدابير لدعم الأفراد / الأسر الذين لا يمتلكون وثائق الهوية المطلوبة للتسجيل في برامج الحماية الاجتماعية؟</p>	<p><b>*If possible, probe the following during the interview as you see appropriate within the context of dialogue:</b></p> <p>a. Highlight if there are any variations in the official documents required for households from diverse demographic groups to register.</p> <p>b. Have you encountered cases where it was difficult for some individuals to provide the necessary documents for registering in SP programmes (such as IDPs, returnees, PwD, and Female HoHH)</p> <p>c. How long does it take to issue or renew the required documents</p> <p>d. Do you think vulnerable community requires support to procure the required documents? Please explain</p> <p>* إن أمكن، تحقق مما يلي أثناء المقابلة كما تراه مناسباً في سياق الحوار:</p> <p>أ. تسليط الضوء على ما إذا كان هناك أي اختلافات في وثائق الهوية المطلوبة للأسر من مجموعات ديموغرافية متنوعة للتسجيل.</p> <p>ب. هل واجهتم حالات استصعب على بعضهم توفير المستندات المطلوبة للتسجيل في برامج المساعدات (مثل النازحين ، والعائدين ، والأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة ، والأسر التي ترأسها نساء ... إلخ).</p> <p>هـ. هل تستغرق إصدار أو تجديد الوثائق المطلوبة فترة زمنية طويلة؟</p> <p>و. هل تعتقد أن بعض العائلات تحتاج إلى دعم للحصول على الوثائق المطلوبة؟ يرجى توضيح</p>
<p>4.3. Are there any special reach-out measures to ensure the programme enrolls families that are difficult to cover (e.g., hard to reach, marginalised, homeless individuals, undocumented individuals/HH)? Please explain</p> <p>4.3 هل توجد أي تدابير لضمان شمول العائلات التي يصعب شمولهم (على سبيل المثال، العائلات التي يصعب الوصول إليهم، المهمشين، أو الأفراد الذين لا مأوى لهم، أو الأفراد غير المسجلين في السجلات الرسمية)؟ يرجى التوضيح مع ذكر أنواع المجموعات والأسباب</p>	

5. The capacity of social workers	
<p>5. قدرة الأخصائيين الاجتماعيين  <u>يتم طرح هذا السؤال ضمن المقابلات على مستوى المحافظة أو المستوى الوطني (موظفين الوزارات في بغداد)</u>  <b>This question is asked during interviews at the governorate or national level</b></p>	
<p>5.1. Can you describe the current capacity of the social workers under your department's authority?            5.1 هل يمكنك وصف القدرة الحالية للأخصائيين الاجتماعيين الخاضعين لسلطة إدارتكم؟</p>	<p><b>*If possible, probe the following during the interview as you see appropriate within the context of dialogue:</b></p> <p>a. Do you have a dedicated team to manage the programme in the area?            b. Do social workers within the department possess the required skills, experiences and training?            c. Any suggestions or recommendations to strengthen the capacity of social workers within the department?</p> <p>* إن أمكن، تحقق مما يلي أثناء المقابلة كما تراه مناسبًا في سياق الحوار:            أ. هل لديك فريق متخصص لإدارة البرنامج في المنطقة؟            ب. هل يمتلك الأخصائيون الاجتماعيون داخل القسم المهارات والخبرات والتدريب المطلوب؟            ج. أي اقتراحات أو توصيات لتعزيز قدرات الأخصائيين الاجتماعيين داخل القسم؟</p>

6. Barriers and Recommendations:	
<p>6.1. I would like to inquire and discuss the various barriers that could hinder vulnerable populations, including IDPs, Returnees and host communities, from accessing social protection programmes in your area            6.1 أود الاستفسار ومناقشة مختلف الحواجز التي يمكن أن تعيق السكان الضعفاء، بما في ذلك النازحين والعاثدين والمجتمعات المضيفة، من الوصول إلى برامج الحماية الاجتماعية في منطقتك</p>	<p><b>*When possible, refer to these examples for a comprehensive representation of the barriers</b>  <b>Examples of the general barriers:</b>            Geographical (distance), transportation infrastructure and cost, linguistic, access to information  <b>Examples of regulatory barriers:</b>            Constant changes in policy, funding constraints, structure of government programmes, people's trust in the institutions, and top-down decision-making process.  <b>Examples of design and implementation barriers:</b>            Outreach activities and communications, Inclusion/Exclusion system accuracy, Registration support level to PWDs, Elderlies, illiterate...etc, Programme Coverage (rural vs urban), access to technology (internet, social media..etc), outdated BNFs data, Complaints/Appeal mechanism inefficiency. Payment difficulties (e.g. documentation, proxy arrangement)  <b>Examples of socio-cultural barriers:</b>            Myths and rumours around Social Protection programmes, The habit of non-claiming of rights</p>

\* عند الإمكان، راجع هذه الأمثلة للحصول على تمثيل شامل للعوائق  
أمثلة على العوائق العامة:

عوائق جغرافية (المسافة).....

وسائل النقل والتكلفة.....

عوائق لغوية.....

الحصول على المعلومات.....

أمثلة على الحواجز التنظيمية:

التغييرات المستمرة في السياسات.....

شح الموارد المالية.....

هيكلية البرامج الحكومية.....

ثقة الناس في المؤسسات.....

عملية صنع القرار من أعلى إلى أسفل.....

أمثلة على حواجز التصميم والتنفيذ:

برامج التوعية والتواصل.....

دقة نظام الشمول / الاستبعاد.....

مستوى دعم المتوفر للأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة، المسنين، الأميين في محاور التسجيل.....

الوصول إلى التكنولوجيا (الإنترنت، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ... إلخ).....

بيانات قديمة للمستفيدين.....

ضعف آليات الشكاوى و الاستئناف.....

صعوبات في عمليات البات التسليم.....

أمثلة على الحواجز الاجتماعية والثقافية:

الخرافات والشائعات حول برامج الحماية الاجتماعية.....

عادة عدم المطالبة بالحقوق.....

**6.2 Probe:** Can you describe if a particular group of people faces more barriers than others? And what population groups are not included?

6.2 تحقق: هل يمكنك وصف ما إذا كانت مجموعة معينة من الأشخاص تواجه حواجز أكثر من غيرها؟ وماهي المجموعات السكانية الغير مشمولة ضمن برامج الدعم الحكومية؟

7 I would greatly appreciate your recommendations and suggestions on strengthening social protection programmes and making them more inclusive and effective for those in need.

7. هل لديكم أي توصيات واقتراحات بشأن تعزيز برامج الحماية الاجتماعية وجعلها أكثر شمولاً وفعالية لمجموعات مختلفة من المجتمع المحلي

Probe of there is any recommendations and suggestions on putting in place any specific system to cover additional needs (e.g. maternity, PwD, Pension, support to cover education cost, unemployment insurance...etc.)

هل هنالك توصيات واقتراحات بشأن وضع أي نظام محدد لتغطية الاحتياجات الإضافية (على سبيل المثال ، الأمومة ، الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة ، المعاشات التقاعدية ، الدعم لتغطية تكاليف التعليم ، التأمين ضد البطالة ... إلخ)

## Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Tool

Questions الأسئلة	Instructions تعليمات
<p>1. Please describe the social protection programmes that you are aware of in your area, including the name, target population, name of the providing government department, frequency, periodicity, modality and benefits</p> <p>1. يرجى ذكر برامج الدعم الحكومية على حد علمكم في هذه المنطقة</p>	<p><b>Examples of targeted populations: IDPs, PLWDs, Returnees, elderlies, female-headed HHS, Universal, and Host communities below the poverty line</b></p> <p>Examples of frequency: monthly, quarterly, biannually, and annually.</p> <p>Examples of periodicity:</p>
	<p>أمثلة على السكان المستهدفين: النازحين داخليًا، والأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة، والعائدين، وكبار السن، والأسر التي تعولها النساء استهداف شامل على المستوى الوطني، والمجتمعات المضيفة تحت خط الفقر</p> <p>أمثلة على فترة التكرار: شهري، ربع سنوي، نصف سنوي، سنوي</p> <p>أمثلة على المدة: لمرة واحدة، مرتين، ثلاث مرات</p> <p>أمثلة عن نوع الدعم: نقدي، عيني</p>
	<p>اكتب رقم المشاركين هنا:</p> <p><b>List the Participants No. here:</b></p> <p>الإجابات Answer</p>
A)	
Programmes Name اسم البرامج:	
Targeted population السكان المستهدفين:	
Government department الدائرة الحكومية:	
Frequency فترة التكرار:	
Periodicity الفترة الزمنية للدعم:	
Modality and Benefit نوع وقيمة الدعم:	
Documents required الوثائق المطلوبة:	



	<b>اكتب رقم المشاركين هنا:</b>
B)	<b>List the Participants No. here:</b> الاجاباتAnswer
Programmes Name اسم البرامج:	
Targeted population السكان المستهدفين:	
Government department الدائرة الحكومية:	
Frequency فترة التكرار:	
Periodicity الفترة الزمنية للدعم:	
Modality and Benefit نوع وقيمة الدعم:	
Documents required الوثائق المطلوبة:	
	<b>اكتب رقم المشاركين هنا:</b>
C)	<b>List the Participants No. here:</b> الاجاباتAnswer
Programmes Name اسم البرامج:	
Targeted population السكان المستهدفين:	
Government department الدائرة الحكومية:	
Frequency فترة التكرار:	
Periodicity الفترة الزمنية للدعم:	
Modality and Benefit نوع وقيمة الدعم:	
Documents required الوثائق المطلوبة:	
	<b>اكتب رقم المشاركين هنا:</b>
D)	<b>List the Participants No. here:</b> الاجاباتAnswer
Programmes Name اسم البرامج:	
Targeted population السكان المستهدفين:	
Government department الدائرة الحكومية:	
Frequency فترة التكرار:	
Periodicity الفترة الزمنية للدعم:	
Modality and Benefit نوع وقيمة الدعم:	
Documents required الوثائق المطلوبة:	

<p>2. Could you describe your experience with the registration process to benefit from the Social Protection Programmes?  2. هل يمكنك وصف تجربتك من عملية التسجيل للاستفادة من برامج الحماية الاجتماعية وفيما يتعلق بالمحاور التالية؟</p>	<p>Probe the experience with the registration office (distance, support...etc)  Probe the documentation required,  Probe the time between registration and receiving the benefits or receiving feedback  Probe if PwD or other specific populations can identify a proxy to do the registration.</p>
<p>Participants no. and answers:.....: ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:</p> <p><b>Probe: the experience with the registration office (distance, support...etc.) or the experience with the online registration application:</b>  <b>تحقق: التجربة مع مقر مركز التسجيل (المسافة، الدعم ... إلخ) أو تجربة نموذج التسجيل عبر الإنترنت:</b>  Participants no. and answers:.....: ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:</p> <p><b>Probe: Encountering difficulties regarding the required documentation (such as missing records, cost, drawn-out and complicated procedures...etc.)</b>  <b>تحقق: مواجهة صعوبات تتعلق بالوثائق المطلوبة (مثل السجلات المفقودة والتكلفة والإجراءات الطويلة والمعقدة ... إلخ)</b>  Participants no. and answers:.....: ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:</p> <p><b>Probe: the period between registration and receiving the benefits or receiving feedback</b>  <b>تحقق: الفترة الزمنية بين التسجيل وتلقي الدعم أو استلام الرد / التغذية الراجعة</b>  Participants no. and answers:.....: ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:</p> <p><b>Probe: if people can identify a proxy to do the registration (such as elderlies, PwDs, female Headed HHs).</b>  <b>تحقق: مما إذا كان بإمكان الأشخاص تحديد وكيل للقيام بالتسجيل (مثل كبار السن والأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة والأسر التي تعولها النساء... إلخ).</b>  Answers.....: الاجابات:</p> <p><b>Probe: if you have had a visit from a government department to assess your household's needs or for verification after submitting a registration application?</b>  <b>تحقق: ما إذا تمت زيارتكم من إحدى الدوائر الحكومية لتقييم احتياجات الأسرة أو التأكد من ان الأسرة مستحقة للدعم حسب معايير الاهلية بعد تقديم طلب التسجيل؟</b>  Participants no. and answers:.....: ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:</p>	

<p>3. Can you describe your or your relatives' or neighbours' experience and the impact of benefiting from social protection programmes  3. هل يمكنك وصف تجربتك أو تجربة أقاربك أو جيرانك وأثر الاستفادة من برامج الحماية الاجتماعية ضمن المحاور التالية</p>	
<p><b>Probe if the support was sufficient to achieve its intended purpose: such as covering basic needs or elevating/reducing poverty level/provide sufficient food</b>  <b>تحقق: ما إذا كان الدعم كافياً لتحقيق الغرض المقصود منه: مثل تغطية الاحتياجات الأساسية أو رفع / خفض مستوى الفقر / توفير الغذاء اللازم... إلخ</b>  Participants no. and answers:.....: ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:</p> <p><b>Probe: If the government support was provided fully or partially according to your entitlement and rights? If partially, what are the reasons?</b>  <b>تحقق: ما إذا كانت المساعدة الحكومية قد تم توفيرها بالكامل ام بشكل جزئي وفقاً للأهلية وحقوقك؟ وما هي الاسباب في حال توفيرها بشكل جزئي؟</b>  Participants no. and answers:.....: ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:</p> <p><b>Probe: if the beneficiary receives government assistance consistently. If not, what are the reasons:</b>  <b>تحقق: مما إذا كان المستفيد يتلقى الدعم الحكومي بصورة مستمرة وباتساق. وما هي الأسباب في حال عدم الاتساق؟</b></p>	

ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:.....:Participants no. and answers:

**Probe:** if the beneficiary has undertaken any action to claim the remaining entitlement/support. What was the response/feedback from the designated authority?

**تحقق:** مما إذا كان المستفيد قد اتخذ أي إجراء للمطالبة بالاستحقاق / الدعم المتبقي. ماذا كانت الاستجابة / التغذية الراجعة من القسم المسؤول

ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:.....:Participants no. and answers:

**Probe:** For participants who do not receive support from the government: What are the reasons for not participating in social protection programmes?

**تحقق:** المشاركين الغير مستفيدين من الدعم الحكومي: ماهي أسباب عدم انضمامكم الى برامج الحماية الاجتماعية (برامج الدعم الحكومي)؟

ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:.....:Participants no. and answers:

4. Can you share your experience on the modality of government support concerning the following aspects:

4. هل يمكنك أن تشارك تجربتك فيما يخص طريقة ونوع المساعدة المقدمة من قبل البرامج الحكومية:

ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:.....:Participants no. and answers:

**Probe:** what would be the preferred modality? And why?

**تحقق:** هل يفضلون طريقة دعم عن أخرى (النقد، مقابل الدعم العيني) وما هي أسباب تلك التفضيلات؟

ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:.....:Participants no. and answers:

**Probe:** Can you share your experience with the distribution and delivery mechanism and if you faced any difficulties or challenges during this experience?

**تحقق:** هل يمكنك مشاركة تجربتكم فيما يخص آلية التوزيع والتسليم وهل واجهتم أي صعوبات او تحديات خلال هذه التجربة؟ (آلية التوزيع: مثل مراكز التوزيع للدعم العيني. آلية التسليم: مثل البطاقات الالكترونية للدعم النقدي...الخ)

ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:.....:Participants no. and answers:

**Probe:** Any suggestions or recommendations to enhance the distribution process, modality and delivery mechanism...etc.?

**تحقق:** أي اقتراحات أو توصيات لتحسين عملية التوزيع وطريقة الدعم وآلية التسليم ... إلخ؟

ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:.....:Participants no. and answers:

<p>5. Can you share your experience obtaining information about government support programmes regarding the following aspects:</p> <p>5. يرجى مشاركة تجربتك في الحصول على معلومات حول برامج الدعم الحكومية فيما يتعلق بالجوانب التالية:</p>	
<p><b>Probe:</b> Did you manage to gather clear information about the eligibility criteria for different government support programmes, and do you believe the criteria are fair?</p> <p><b>تحقق:</b> هل استطعت الحصول على معلومات واضحة فيما يتعلق بمعايير الأهلية لبرامج الدعم الحكومية المختلفة وهل هي معايير عادلة بالنسبة لكم؟ (أمثلة: معايير أهلية برامج دعم ذوي الإعاقة، معايير أهلية برامج دعم الاسر التي تعولها النساء...الخ)</p> <p>ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:.....: Participants no. and answers:</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> Can you specify the channels that you were able to use to access the information on government support programmes? (Such as Government websites, printed materials or brochures, social media, community outreach campaigns, Word of moutn from social workers, radio or television, family or friends)</p> <p><b>تحقق:</b> هل يمكنك تحديد القنوات التي تمكنت من استخدامها للوصول إلى المعلومات المتعلقة ببرامج الدعم الحكومية؟ (مثل: مواقع الويب الحكومية، أو المواد المطبوعة أو الكتيبات، أو وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، أو حملات التوعية المجتمعية، أو التحدث مع الأخصائيين الاجتماعيين، أو الراديو أو التلفزيون، أو العائلة أو الأصدقاء)</p> <p>ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:.....: Participants no. and answers:</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> Please explain the adequacy and sufficiency of the information you were able to access on government support programmes?</p> <p><b>تحقق:</b> هل كانت المعلومات التي تمكنت من الوصول إليها دقيقة وكافية فيما يتعلق ببرامج الدعم الحكومية؟</p> <p>ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:.....: Participants no. and answers:</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> What barriers have been encountered in accessing information, and what suggestions are being recommended by the participants to overcome these barriers?</p> <p><b>تحقق:</b> هل كانت هناك أي عوائق أمام الوصول إلى المعلومات، وما هي الاقتراحات التي توصي بها المجموعة للتغلب على هذه الحواجز؟</p> <p>ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:.....: Participants no. and answers:</p>	
<p>6. Can you explain which of the following barriers could affect you or a particular group of people from accessing social protection programmes in your area</p> <p>6. هل يمكنك شرح أي من العوائق التالية يمكن أن تؤثر عليك أو على مجموعة معينة من الأشخاص من الوصول إلى برامج الدعم الحكومية في منطقتك</p>	<p><b>*When possible, Refer to these examples for a comprehensive representation of the barriers</b></p> <p><b>Examples of general barriers:</b> Transportation infrastructure and cost, Linguistic barriers, Official documents,</p> <p><b>Examples of organizational barriers:</b> People trust in government institutions, Biases towards specific population groups, The decision-making process is top-down, administrative favouritism</p> <p><b>Examples of design and implementation barriers:</b> transparency in targeting, Accuracy of the inclusion/exclusion system, The level of registration support (such as PWDs)</p>

, elderly, illiterate) Geographic coverage of programs (rural vs. urban), Access to technology (internet, social media, etc.) Inefficiency of the complaints/appeals mechanism

**Examples of social and cultural barriers:**  
Myths and rumors about social protection programmes, the habit of not claiming rights, The constant movement of the family  
Suffering from stigma

\* اشرح الأمثلة التالية للحصول على تمثيل شامل للعوائق  
\* إذا كنت تعتقد أن بعض القضايا لا يمكن شرحها ضمن مجموعة الحوار. تحدث مع بعض الأشخاص على حدة بعد انتهاء الجلسة

#### أمثلة على العوائق العامة:

وسائل النقل وتكلفتها: ..... ارقام المشاركين.  
عوائق لغوية (عربي، كردي، تركماني... الخ): ..... ارقام المشاركين.  
الوثائق الرسمية المطلوبة لمختلف البرامج: ..... ارقام المشاركين.

#### أمثلة على الحواجز التنظيمية:

ثقة المواطنين في مؤسسات الدعم الحكومية: ..... ارقام المشاركين.  
التحيزات تجاه مجموعات سكانية محددة: ..... ارقام المشاركين  
وعملية صنع القرار من أعلى إلى أسفل ..... ارقام المشاركين  
المحسوبية والمحاباة الإدارية (الواسطة) ..... ارقام المشاركين

#### أمثلة على حواجز التصميم والتنفيذ:

قلة الشفافية في استهداف المستفيدين: ..... ارقام المشاركين  
دقة نظام الشمول / الاستبعاد: ..... ارقام المشاركين  
مستوى دعم التسجيل للأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة: ..... ارقام المشاركين  
مستوى دعم التسجيل للأشخاص المسنين: ..... ارقام المشاركين  
مستوى دعم التسجيل للأشخاص الأميين: ..... ارقام المشاركين  
التغطية الجغرافية للبرامج (الريفية مقابل الحضرية) ..... ارقام المشاركين  
الوصول إلى التكنولوجيا (الإنترنت، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، إلخ) ..... ارقام المشاركين  
عدم كفاءة آلية الشكاوى / الاستئناف: ..... ارقام المشاركين

#### أمثلة على الحواجز الاجتماعية والثقافية:

الشائعات المتكررة حول برامج الحماية الاجتماعية: ..... ارقام المشاركين  
عادة عدم المطالبة بالحقوق: ..... ارقام المشاركين  
التنقل المستمر للأسرة: ..... ارقام المشاركين  
المعاناة من وصمة العار في استلام المساعدات: ..... ارقام المشاركين

**Probe:** Can you describe if a particular group of people faces more barriers than others? And what population groups are not included?

**تحقق:** هل يمكنك وصف ما إذا كانت مجموعة معينة من الأشخاص تواجه حواجز أكثر من غيرها؟ وماهي المجموعات السكانية الغير مشمولة؟

ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:..... Participants no. and answers:

7. Can you explain if other supporting networks exist in your area? How is the vulnerable/poor population supported?

7. هل يوجد أي شبكات دعم أخرى في منطقتك؟ (مثل: منظمات المجتمع المدني، المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية أو المحلية)

Participants no. and answers:.....:ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:

8. What general improvements and recommendations would you suggest for the social assistance programmes in your area that have not been discussed to support you and your community better?

8. ما هي التحسينات والتوصيات العامة التي تقترحها لبرامج الدعم الحكومية في منطقتك والتي لم تتم مناقشتها؟

Participants no. and answers:.....:ارقام المشاركين والاجابات:

