

Research Report

East Africa Food Security and Livelihoods Programme Review

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Research Information at a Glance	
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Research focal point	Osob Osman, Global Accountability & Learning Lead osob.osman@irworldwide.org Yusuf Roble, Regional Director – East Africa yusuf.ahmed@irworldwide.org

TANGO Research Team	
Mr. Bruce Raveslout	TANGO Executive Officer & Team Leader
Mr. Tanay Amirapu	Senior Researcher & Writer
Ms. Rutere Kagendo	Senior Researcher
Ms. Vanessa King	Research Support

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands Region
BRIYC	Building Resilience for Yei IDPs and Host Communities
CAHW	Community-Based Animal Health Workers
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
CLTS	Community-led Total Sanitation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
EA	East Africa
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FSL	Food Security and Livelihoods
GSLA	Group Savings and Loans Associations
HEAL	Health, Education and Agricultural Livelihood Support in Balcad, Benadir & Beledweyne
HQ	Head Quarters
ICReP	Integrated Community Resilience Programme
IDP	Internally Displacement Person
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
IR	Islamic Relief
IR EA	Islamic Relief East Africa
IRW	Islamic Relief Worldwide
KII	Key Informant Interview
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
PIA	Priority Intervention Areas
RQs	Research Questions
RT	Research Team
SARiA	Strengthening Agricultural Resilience in Awdal, Somaliland
SO	Strategic Objectives
TANGO	Technical Assistance to Non-Government Organisations
ToC	Theory of Change
UNOCHA	United Nations Office Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs
USD	United States Dollar
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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Executive Summary

This is a review of Islamic Relief East Africa's (IR EA) current and recent portfolio of food security and livelihood (FSL) programmes. The purpose of this review is to assess how well the East Africa programme portfolio is aligned with IRW regional and global strategies and identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for development.

Objectives and Scope

The review has the following objectives:

1. To assess the relevance of East Africa's FSL interventions in relation to alignment with IRW policies and strategies, and appropriateness to need.
2. To examine the key process and programme results of select projects (2019 – 2023) with the purpose of identifying learnings and best practices.
3. To provide evidence-based recommendations to strengthen IR East Africa's strategic planning process.

The scope of this research covers the 5 countries in the IR EA portfolio: Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan. To focus this research and provide capture key lessons, a sample of 10 FSL projects from the East Africa portfolio (2 per country) was reviewed to produce evidence towards the RQs.

This review served to understand broad strengths and weaknesses of IRW's FSL portfolio in East Africa through tailored lines of inquiry. It was not intended as an evaluation of programmes. Rather, conclusions, insights and recommendations are meant to inform the upcoming FSL strategy development process.

Review Methodology

The overall approach to this review involved mixed-methods data collection, including a structured secondary literature review, and remote key informant interviews (KIIs).

Secondary data review. Through close collaboration, the Research Team (RT) and IRW developed a project inventory, detailing key programming elements for each of the sample projects of this research. The programming elements that were identified reflect the evidence needed to answer the research questions. The RT first reviewed key strategy and programme documentation and populated the inventory, which was then provided to the country teams to provide further necessary information.

Remote key informant interviews and discussions. The RT engaged with 20 key informants at the country, regional and global levels through remote semi-structured interviews. The selection of KIIs was purposive, based on their knowledge of FSL programmes in the region.

Review Conclusions

RQ1: To what extent is the 2019-2022 project portfolio strategically positioned against sector needs and stated strategic objectives

The project portfolio aligns with regional FSL strategies through its strong focus on agriculture and livestock interventions. Programmes prioritise these approaches because they show immediate

results among rightsholders and their communities. The other components of regional FSL strategies, particularly disaster risk reduction and recovery, do not feature as strongly within the programming footprint of the region. The portfolio did not demonstrate sufficiently integrated programming at the country level across regional strategic objectives, and there is a need to capacitate staff on strategic engagement.

However, there is a disconnect between regional strategies and the readiness of country offices. Country offices do not have the bandwidth and resourcing to operationalise the full breadth of strategic objectives established at the regional level. Factors such as COVID-19 and staff turnover have contributed to this lack of bandwidth. Regional strategies have high ambitions which, while responsive to critical needs of the Horn of Africa, do not reflect the current readiness of the country offices.

RQ2: How effective, sustainable and innovative was programming in the 2019-2022 portfolio?

Given the strong focus on agriculture and livestock interventions within the portfolio, the majority of lessons and best practices were focused on these activities. The quality of lessons points broadly to IRW's familiarity of programming in these intervention areas, but it was difficult to ascertain how effective programming was in other domains. Due to chronic external shocks and stresses that characterise the region, sustaining programme results remained a challenge across the portfolio. Funding availability and short project cycles have significantly affected IRW's ability to ensure programme outcomes are sustained in view of the dynamic shocks and stresses of the region.

There are concerns around the level and quality of reflection in programme learning and the region lacks a mechanism to harvest and disseminate lessons in a structured way.

RQ3: What are the takeaways and learning from RQ 1 and 2 that should inform East Africa strategic focus in terms of programme, advocacy and funding planning?

With regards to programming and achieving FSL goals for the region, there is a continued need to strengthen relationships with local stakeholders and CSOs. Country teams have developed working relationships with national governments through joint targeting and programme delivery over the last four years. However, IRW does not capitalise on the strengths and presence of comparable organisations in the region, who do similar programming and are better resourced and capacitated than IR's country offices.

There is no clear FSL advocacy strategy for the region, which is a critical gap that needs to be addressed. There are opportunities to develop a structured strategy that is centred around supporting country capacity strengthening, leveraging consolidated partnerships with humanitarian agencies and towards an agenda of localisation.

The East Africa portfolio – like many other comparable development organisations – is challenged with limited options for long-term and flexible funding for multi-year FSL programmes. This prompts exploration into not only changing IR funding partners' current short-term funding cycles, but also into external (non-IR) partners, such as bilateral and UN agencies.

TANGO Insights

To support the upcoming strategic development process, the RT proposed the following insights. Insights are subjective, based on TANGO observations gathered from interaction with IRW throughout this review and other engagements.

Insights for each RQ

RQ 1: Strategic Positioning. There are deficits in (i) the in-house technical capacity and (2) in technical partnerships across operations. This has resulted in difficulties in translating strategic priorities into localised solutions. The current set of tools and approaches leads to little deviation in how IRW approaches its FSL work across East Africa. There is mostly a singular focus at the beneficiary level and insufficient targeting of other key stakeholders, like livelihood/market intermediaries and government. The lack of partnerships at country level also limits IRW exposure to leading practice in its sectors. This, coupled with small funding and isolated agriculture interventions, make IRW a smaller player and significance in the sector can likely be contested. The regional strategies overall appear too ambitious in view of the capacity of the country offices. It might be more suitable as a Theory of Change, where IRW then identifies in which pathways (and where) it (1) directly intervenes and (2) engages in partners towards a common ToC goal.

RQ 2: Programming. There appears to be a disconnect between what HQ (both at international and regional HQ levels) thinks is possible at the operational level, and what operations can feasibly carry out. Technical capacity at the operational level focuses on intervention capacity, not in support systems like MEAL. While it is understandable that operations are investing capacity investments that support direct interventions, there are questions to the level of funding that should be distributed centrally (i.e. regionally/HQ) to support core support services to match its mandates. Regarding sustainability, the projects are too short and small scale, too focussed on productivity and too fragmented to result in tangible sustainability. For innovation, IRW is not practicing innovation in terms of new and promising practices – this should be removed as a strategic priority/objective. Instead, innovation can be redefined for IRW as institutionalising existing sector leading practice into its programmes, for both intervention level and support systems.

RQ 3: Critical Considerations (strategic focus, funding, advocacy). There is room for improvement on IRW's current engagement with other sector stakeholders. While current engagement is sufficient for current programming goals, IRW can be differentiating themselves further from other organisations. This, coupled with strengthening how operations contribute to regional ToC/strategies, are critical considerations when exploring further funding and programming partnerships. Exploring other external funding partners (i.e. beyond IR Federation) is essential; the current focus on internal funding is too high and this is known to undermine MEAL investments. Rather than developing an advocacy strategy, it may be more appropriate to develop a communication strategy – this would place focus instead on two key areas: (i) making wider stakeholders aware of IRW's capacities and willingness to engage in the sector; (ii) creating a plan for engaging the wider IR Federation to address some of issues identified, towards an agreed integrated and long-term programmatic approach and funding model.

Review Recommendations

The following are recommendations emerging out of this review with specific reference to the upcoming FSL strategy development process.

Responsibility for implementing these recommendations lies with the regional FSL development team, in close collaboration with HQ colleagues.

#	Recommendation
1	Reposition the current strategic objectives within a sector Theory of Change that mentions all issues of importance to FSL security in the Horn of Africa region. Then identify where IRW will strategically prioritise its resources; these priority areas become the strategic objectives that IRW will measurably achieve in the next strategy cycle. Strategic prioritisation includes taking full account of the observations presented in this review. These are things where change is more directly attributable to IRW, i.e. an attribution model.
2	For all TOC domains and pathways where IRW will not directly intervene, identify partnerships that will enable IRW to engage in comprehensive programming with and through other key sector stakeholders. This issue can be tackled at two levels: (i) through leveraging IRW's international networks such as Interaction, and (ii) by providing country operations with a clear mandate to develop local and regional partnerships keeping in mind principles of localisation.
3	Define the IRW contribution to longer-term FSL systems building beyond a single strategic cycle, i.e. a contribution model. This can include identifying key areas for collaboration with government, i.e., government capacity strengthening, or even be as basic as identifying principles of operation that define how IRW will work with government stakeholders at all levels, in all activities.
4	Develop a learning agenda that is directly linked to the TOC assumptions. In other words, where there exist questions or uncertainty around the logic inferred across in TOC pathways, specifically those pathways where IRW is directly intervening, those issues should be researched and tracked through an ongoing learning agenda. This includes processes that enable reflection and utilisation of research results.
5	Develop and formulate a clear governance structure that demonstrates how HQ, regional and operations resources will stack up to deliver success for IRW's strategic objectives and for a meaningful contribution to FSL sector progress as a whole
6	Present the IRW differentiating factors clearly in the strategy, i.e., what sets IRW apart from other organisations and why should IRW be a preferred partner for sector stakeholders. Evidence for differentiators is thin but possible areas to research further are its programming approaches that are appropriate to Islamic communities, its long-term commitment to target areas even if this is through small and shorter projects, and its commitment to working with local CSOs (localisation agenda linkages)
7	Any internal strategic discussion on advocacy priorities should link to where IRW lands regarding differentiating factors. One area to consider is its potential role as a champion of localisation.
8	Once the strategy is completed, it should be accompanied by two additional documents: first, a detailed implementation plan for the strategy that sets out timebound metrics and targets for the internal and external change envisaged under this strategy; second, a summary strategy brief and communication plan for relevant sector stakeholders including implementing, technical and funding.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Features

1. This is a review of Islamic Relief East Africa’s (IR EA) current and recent portfolio of food security and livelihood (FSL) programmes. Technical Assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) International, an independent research and evaluation company, was hired to carry out the review. The purpose of this review is to assess how well the East Africa programme portfolio is aligned with IRW regional and global strategies and identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for development.
2. This research is guided by a set of Research Questions (RQs) developed in accordance with the Terms of Reference (TOR) and confirmed during the inception phase. These RQs were updated across the review to reflect emerging lines of inquiry. The final RQs are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Research Questions

#	Research Questions
RQ 1	To what extent is the 2019-2022 project portfolio strategically positioned against sector needs and stated strategic objectives?
1.1	How aligned is the portfolio to the 2019 FSL and 2019-2022 regional strategic objectives?
1.2	How appropriate (relevant, coherent) is the portfolio to FSL sector needs and priorities?
RQ 2	How effective, sustainable and innovative was programming in the 2019-2022 portfolio?
2.1	What are the lessons learned and best practices of effective programming?
2.2	What are the lessons learned and best practices in terms of programme sustainability?
2.3	What are the lessons and best practices of programme innovation?
RQ 3	What are the takeaways and learning from RQ 1 and 2 that should inform East Africa strategic focus in term of programme, advocacy and funding planning?
3.1	What are critical programming considerations for IRW in East Africa?
3.2	What are critical advocacy considerations for IRW in East Africa?
3.3	What are key funding considerations for IRW in East Africa.

3. The review has the following objectives:¹
 1. To assess the relevance of East Africa’s FSL interventions in relation to alignment with IRW policies and strategies, and appropriateness to need.
 2. To examine the key process and programme results of select projects (2019 – 2023) with the purpose of identifying learnings and best practices.
 3. To provide evidence-based recommendations to strengthen IR East Africa’s strategic planning process.
4. The scope of this research covers the 5 countries in the IR EA portfolio: Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan. To focus this research and provide capture key lessons, a sample of 10 FSL projects

¹ The purpose and objectives presented here are consistent with the Terms of Reference (TOR); no changes were made.

from the East Africa portfolio (2 per country) was reviewed to produce evidence towards the RQs. The details of the sample portfolio are outlined in [Appendix 5: Full Project Narratives](#).

1.2. Scope of this Review

- This exercise served to understand broad strengths and weaknesses of IRW’s FSL portfolio in East Africa through tailored and specific lines of inquiry (RQs above). It is not intended as an evaluation of programmes nor to develop IRW’s upcoming FSL strategy. Rather, conclusions, insights and recommendations are meant to *inform* the upcoming FSL strategy development process.²

2. Review Methodology

2.1. Summary of Methods

- This research followed the methodology agreed upon in the Inception Report.³ The overall approach involves mixed-methods data collection, including a structured secondary literature review, and remote key informant interviews (KIIs).

Data sources and data collection

- Secondary data review.** Through close collaboration, the RT and IRW developed a project inventory, detailing key programming elements for each of the sample projects of this research. The programming elements identified reflect the evidence needed to answer the RQs. The RT first reviewed key strategy and programme documentation and populated the inventory, which was then provided to the country teams to provide further necessary information. Programme elements detailed in the inventory is detailed below:

Table 2 Project inventory elements.

Elements identified by IRW	Elements Identified by RT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budgetary information - Primary Intervention Areas - Primary activities/interventions - FSL components and features - Sustainability mechanisms - Key programme innovations - Outcomes - MEAL outputs (lessons) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key Resilience Outcomes / Capacities Strengthened - Lessons learned (in the context of and calibrated to broader FSL sector learning) - Good practices (in the context of and calibrated to broader FSL sector leading practice)

- Remote key informant interviews and discussions.** The RT interviewed a total of 20 key informants via online platforms. These consisted of key IRW staff at country, regional and global levels. The selection of KIIs was purposive, based on their knowledge of FSL programmes in the region. The stakeholder groups consulted is as follows:

² While the findings and conclusions are evidenced based, the insights do not cite specific sector practices and strategies of other organisations.

³ See [Appendix 2: Research Approach](#)

Stakeholder Group	Purpose	Key informants
Regional & strategic staff	To understand how the regional strategy is operationalised across the EA portfolio and identify gaps in programmatic focus.	3
Programme staff of the sample projects	To understand programme realities and outcomes, including strengths, challenges and factors affecting results. This group includes Programme Heads/Managers and MEAL staff.	14
Strategic staff & donors at the global level	To understand the alignment of regional strategy and priorities with IRW's global mandates,	3

9. Country-level interviews were conducted in 'sessions' – 2 sessions per country, with 2-3 informants per session. In some sessions, not every informant attended but the session was marked as complete if at least one informant was interviewed.⁴ The list of informants who participated in these activities is presented in *Appendix 3: List of Key Informants*.

Data analysis methods

10. IRW documents and interview data were reviewed against the research matrix to produce emerging findings. Data analysis progress was regularly discussed during RT meetings to fine-tune areas of inquiry, assess saturation of thematic areas, and advance the formulation of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
11. **Triangulation, sense-making, and validation of analysis results.** This is a mixed-methods research that has drawn on multiple primary and secondary data sources premised on the triangulation of findings across sources. The RT systematically reviewed all provided sources pertinent to each RQ and sought to present a robust evidence base for each finding and conclusion presented. Where data and information were sparse, unclear, conflicting, or inconclusive, the team consulted relevant documents and stakeholders to obtain a clearer picture or explain why these data limitations and validity issues may exist. Some interviews were conducted following the development of the first draft, as a way to validate and sense-check emerging findings and conclusions.

2.2. Limitations of the Review

12. There were a couple of key research limitations that needs to be considered when examining and applying the review findings and conclusions. Feedback from senior IRW staff highlight these limitations provide key learning for wider IRW studies and evaluations, which often feature similar challenges. These are listed below:
13. **Availability of respondents.** It was identified in the inception phase that many key project staff may have moved on from the organisation, resulting in losses of institutional and programming memory. This informed the sampling of the respondents for this review; the RT worked closely with IRW to identify strategic and programming staff most suitable for the projects under review. The review also focused on key strategic elements, so the RT prioritised speaking to key strategic/senior stakeholders such as country directors, regional decision-makers, and key staff at UK HQ.
14. During data collection, some key informants were unavailable (or in some cases, unresponsive) during the allocated window. While the RT respected the right for non-participation of informants, the RT extended

⁴ Some informants were unavailable during the data collection window or were unresponsive to meeting requests. The ET took necessary steps to follow up with respondents and acknowledges the right for non-participation in this review.

the window of data collection to ensure informants had more opportunity to engage in qualitative activities. Informants were able to provide feedback in multiple modalities: in direct interview sessions, through inputs in the project inventory and via email correspondence. This allowed sufficient triangulation of the evidence presented in the findings and conclusions.

15. **Availability and quality of data and information.** The review draws from projects across multiple countries. To ensure the RT had access to the right project documentation and details, the regional and country teams provided key information via the project inventory (see [Table 2](#) above). This supported the RT's own review of secondary literature and formed the basis of discussion in country-level interviews.
16. However, the project documentation varied in the quality of reporting and the depth of reflection. While performance was generally documented in terms of outputs and outcomes, deeper reflection on the drivers of impact and identification of lessons and innovation was limited. This limited the ability for the RT to conduct detailed analysis under some RQs (e.g. those related to programme innovation). The RT found instead that project staff were more readily able to articulate reflections in interviews better than what found in the reporting.

2.3. Ethical Considerations

17. TANGO ensured the ethical conduct of RT members and partners at all stages of the research cycle. TANGO consultants on the RT are trained internally on ethical research safeguards based on international guidance and client policies and standards. TANGO ensured the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS), Sphere, and Human Accountability Partnership (HAP) standards for humanitarian response were reflected in the research process as appropriate. The RT took necessary steps to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of all study participants.

3. Subject of the Research

3.1. Overview of the Regional FSL strategies

18. IRW works in communities characterised by high levels of poverty, disasters, and livelihood shocks. The IR Global Strategy (2017-2021) identifies Four Global Goals:⁵
 1. Reduce the humanitarian impact of conflicts and natural disasters;
 2. Empower communities to emerge from poverty and vulnerability;
 3. Mobilise people and funds;
 4. Strengthen Capacity and Institutional Development
19. East Africa Regional Strategy (2017-2021) is informed by IRW's global strategy (2017-2021) as well as the individual country strategies in the East Africa region.^{6,7} The regional strategy is organised around two main areas: programme development and institutional development and strengthening. The strategy emphasises linkages between disaster and emergency response and long-term and sustainable

⁵ IRW. (2017). Islamic Relief Worldwide Global Strategy (2017-2021).

⁶ IR Kenya. Kenya Strategy 2017-2021.

⁷ IR South Sudan. Islamic Relief South Sudan (RSS) Final Strategic Plan 2019-2024.

development, in addition to standardising quality and promoting cooperation and coordination between the five countries of IR's EA region.⁸

20. The East Africa regional strategy focuses on increasing resilience among poor and vulnerable communities through programmes that address disaster risk reduction (DRR), climate change, food security, and sustainable livelihoods in five East African countries. A majority of these countries are mostly arid and semi-arid and experience cyclical droughts and unreliable rainfall, exacerbated by desertification, ecological destruction, and climate change.⁹
21. The primary means of livelihoods within the East Africa portfolio are pastoralism and agro-pastoralism. Prolonged droughts and human-made disasters make it increasingly difficult for these communities to cope with livelihood shocks and hazards. Examples of shocks and stresses in this region include climate change, rapid population growth, political and economic marginalisation, conflict and displacement, land degradation and livestock trade bans. To respond to this context, IR EA utilises strategies that address policy, infrastructure, capacity building and resource access.
22. The East Africa Regional Strategic Framework 2017-2021 outlines three primary strategic objectives (SO).¹⁰
 - **SO1 Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery.** This includes protecting the lives and livelihoods of disaster-prone communities (SO 1.1), provision of appropriate and timely emergency assistance (SO 1.2), through emergency assistance and supporting households and communities to rebuild (SO 1.3).
 - **SO2 Climate Resilient Livelihoods and Investing in People.** This includes support with increasing assets, income, food security and employment opportunities (SO 2.1) and investments in education, WASH and health services, particularly to vulnerable groups (SO 2.2).
 - **SO3 Cross-Cutting Themes.** Themes include an inclusion agenda (gender, environmental and disability integration) and peace and conflict transformation (SO 3.1), promoting MEAL mechanisms to provide direction, innovation and coherence in IR's DRR and FSL interventions (3.2), and to create/foster linkages between policy and practices, particularly around risks, vulnerabilities, discrimination and marginalisation (SO 3.3).

3.2. Summary of Project Inventory

23. There is a total of 55 FSL programmes between 2019-2022 across the East Africa region. High-level analysis of the full portfolio shows:
 - Of the 55 FSL programmes, 48 were funded internally through the IR Federation, with the largest donor being IR USA (18 programmes – 32%), followed by IR Canada and IR Sweden (both funding 10 programmes – 18%). Two programmes had joint-funding between institutional partners.
 - 2 out of 55 (3%) programmes were funded for 3 years, with the most common duration being 12 months (29%). Programmes funded more than 2 years accounted for 18% (10 programmes) of all programmes.

⁸ IRW. (2018). Islamic Relief Worldwide East Africa Strategy (2017-2021).

⁹ IRW. (2018). Islamic Relief Worldwide East Africa Strategy (2017-2021).

¹⁰ IRW. (2018). Islamic Relief Worldwide East Africa Strategy (2017-2021).

- Programme funding ranged between 12,414.87 GBP (Food Security and Livelihoods Improvement Project in Kapoeta East in South Sudan) and 2,175,000.00 GBP (WASH, Protection and Nutrition for Tonj North Crisis Affected Populations also in South Sudan). The median cash value of individual contracts across programmes was 526,500.00 GBP and the mean was 585,788.06.
- The majority of programmes were implemented under the FSL sector (28 programmes – 51%). Fifteen programmes (27%) were classified as Integrated Development, while an additional 4 (7%) were within the Rehabilitation Sector. Education, Emergency, Gender/Disability, Peacebuilding, and Protection and Inclusion Programming were represented by one programme each.
- FSL programmes were implemented most frequently in Somalia (16 programmes – 29%), followed by Sudan (22%). Both Kenya and South Sudan implemented 10 programmes (18%), while Ethiopia implemented 7 (13%).
- The number of rightsholders reached varied; the smallest was 420 rightsholders and the largest programme reached 112,147 rightsholders. Of the 51 programmes that included data on direct rightsholders, the median number of individuals impact through programming was 18,600 and the mean was 28,850.

4. Research Findings

24. The findings presented in this section are organised by RQ and sub-questions. The findings are then rolled up into summative conclusions for the three main RQs, presented in *Conclusions and Insights from the Research*. Based on the conclusions, the RT put forward key insights and options for IRW to consider in future strategic and programme development.
25. The research findings primarily examine the 10 sample projects of the inventory as a basis for evidence (referred henceforth as the ‘*portfolio*’). Where possible, observations are also included on the wider IR FSL programming in East Africa. These observations are based on evidence from interviews and high-level review of the wider FSL programmes in East Africa.

4.1. RQ 1: To what extent is the 2019-2022 project portfolio strategically positioned against sector needs and stated strategic objectives?

RQ 1.1: How aligned is the portfolio to the 2019 FSL and 2017-2021 regional strategic objectives?

Finding 1

The portfolio partially aligns with the 2017-2021 regional strategic objectives, mainly through a focus in *Climate Resilient Livelihoods* and *Investing in People* intervention areas.

26. IRW has put in place a clear regional strategy (2017-2021) articulating its aims and ambitions for programming in East Africa.¹¹ Key informants indicate that the development of the regional strategy was

¹¹ IRW. (2017). Islamic Relief Worldwide East Africa Regional Strategy 2017-2021

a way to reinforce IR East Africa as a devolved unit, charged with tailoring and operationalising IRW’s global humanitarian and development mandates for the region. Under the overarching global goals presented in *Overview of the Regional FSL strategies*, the regional strategy highlights several Priority Intervention Areas (PIAs) which relate broadly to the sectors of focus for regional and country teams. Out of all the strategic elements and components, key informants at the country level had the greatest knowledge about the PIA level of the regional strategy - that is, IRW’s existing focus is centred around supporting climate resilient livelihoods and in disaster preparedness, response and recovery. Specifically, *Climate Resilient Livelihoods* was best articulated by staff, particularly around IRW’s stated approach of supporting agricultural productivity and commercialisation and developing financial services via the GSLA model.¹²

27. However, KIIs show that country staff lacked familiarity of other areas of the regional strategies – such as the ‘Cross-cutting Themes’¹³ and ‘Policy Influencing Advocacy’¹⁴. There was acknowledgement from both regional and country level staff that this lack of wider knowledge among country staff on regional strategy was an issue – that programme design and activities are not being informed by the full breadth of organisational priorities, and instead by only certain key components.
28. The strong knowledge of *Climate Resilient Livelihoods* and *Investing in People* PIAs is in-part due to the majority of the FSL programming focussing specifically on direct livelihood strengthening activities. This includes activities such as agricultural and livestock-based trainings (in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia), direct agriculture and livestock inputs (in Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan) and forming group savings and loans associations (GSLAs) (in Ethiopia, Kenya). Analysis on the distribution of PIAs of the portfolio supports this, indicated in *Table 3* below:

Table 3. Programming focus of the 10 sample project portfolio.

Global Goals	Priority Intervention Area	Strong focus	Med. Focus	Light Focus
Reducing the humanitarian impact of conflicts and natural disasters	Disaster Preparedness			
	Disaster Response			
	Recovery			
Empowering communities to emerge from poverty and vulnerability	Climate resilient livelihoods			
	Investing in people			

29. The KIIs with regional and country staff explained that working in direct livelihood inputs was the easiest way to see maximum gains and programme impact in FSL. This was cited as a driving factor for why activities involving agriculture and livestock inputs feature heavily across the portfolio. For example, the BRIYC and FLIP programmes in South Sudan and the Integrated Development Project in Sudan all highlighted that the FSL aims was largely achieved through direct agricultural inputs.
30. Senior staff across countries highlighted that the FSL projects aim to include WASH activities as a minimum standard for integrated programming. For example, FSL projects in Ethiopia support water access to

¹² IRW. (2017). Islamic Relief Worldwide East Africa Regional Strategy 2017-2021.

¹³Of gender, environment and conflict transformation

¹⁴ Such as Strategic Objective 3.3 of the Regional Strategy: *Increase the impact of IR DRR and development work and coherence through better linkages between policy and practice and expanded advocacy to reduce vulnerabilities, discrimination and marginalization*.

rightsholders, not only for household consumption, but also for agricultural and livestock interventions (crop and fodder). Given the persistent drought conditions across the region, regional and country staff underscored the importance of including WASH elements into all FSL programmes for East Africa.

31. Conversely, KIIs and the project inventory highlight that DRR component of the portfolio – and in turn, the *Reducing the humanitarian impact of conflicts and natural disasters* global goal – was the smallest area of focus. However, while direct humanitarian/disaster response activities featured less frequently, some KIIs indicated some evidence that DRR activities were incorporated into livelihood strengthening activities as a cross-cutting issue. Some examples were given through the livelihood training activities to farmers in Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, which incorporated components of early warning systems and the importance of disaster preparedness to key local hazards (drought, floods). Interviews discussed this kind of integrated programming was not happening across the wider portfolio for the following reasons: (1) limited awareness on the importance of linking strategic objective together, (2) low staff bandwidth and capacity, and (3) short funding project timelines.
32. Feedback from the regional level show that the FSL regional strategy is used as basis for the disaster response work. Notable achievements were made possible through regional-level appeals, namely in 2017 and 2020-2023. In 2017, a regional-level appeal raised 15M USD, which was used to reach over 750,000 drought affected people in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. Feedback from the regional level highlight this included life-saving interventions such as cash and food assistance and WASH and emergency non-food items. Additionally, KIIs show specific recovery interventions were included in the response, such as constructing and rehabilitating water facilities in addition to providing agricultural inputs to help smallholder farmers. The regional appeal launched in 2020-23 raised 17M USD for the drought response in the same three countries above. Regional-level staff indicate the response was regionally led and directed and provided an opportunity respond to large emergencies at scale.
33. While the above provides good examples of how IRW at the regional level is addressing disaster response strategic priorities, KIIs show that the disaster preparedness, response and recovery is not being sufficiently addressed in an integrated way in country-level programming. KIIs indicate that several areas of both global and regional strategies can be expanded into a larger programming footprint, such as supporting education in emergencies,¹⁵ and building resilience at the local level.¹⁶ Key informants at the regional level indicated these three areas in particular have high complementarity with existing initiatives and country focus, and provide strong opportunity for IRW to develop further regional and country-level programming in.

Finding 2

The FSL 2019 strategy is well informed but does not take into account the current status and readiness of the country offices.

34. The 2019 Economic Strengthening Strategy (referred as the FSL 2019 strategy) details the economic strengthening approach for FSL activities in East Africa. It expands upon a key component of the IR Global Strategy 2017-2021 – Goal 2: *Empowering Communities*. The strategy puts forward a list of five strategic objectives for economic and livelihood strengthening, with the aim of guiding IR field staff and partners with principles, processes and tools to improve resilience. These are:
 1. Support poor households to build self-insurance mechanisms and protect key assets.

¹⁵ Strategic Objective 1.2.4, Islamic Relief Worldwide East Africa Regional Strategy 2017-2021

¹⁶ Strategic Objective 1.2.5, Islamic Relief Worldwide East Africa Regional Strategy 2017-2021

2. Build productive capacity of households for predictable consumption and quality management of household cashflow.
 3. Empower selected GSLA members with skills, technologies and organisational structures to improve their market performance in selected value chains.
 4. Support GSLA members to expand household income and consumption.
35. Based on previous experience in developing and evaluating strategies of comparable FSL portfolios, the RT found the strategy was comprehensive, well-grounded in literature and aligned with wider sector approaches related to livelihood and economic strengthening. Notably, the pathways in how the strategy aims to achieve food security in East Africa – by reducing (1) household economic vulnerability and (2) food and nutritional insecurity – are coherent with regional needs (discussed in the following finding).
 36. Despite this comprehensive strategy, interviews show it is not fully considered at the country level. Certain components of the 2019 strategy are operationalised in programming across the portfolio, such as building the productive capacity of households and supporting households to recover assets and stabilise household consumption. However, interviews show that programme designers and country staff are not considering the full breadth of the strategy and the activities it presents; pathways of change, which are presented in the 2019 strategy, are not reflected or operationalised as outlined across the portfolio. KIIs acknowledge the FSL strategy is underused at the country level when designing projects, and as a result, projects – even within a country – can appear to lack complementarity with one another, impacted further by the geographic spread of project sites.
 37. KIIs underscore there is simply not enough bandwidth at the country level to operationalise full pathways of change presented in the FSL strategy across a country’s programming portfolio – for instance, KIIs expressed that limited funding and tight project timelines restrict the ability for country teams to design and implement a project that supports households to build self-insurance mechanisms (Objective 4) AND enhance food/nutrition status (Objective 3) AND promote productive behaviour (Objective 2). This feedback extends to the regional strategy, notably that country teams are unable to sufficiently address the FSL needs under *Climate Resilient Livelihoods* in addition to supporting in disaster and conflict management (preparedness, response, recovery) comprehensively. KIIs also cited turnover at the country level also affects capacity to deliver on the strategic objectives; informants across countries highlighted that loss of technical staff (particularly those specialising in FSL), and therefore institutional knowledge, is a key issue for country offices. Some staff speculated in interviews that turnover at the country-level might be driven by the short-term nature of the projects; if projects only last for 1 year, then staff are more likely to seek external opportunities that offer longer contracts and security.
 38. Key informants cited similar issues for the regional level; the regional office saw downsizing of the regional technical capacity due to COVID-19. A key example given in interviews was the lack of a FSL technical lead - a role which was not replaced due to budgetary deficits. Some interviews at the country level also point to a need to strengthen the gender and protection element of FSL projects, in accordance with regional and global strategic priorities. There was consensus in the interviews that the regional level could focus on providing adequate technical backstopping in such key thematic areas (i.e. gender, FSL, DRR, WASH) to country offices as needed during project design and implementation.
 39. While there is consensus in interviews that the strategy is appropriate to sector needs, and the feedback from country teams indicate the current FSL strategies may not be fit for capacity; that the strategy spans too many critical needs with an expectation for country portfolios to reflect all these strategies areas.

RQ 1.2: How appropriate (relevant, coherent) is the portfolio to FSL sector needs and priorities?

Finding 3

The project portfolio focuses on critical FSL needs in the Horn of Africa region.

40. After three years of drought, more than 23 million people across parts of the Horn of Africa region face severe hunger, and malnutrition rates remain a serious cause for concern.¹⁷ For example, needs in Somalia remain urgent, despite avoiding famine, with approximately 6.6 million people projected to experience high levels of acute food insecurity through June 2023.¹⁸ 11 million people in Ethiopia are severely food insecure due to the drought, according to the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan. In Kenya, food insecurity has escalated, with more than 5.4 million people in the arid and semi-arid lands region (ASAL) now facing acute food insecurity.¹⁹
41. The focus areas laid out in the regional strategy are responsive to these stated needs. These strategic areas, where the 5 countries all tasked to work in are notably: (1) increasing agricultural production and productivity, (2) supporting access to natural resources (water), hygiene and sanitation and (2) supporting employment. The following presents brief contextual analysis and IR's programming response:

In Ethiopia, recurrent climate shocks and human-induced conflict have negatively impacted the livelihoods and food security of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. Reduced pastoral areas due to drought caused the livestock production and productivity to deteriorate, forcing the majority of pastoralists to sell at a diminished rate at market. Climate shocks have also reduced access to water and overwhelmed existing coping mechanisms and resilience capacities, causing displacement, food insecurity, and malnutrition. Conflicts disrupted agricultural activities, lead to displacement of communities, and cause destruction of infrastructure and productive assets. These disruptions have resulted in reduced access to key resources for pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, such as grazing lands and water sources, further undermining food security and economic stability. Priority interventions in Ethiopia have therefore focused on improving access to irrigation, veterinary care, agricultural inputs and training in order to address food security, stability and resilience capacities.

In Somalia, agricultural productivity has declined due to droughts and floods that have increased in frequency and severity due to changes in climate. Floods have destroyed farmland and channels used for irrigation, and farmers have limited options to adapt due to limited resources. IR projects in Somalia focused on addressing the needs of pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and IDPs through FSL interventions that related to agricultural production, rehabilitation and expansion of water infrastructure, access to proper sanitation and primary health services. They also emphasised capacity building in order to support the longevity of programme outcomes.

In Kenya, 65% of informal employment is in the agriculture sector, where smallholder farmers depend on rain for irrigation. Rainwater recharges the rivers where people derive drinking water. Food security, the economy, biodiversity and human health are all impacted by recurrent floods and droughts in the region. Projects in Kenya focus on income generation to improve farmer livelihoods and strengthened WASH infrastructure through the construction and rehabilitation of water facilities and increase of hygiene and sanitation practices.

¹⁷ WHO (2022). Public Health Situation Analysis: Greater Horn of Africa (Food Insecurity and Drought).

¹⁸ IPC (2023). Somalia: IPC Food Security & Nutrition Snapshot, March - June 2023.

¹⁹ IPC (2023). Kenya: Acute Food Insecurity Situation February 2023 and Projection for March - June 2023

In Sudan, conflicts, poverty, food insecurity, and economic precarity have led to malnutrition, the escalation of preventable diseases and the deterioration of livelihoods. Because of these vulnerabilities, few participate in meaningful socio-economic activities and instead use negative coping strategies to meet basic needs. The number of IDPs have increased due to conflict, putting additional pressure on health facilities already in need of rehabilitation. Water sources and sanitation infrastructure have been damaged by flooding, which increases the likelihood of a disease outbreak. Women and children are particularly vulnerable, experiencing high levels of food insecurity and the threat of SGBV, child labour, and forced, planned and early marriages. Project interventions increased access to safe, clean and nearby water points as well as improved sanitation facilities and tools to reduce solid waste. They also increased food security and livelihoods by addressing veterinary care and access to quality agriculture inputs, training, and storage facilities.

In South Sudan, natural hazards, conflict, and displacement leave the population vulnerable to external shocks. More than half the country is severely food insecure and unable to meet their basic needs. An influx of returning refugees and IDPs, many of whom live in settlements and rely on food assistance, cash assistance or host community donations to meet their food needs, require an expansion of essential services like education, water and health. Projects in South Sudan provided ongoing training as well as the provision of agricultural inputs, community-Based Animal Health Workers (CAHWs), and storage facilities support farmer livelihood, and WASH activities ensured access to consistent irrigation and safe, clean water.

Finding 4

There are limited available tools to allow programmes to reflect on contributions beyond direct FSL needs.

42. Based on the context analysis presented in the finding above, there is a tendency for programmes to work in the priority area of increasing agricultural and pastoral production and productivity. However, the regional strategies – as indicated in findings above – outline further areas where country offices should strive for outcomes, such as disaster response and crosscutting themes of gender, environment, disability and conflict transformation. A review of the programme documentation show that country problem analysis and needs assessment are limited to identifying direct constraints on household food security and income – such as inadequate and unreliable sources of food, lack of inputs such as seeds and tools, and water scarcity. This does not result in wider analysis of systemic drivers behind need, such as service mapping,²⁰ workforce mapping and market analysis. KIIs at the country level indicated that needs assessments for programmes in the region are generally simple tools or draw from previous assessments, such as interagency assessments conducted by UNOCHA (e.g. for ERRP in South Sudan). While this review did not examine the quality of needs assessments, the problem analysis presented in documents (namely in the project proposals) do not examine needs that go beyond existing IRW prioritised areas and country capacity, such as pastoral and agro-pastoral production issues.
43. This means there is no existing way to re-prioritise programming outside of the established country work areas; the FSL lens used in the needs assessments outline the same type of need, which programming then responds to. While interviews highlight that country needs are diffuse and dynamic, this reflection is not found within project documentation. KIIs agree that needs assessments should be broadened to span

²⁰ Service mapping involves identifying and documenting the range of services available within the region/area, and the kinds of relationships that exist between services. Service mapping can also include consideration of the system's ability to deal with emergencies and stresses and issues around regional coordination that may impact on emergency preparedness.

the breadth of IRW's strategic priorities, rather than focus on identifying specific household-level constraints on food production and livelihood security.

4.2. RQ2: How effective, sustainable and innovative was programming in the 2019-2022 portfolio?

A consolidated list of key learning and best practices discussed in this section is presented in [Appendix 6: List of Lessons Learned and Leading Practices](#)

EQ 2.1: What are the lessons learned and best practices of effective programming?

Finding 5

Regarding effective programming, the 2019-2022 portfolio demonstrated learning in strengthening monitoring, staff selection and rightsholder tracking.

44. Feedback in the project inventory and KIIs showed learning on programme effectiveness was in three areas: (1) the need for strong monitoring assessments, (2) properly selecting staff and (2) vetting/tracking processes. Key lessons were drawn from challenges faced during programme implementation. For example, ICRP in Kenya did not feature a mid-line evaluation which was identified as a large, missed opportunity for course correction and to develop ongoing understandings of programme impact. KIIs with project staff identified that greater focus should be placed on mid-line evaluations and other monitoring exercises (e.g. verification surveys and thematic/case studies) moving forward. Feedback in interviews highlighted that the IR MEAL Framework should be followed by all projects. This is in line with the cursory evaluation requirements suggested in the 2019 FSL strategy: that all economic strengthening programming should involve a baseline, midline and endline evaluation. If country staff are indicating that monitoring assessments needs to be conducted routinely – which are mandated by IR policies and strategy – then this points to an issue of process compliance at the country level.
45. Regarding implementing activity and staff selection, the EFSSR project in Ethiopia found that community facilitators were not based near project sites, which required individuals to have access to vehicles for travel. As many did not have access to such transport, monitoring in these sites became difficult. Project staff identified the lesson here is to be purposive on where project teams reside in proximity to project sites, particularly for projects requiring on-going and ad hoc monitoring. When discussing general staff capacity of country offices, regional and country-level KIIs indicated in general terms that staff capacity was sufficient mainly to meet the agropastoral and pastoral support programming (e.g. providing tailored inputs, supporting households in addressing/recovering assets).
46. Towards improved rightsholder tracking, the HEAL II project in Somalia highlighted the importance of having a community vetting system in implementation staff. This involves gathering rightsholders in a communal place for vetting and registration in addition to planned distribution activities. This allowed efficiency in the vetting and tracking of rightsholders, reaching more of the target group at once.

Finding 6

The leading practices of effective programming identified in the portfolio are broadly centred around agriculture and livestock interventions.

47. There was consensus in KIIs that agriculture and livestock activities were most effective and impactful for rightsholders across the region. As previous findings, this can explain the high focus of these activities within the portfolio. This also resulted in the identified best practices also mainly focusing on agriculture and livestock activities.
48. **Leading practices in livestock-based activities.** Stated best practices emerging from programming in Ethiopia and Kenya reinforce that when distributing/restocking livestock as assets, they should be procured from local vendors to avoid instances of disease and death. Further feedback from these projects also highlighted the good practice of utilising targeted livestock restocking as way to help pastoralist communities recover important productive assets after shock events (e.g. drought or disease outbreaks). During such shocks, project staff in Kenya reported it was good practice to not distribute any livestock, as rightsholders may not be able to sustain animals. Interviews underscored that this lesson should be scaled for all livestock-focussed projects, particularly given it is costly to procure additional productive assets and the need to sustain the life.
49. **Leading practices for agriculture activities.** The best practices that project staff identified from agriculture activities involved promoting multi-sectoral and group-based interventions. For instance, document reviews and interviews emphasised that projects in Ethiopia and Somalia purposively combined agriculture with financial inclusion and livestock initiatives, intending to provide holistic support for food security. Additionally, projects from Sudan and South Sudan highlighted the good practice of working in groups for agriculture activities to (1) reach a larger target population at once and (2) promote social cohesion and motivation among rightsholders. These practices could be broadly applied to other projects across the portfolio, many of which focus on agriculture and livestock activities. KIIs repeatedly stated the importance of improving the dissemination processes between countries, given the high relevance of key learning to all county teams.
50. Beyond agriculture and livestock areas, feedback from IRW staff indicate the wider portfolio is making progress towards expanding non-agricultural assistance since 2019. Examples of good practices identified by regional staff include supporting financial inclusion through GSLAs and working with local research and policy institutes to customise and contextualise GSLA guidelines to IRW target communities.²¹

EQ 2.2: What are the lessons learned and best practices in terms of programme sustainability?

Finding 7

Programme sustainability was challenging for the region, but the portfolio leveraged community engagement to sustain outcomes after project close.

51. Key informants across all programmes cited that sustaining of programme outcomes remains a challenge across the East Africa portfolio. This was due to the chronic and acute shocks and stresses which characterise the region, with project staff specifically citing persistent drought conditions and conflict leading to natural resource scarcity, unstable markets and inflation and displacement. KIIs and project

²¹ Specifically, feedback the regional office indicated that IRW worked with Institute of African Alternatives (IFAA) to produce sharia compliant GSLA guidelines and how-to notes for operationalisation in communities.

documents show that agriculture and livestock-based livelihoods – which make up the majority of the portfolio – are particularly susceptible to these external shocks and stresses. This undercuts the sustained programming outcomes for the majority of portfolio.

52. However, there was evidence that project staff were trying to maximise potential sustained results in some areas. Analysis of the project inventory shows the most effective sustainability efforts were through community participation and shared ownership. For example, project staff in Ethiopia purposively involved community members participating in the construction of activities. KIIs reported this led to savings in labour costs and, importantly, built ownership of new construction projects within the local community. Project staff confirmed this increased the likelihood of upkeep/maintenance following project close. Additionally, programmes in Kenya, Sudan and Ethiopia formed and capacitated local committees to take over project activities. Project staff reported that working with community groups was especially effective for WASH-related initiatives. For instance, projects in South Sudan employed the Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS)²² approach to build awareness and supported community-driven latrine construction.
53. While community engagement indeed enabled some sustained outcomes, project staff acknowledged the associated costs involved when engaging at the community level. For instance, interviews with project staff report that community-based projects that lead to long lasting change/impacts in target communities required more resources, in terms of time, staff and budget. This lesson emerges from community based DRR components in Somalia; analysis of the project inventory highlighted that addressing chronic and multi-layer needs and vulnerabilities involved costly community-based programming. KIIs emphasised the short project durations and project life affected the level of investment a programme can make into seeing lasting results. As indicated above, only 2 out of the 55 projects were funded for 3 years, which itself is a short timeframe based on wider development-driven programmes in the sector. While sustainability continues to be an issue, it is clear that the projects itself vis-à-vis duration, resourcing and the context are not set up for seeing sustained results.

EQ 2.3: What are the lessons and best practices of programme innovation?

Finding 8

The portfolio had difficulty identifying discrete programme innovation.

54. It was difficult for the RT to understand where innovation within the portfolio was concentrated. An analysis of the project inventory presented few explicit programme innovations emerging from the portfolio. Additionally, project staff were not able to refer to specific innovation within programmes; there was greater focus from project staff in articulating key learning and good practices found in the projects. When discussing wider projects in portfolio, feedback from regional level staff highlighted a couple of notable examples. The first was the use of blended finance and technology to improve the productivity for farmers in Mandera, Kenya. IR supported farmers groups through a package that included securing ethical financial support through local banks to locally source solar-power irrigation kits, along with working with government technical capacity. Feedback from IRW staff indicated that the application of these solar kits reduced operational costs for farmers by 80% and increased crop yield by 30%. Another example of innovation identified by regional staff was in Ethiopian projects; IR supported pastoralists to

²² CLTS is an approach that focuses on igniting a change in sanitation behaviour through community participation rather than constructing toilets.

produce fodder by drilling boreholes for water. IRW staff indicated that the boreholes directly provided water for livestock, fodder and the local communities.

55. Rather than innovative programming, the RT found the strength of the portfolio lies more in appropriately implementing existing sector practice. For example, land-use diversification is an existing approach in FSL programming to ensure households can cope with long-term shocks, should one asset or livelihood option become compromised. Project staff in Ethiopia adopted this approach well by dividing rightsholders' land between fodder and food crop; while the feedback from project staff presents this as innovation, it is instead a good application of appropriate sector practice. Similarly, constructing food storage facilities (presented as innovation in Kenya programmes) to extend food availability is another example of sustainable and affordable sector practice that the RT notes as standard in many agricultures focussed programming.
56. The portfolio showcases good examples of leveraging relationships with local stakeholders to support programming outcomes. For instance, projects in Sudan fostered a good working relationship between community members and law enforcement, leading to positive outcomes in the safety and justice for victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Interviews with country teams highlighted that IRW also builds relationships with national and regional-level stakeholders to support programming. UN agencies, for instance, are key IRW implementing partners; documents show that in Sudan, this has resulted in access to the UN Procurement System, enabling supplies and materials to be obtained at lower (or zero) cost.
57. When discussing the limited evidence of programme innovation, the interviews highlighted a concern for the quality and robustness of monitoring and learning processes for IRW. This is evident through the level and quality of reflection and learning presented in project documentation. For instance, reflections behind the reasons for outcome-level success and challenges are not articulated in documents, and project impact is discussed primarily in terms of outputs achieved. However, project staff across countries were able to articulate the outcomes and contributions of projects well, indicating that while critical reflection is happening within the organisation, it is an oral tradition; it is not being reported in process documentation.
58. Additionally, interviews show that IRW lacks a structured regional-level mechanism to collate and disseminate learning and innovation between countries. Regional level interviews highlighted that developing such a structured approach to learning and dissemination (e.g. to identifying innovation for instance) would directly respond to multiple objectives in the new IRW Global Strategy 2023-2033, chiefly: *Building the Quality of Core Programme Thematic Areas* (Objective 1 of Empowered Families and Communities) and *Evidence, Learning and Research* (Objective 4 of Addressing Global and Local Root Causes).

4.3. RQ3: What are the takeaways and learning from RQ 1 and 2 that should inform East Africa strategic focus in terms of programme, advocacy and funding planning?

EQ 3.1: What are critical programming considerations for IRW in East Africa?

Finding 9

Country offices are well positioned to expand the regional FSL goals by building and leveraging strategic partnerships with government agencies and CSOs.

59. KIIs indicate that greater engagement and partnership with local CSOs is key to IRW's economic strengthening approach. Interviews and documents emphasise the need for increased involvement of local partners in FSL programmes, in line with mandates in both regional FSL strategies: the 2019 FSL strategy and the 2017-2021 regional strategy have specific strategic objectives emphasising partnerships with local stakeholders such as national CSOs. Additionally, the new IRW Global Strategy 2023-2033 highlights strengthening relationships with local partners towards stronger programming across the framework, highlighting a clear strategic priority for IRW.
60. Key informants report that country offices have developed relationships with government agencies in particular through joint targeting and programme delivery over the last four years. Multiple KIIs highlighted government ministries are the primary partner for implementation. For example, government agencies in Ethiopia have actively provided human resources and monitoring support for key activities in livestock and agriculture. Similarly, in Sudan, government agencies have supported IR country teams with technical training (e.g. to pastoralists). However, there is no structured approach to these partnerships and KIIs report that partnerships are formed opportunistically, rather than driven by a concerted strategy driven by organisational principles.
61. In addition to government partners, project documents highlight a commitment in principle to forming strong relationships with local NGOs and committees. Interviews and documents show that these local stakeholders have strong potential to help project teams build trust and leverage its reach within communities. Country teams underscored the importance of these local partners when implementing community-driven programming, as they can provide greater insight on local needs and resources. As general good guidance on working with local stakeholders, interviews with country teams indicated that prioritising the formation of local partnerships at the project start was conducive to more efficient programming. However, there was mixed feedback to the level of genuine engagement with local actors in programming in the field; some informants indicated that local partnerships are not as strong or alive as indicated in the project reporting. Currently, there is no verifiable means to ascertain the extent to which local partnerships are functioning and reliable at the country level.
62. In addition, interviews acknowledged that IRW is not taking advantage of the strong consortiums that exist across the East Africa region. KIIs indicated that the consortium model has seen rising popularity in region, particularly as it pools resources together (in a tightening funding environment), expands collective programming reach and allows for jointly accountable project governance. A key example includes BORESHA project is a cross border project in the Horn of Africa region (Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia) implemented by a consortium composed of four iNGOs also operating in the FSL space: Danish Refugee Council (DRC), World Vision, WYG and CARE.²³ Interviews highlight that country offices are well positioned to engage with these consortiums, given its existing networks with national governments and overlaps in programming context. Interviews suggest that engaging with consortiums – and other critical actors in FSL in general – should be a priority of IRW. This would benefit the portfolio as many of iNGOs in these East African-focused consortiums are better resourced and have stronger programmatic reach than what the IR country offices are currently capacitated for.

Finding 10

There are opportunities to strengthen the operational support given by Regional Office to country offices.

²³ The Building Opportunities for Resilience in the Horn of Africa (BORESHA). Accessed: <https://boreshahoa.org/>

63. The regional FSL portfolio in East Africa has moved beyond its nascency period; the region has clear strategic priorities and pathways of change (e.g. the 2019 FSL strategy) and has established ways of working with the five country offices. Senior IRW staff indicated in interviews that the priority now is to strengthen these existing processes to better support country offices and programming teams. However, feedback on the role and level of support the Regional Office can provide to country offices was mixed. Some country-level informants expressed that because regional-level staff do not have the opportunity to do frequent field visits, there is a disconnect between understandings of programme and contextual realities faced by field teams. Interviews with senior staff highlighted this is a key gap that needs to be addressed; it is important to capacitate the regional office (both in terms of making resources available and freeing up staff time) to visit country offices and have comprehensive view of their needs and contexts. In addition, multiple KIIs cited processes such as needs assessments, and programme and proposal development could be made more efficient and effective if regional staff had increased resources and bandwidth to conduct on-site visits. However, the RT acknowledges the resource limitations highlighted by regional staff in the interviews and the costs involved in increasing field-level engagement.
64. Feedback from senior staff show that IRW in the region has moved towards a multi-year and multi-country programmatic approach from 2022 onwards. There is a positive consensus at the country level around this shift, as it may mean increased support and collaboration between country offices in joint programming. At the regional and international level, interviews show this regionalisation is a promising shift away from the current 'portfolio of *projects*'²⁴ and now aims to produce more longer-term and integrative approaches. Senior KIIs show that this multi-year/multi-country programmatic approach is a strong opportunity to implement market-systems approaches, which is currently lacking across the FSL portfolio. For these reasons, interviews highlight that larger partners within the IR Federation (e.g. IR USA) are increasingly interested in funding *programmes* over *projects*.

EQ 3.2: What are critical advocacy considerations for IRW in East Africa?

Finding 11

In the absence of an advocacy strategy, regional and country-level relationships can be leveraged to support country capacity strengthening, consolidating networks with other humanitarian/development actors and work to a localisation agenda.

65. IR East Africa does not have a formalised advocacy strategy. KIIs show that advocacy instead happens opportunistically in key forums. For example, IR staff engage with working groups at the regional level to advocate for critical needs due to persistent droughts over the last years. In lieu of a strategy and dedicated staff, the regional office receives support from the Global Office (UK) to form advocacy materials/products. KIIs show that while this does address some advocacy requirements, there is a strong need to (1) develop an advocacy strategy, and (2) allocate resourcing to carry out initiatives.
66. Analysis of the project documentation indicate that country teams have strong relationships with the government, which KIIs highlight provides good opportunity for country capacity strengthening activities. While country teams already work with national governments across the region, particularly in key areas of WASH and disaster preparedness, KIIs show opportunities to share evidence and lessons learned from programmes to government partners, to enable policy and programme development and promote institutional effectiveness.

²⁴ Given most are focused within a particular area/community and have short timeframes (\pm 3 years).

67. In addition, KIIs highlight that the regional office is well positioned to continue advocating for country needs in existing working groups and to wider donors. KIIs show that regional staff already engage in this way, but a structured approach is required to ensure advocacy is conducted strategically. KIIs further highlight that engaging in regional working groups also provides opportunities to build relationships with external funding partners, beyond the IR federation which currently makes up a large part of the overall FSL programming.
68. Finally, interviews discussed the pressing need to work more with local partners and for IR to advocate for increased localisation in its programming. While CSOs and local stakeholders are acknowledged in strategies as being instrumental in IRW programming,²⁵ KIIs highlight generally that more engagement in implementation and decision-making can be done (see [Finding 9](#)). Interviews at the regional level further highlighted advocating for an agenda of localisation is aligned with sector and institutional priorities, such as UN agencies and bilateral partners.

EQ 3.1: What are critical funding considerations for IRW in East Africa?

Finding 12

IRW in East Africa is impacted by the lack of long-term flexible funding for multi-year FSL programmes.

69. Key informants report a key challenge for IRW in East Africa is accessing funding for multi-year programming (3+ years). KIIs indicate that the lack of longer-term and flexible funding is a critical roadblock to implementing and scaling FSL programming (such as economic strengthening and regenerative and resilient livelihood projects) that the 2019 FSL strategy and the 2017-21 Regional Strategy aim to achieve. Senior KIIs expressed there is a general decrease in development (and humanitarian) funding overall,²⁶ which is occurring in parallel with some donors focusing on short-term projects due to practical resource limitations.²⁷ This is supported by the fact high-level analysis of the full list of programmes in East Africa shows that only 2 out of 55 (3%) programmes were funded for 3 years, with the most common duration being 12 months (29%). Feedback from IRW show that there are current efforts within the organisation to utilise a graduation model as the preferred approach for longer-term programming.
70. Funding sources primary came internally from within the IR Federation, with the largest donor being IR USA (18 programmes – 32%), followed by IR Canada and IR Sweden (both 10 – 18%). Interviews show that the programme requirements and standards from internal IR funding partners are generally less restrictive when compared with external donors. Respondents indicated this is a driving reason why

²⁵ Islamic Relief Worldwide (2023). Global Strategy Framework 2023-2033

²⁶ The [Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2023](#) published by Development Initiatives states that “official development assistance (ODA) [data] shows a reduction in the amount of development assistance received by countries facing long-term crisis. Between 2017 and 2021, the volume and proportion of development assistance received by those countries reduced (by US\$0.6 billion; from 50% to 48%), while the volume and proportion of total aid received as humanitarian assistance increased – reaching 41% in 2021, compared to an average of 37% over the past five years, suggesting an increased reliance on humanitarian assistance.”

²⁷ While a [2023 Evaluation of WFP Policy](#) on Building Resilience argues that resilience funding has steadily increased since 2015, the authors note that resilience funding comes from a small number of donors via short-term earmarked funding unfavourable for mid- to long-term resilience programming WFP. 2023. Summary Report on the Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition.

country offices pursue IR-internal funding sources. In view of this, senior staff highlighted that seeking external donors may provide a good opportunity to strengthen programming through external rigour and accountability of international partners. Senior staff also indicated that the funding model for the organisation needs to be revisited to focus on both designing and implementing high quality programming *and* accountability, regardless of where the funding is coming from.

71. Key informants at the regional level highlight that IRW could work with other development actors (e.g. in consortium models, detailed in *Finding 9*) to build strong funding proposals that span multiple domains of expertise. This provides opportunities to diversify funding streams *and* key partners who offer funding potential. An example of key partners are government actors/bilateral agencies; it was suggested in regional KIIs that IRW aligning national interests into funding proposals and programming may lead to innovative and non-traditional development approaches, which could be attractive to bilateral funding partners. Key informants also discussed continuing collaboration with UN Agencies. Since 2019, from reviewed projects, WFP has directly funded 4 programmes (in Sudan and Somalia) and KIIs indicate there is potential to continue this funding partnership into 2024. Working with UN Agencies also has the added benefit of accessing UN Procurement System, as discussed *Finding 8*.
72. Based on a review of project documentation, KIIs and ET’s experience with funding partners in the region, potential external donors are outlined below.

Table 4. Potential donors by Priority Intervention Areas. Existing/previous funding partners are highlighted in bold.

Donor Group	Disaster Preparedness, Disaster Response, Disaster Recovery	Climate Resilient Livelihoods, Investing in People
Bilateral	USAID (BHA), SIDA, Foreign, FCDO , DANIDA, CHF EUTF, United Bank for Africa	USAID, FCDO , EU, SDC, SIDA, DANIDA, BPRM, Dutch Embassy, Danish Foreign Ministry, World Bank, DFID CSSF, INTPA, EEAS
Multilateral	ECHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP , OCHA/ UN Central Emergency Response Fund, Green Climate Fund	DG ECHO, WFP , UNHCR, STC, Green Climate Fund, UNDP, FAO, International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), Climate Investment Funds (CIF)/Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR)

5. Conclusions and Insights from the Research

73. The conclusions of the review are presented in green boxes organised by RQs. In addition to discrete conclusions, which are evidenced based, a set of insights are presented in blue boxes for each RQ. Insights are subjective, based on TANGO observations gathered throughout interaction with IRW through this review and other engagements. Insights are intended to support the upcoming strategic development

RQ 1: To what extent is the is 2019-2022 project portfolio strategically positioned against sector needs and stated strategic objectives?

Conclusion for Research Question #1

The project portfolio aligns with regional FSL strategies through its strong focus on agriculture and livestock interventions. Programmes prioritise these approaches because they show immediate results among rightsholders and their communities. The other components of regional FSL strategies, particularly disaster risk reduction and recovery, do not feature as strongly within the programming footprint of the region. The portfolio did not demonstrate sufficiently integrated programming at the country level across these strategic objectives, and there is a need to capacitate staff on strategic engagement.

However, there is a disconnect between regional strategies and the readiness of country offices. Country offices do not have the bandwidth and resourcing to operationalise the full breadth of strategic objectives established at the regional level. Factors such as COVID-19 and staff turnover have contributed to this lack of bandwidth. Regional strategies have high ambitions which, while appropriate and responsive to critical needs of the Horn of Africa, do not reflect the current readiness of the country offices.

TANGO Insights for Research Question #1

- While policies are addressing the right needs, rollout of its strategic objectives are limited by a lack of (1) technical in-house capacity (including tools and assessments) and (2) technical partnerships. This means the staff in decision-making roles in design and implementation processes are not able to translate strategic priorities into localised solutions.
- Rather than *Climate Resilient Livelihoods*, staff are most knowledgeable about livelihood and local livelihood/agriculture systems. This leads to livelihood activities being primarily basic agriculture production projects, which are mainly input driven supported by basic farmer group and demonstration plots. The available tools, assessments and processes are all focused on these areas (i.e. what IRW is already doing), so leads to results that keep IRW pointed in this existing direction – of where they already work well.
- This means there is little deviation in how IRW approaches its FSL work. For example, market systems approaches do not feature strongly, despite having a critical role in farmer resilience (e.g. maintaining diversity and redundancy in sale options are critical). Instead, there is mostly a singular focus at the beneficiary level and insufficient targeting of other key stakeholders, like livelihood/market intermediaries, government, etc.
- Disaster management elements should be at a higher level, given it is an integral part of resilient livelihoods. For households and communities to be resilient, disaster risk reduction, management and preparedness should be layered on top of livelihood interventions. This is to protect the investment of the beneficiaries AND IRW programming investment.
- The lack of partnerships at country level limits IRW exposure to leading practice in its sectors. This, coupled with small funding and isolated agriculture interventions, make IRW a smaller player, and significance in the sector can likely be contested.
- The assumption for programming impact is that there is a layering of critical capacity investment, which should be done across the portfolio, and deliberate engagement of other

system actors to ensure they play their roles. It is not clear from this review that this is being done.

- Overall, the regional strategies appear too ambitious in view of the capacity of the country offices. It might be more suitable as a Theory of Change, where IRW then identifies in which pathways (and where) it (1) directly intervenes and (2) engages in partners towards a common ToC goal.

RQ2: How effective, sustainable and innovative was programming in the 2019-2022 portfolio?

Conclusion for Research Question #2

Given the strong focus on agriculture and livestock interventions within the portfolio, the majority of lessons and leading practices were focused on these activities. The quality of lessons points broadly to IRW's knowledge and familiarity of programming in these intervention areas, but it was difficult to ascertain how effective programming was in other domains. Due to chronic external shocks and stresses that characterise the region, sustaining programme results remained a challenge across the portfolio. Funding availability and short project cycles have significantly affected IRW's ability to ensure programme outcomes are sustained in view of the dynamic shocks and stresses of the region.

There are concerns around the level and quality of reflection in programme learning and the region lacks a mechanism to harvest and disseminate lessons in a structured way.

TANGO Insights for Research Question #2

- There appears to be a disconnect between what HQ thinks is possible at the operational level, and what operations can feasibly carry out; existing policies, like MEAL are not followed. From this review, the HQ expectations may not be realistic without extra capacity investment.
- Technical capacity at the operational level focuses on intervention capacity, not in support systems like MEAL. This is reflected in the generally good quality of work in agriculture activities (i.e. intervention level) and poor quality in reporting, learning and dissemination (support level). It is understandable that operations prioritise investment into capacity that supports direct intervention with beneficiaries. However, investment decisions should also lie more centrally (i.e. at the regional level). This prompts the following key questions: (1) how much of the funding distribution decision is made centrally, and (2) How much does HQ retain to support core support services (i.e. is everything allocated to projects?)
- The projects are too short and small scale, too focussed on productivity and too fragmented to result in tangible sustainability. The examples of sustainable approaches in the review are in-line with minimum standards for any organisation working in this sector.
- IRW is not practicing innovation in terms of new and promising practices – this should be removed as a priority/objective. Instead, innovation can be redefined for IRW as

institutionalising existing sector leading practice into its programmes, for both intervention level and support systems.

RQ3: What are the takeaways and learning from RQ 1 and 2 that should inform East Africa strategic focus in terms of programme, advocacy and funding planning?

Conclusion for Research Question #3

With regards to programming and achieving FSL goals for the region, there is a continued need to strengthen relationships with local stakeholders and CSOs. Country teams have developed working relationships with national governments through joint targeting and programme delivery over the last four years. However, IRW does not capitalise on the strengths and presence of comparable organisations in the region, who do similar programming and are better resources and capacitated than IR's country offices.

There is no clear FSL advocacy strategy for the region, which is critical gap that needs to be addressed. There are opportunities to develop a structured strategy that is centred around supporting country capacity strengthening, leveraging consolidated partnerships with humanitarian agencies and towards an agenda of localisation.

The East Africa portfolio – like many other comparable development organisations – is challenged with limited options for long-term and flexible funding for multi-year FSL programmes. This prompts exploration into not only changing IR funding partners' current short-term funding cycles, but also into external (non IR) partners, such as bilateral and UN agencies.

TANGO Insights for Research Question #3

- There is basic engagement with other sector stakeholders, which is sufficient for programming goals but there is good room for improvement. IRW should be differentiating themselves from other organisations sufficiently; while there is recognition across IRW on the importance of this engagement, the reciprocity of this engagement from wider stakeholders needs to be earned.
- There are opportunities to rethink the regional governance structure. Shifting to longer term and larger, consolidated programming would make it possible to hire appropriate technical support at the regional level that has direct relevance/accountability to the country level operations.
- While exploring external donors is relevant, IRW must first define why it should be funded. Key issues need to be resolved *first* before (or in conjunction) with trying to achieve external funding, such as: (i) issues around placement and contribution to regional ToC/strategy, (ii) differentiation factors in its programming, (iii) capturing succinctly the value of funding IRW.
- Rather than developing an advocacy strategy, which IRW may not be influential enough yet to justify the investment, a communication strategy may be more appropriate. This would include

making wider stakeholders aware of IRW's capacities and willingness to engage and contribution in the sector. Additionally, this can involve creating a plan for engaging the wider IR Federation to address some of issues identified, towards an agreed integrated and long-term programmatic approach and funding model.

- The focus on internal funding is too high and this is known to drive inefficiency and ineffectiveness of spending. It can undermine MEAL investments and disconnects the organisation from the development actor community.
- It is worth noting that donors are increasingly shifting from providing funding towards becoming strategic partners that enable broader partnerships, access to innovation and technical support.

6. Recommendations

74. This section presents the **recommendations** emerging out of this review and the associated insights with specific reference to the upcoming FSL strategy development process. Responsibility for implementing these recommendations lies with the regional FSL development team, in close collaboration with HQ colleagues, within the allocated timeframe.

#	Recommendation
1	<p>Reposition the current strategic objectives within a sector Theory of Change that mentions all issues of importance to FSL security in the Horn of Africa region. Then identify where IRW will strategically prioritise its resources; these priority areas become the strategic objectives that IRW will measurably achieve in the next strategy cycle.</p> <p>Strategic prioritisation includes taking full account of the observations presented in this review. These are things where change is more directly attributable to IRW, i.e. an attribution model.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A first option would be to strengthen the existing focus on farming livelihoods by adding in specific elements of resilience, i.e., incorporating climate information and disaster risk management into livelihood decisions at household and community level, and strengthening local and regional market systems to increase income and build redundancy into the sales system.
2	<p>For all TOC domains and pathways where IRW will not directly intervene, identify partnerships that will enable IRW to engage in comprehensive programming with and through other key sector stakeholders. This issue can be tackled at two levels: (i) through leveraging IRW's international networks such as Interaction, and (ii) by providing country operations with a clear mandate to develop local and regional partnerships keeping in mind principles of localisation.</p>
3	<p>Define the IRW contribution to longer-term FSL systems building beyond a single strategic cycle, i.e. a contribution model. This can include identifying key areas for collaboration with government, i.e., government capacity strengthening, or even be as basic as identifying principles of operation that define how IRW will work with government stakeholders at all levels, in all activities.</p>
4	<p>Develop a learning agenda that is directly linked to the TOC assumptions. In other words, where there exist questions or uncertainty around the logic inferred across in TOC pathways, specifically those pathways where IRW is directly intervening, those issues should be researched and tracked through an ongoing learning agenda. This includes processes that enable reflection and utilisation of research results.</p>
5	<p>Develop and formulate a clear governance structure that demonstrates how HQ, regional and operations resources will stack up to deliver success for IRW's strategic objectives and for a meaningful contribution to FSL sector progress as a whole</p>

6	Present the IRW differentiating factors clearly in the strategy, i.e., what sets IRW apart from other organisations and why should IRW be a preferred partner for sector stakeholders. Evidence for differentiators is thin but possible areas to research further are its programming approaches that are appropriate to Islamic communities, its long-term commitment to target areas even if this is through small and shorter projects, and its commitment to working with local CSOs (localisation agenda linkages)
7	Any internal strategic discussion on advocacy priorities should link to where IRW lands regarding differentiating factors. One area to consider is its potential role as a champion of localization.
8	Once the strategy is completed, it should be accompanied by two additional documents: first, a detailed implementation plan for the strategy that sets out timebound metrics and targets for the internal and external change envisaged under this strategy; second, a summary strategy brief and communication plan for relevant sector stakeholders including implementing, technical and funding.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Matrix

Appendix 2: Research Approach

Appendix 3: List of Key Informants

Appendix 4: Topical Outlines for Interviews

Appendix 5: Full Project Narratives

Appendix 6: List of Lessons Learned and Leading Practices

Appendix 7: Research Timeline

Appendix 8: Documents Cited

Appendix 1: Research Matrix

The research matrix presents the original and revised RQs alongside d key indicators. RQs are mapped with the corresponding/relevant questions in topical outlines ([Appendix 4: Topical Outlines for Interviews](#))

Research Questions	Key indicators and additional lines of inquiry	Data sources
RQ1 To what extent is the is 2019-2022 project portfolio strategically positioned against sector needs and stated strategic objectives		
1.1 How aligned is the portfolio to the 2019 FSL and 2019-2022 regional strategic objectives	What Priority Intervention Areas (or other components of the 2019 FSL strategy) is under-represented in East Africa programming? The level of complementarity and adherence to strategic framework elements such as Global Goals, Priority Intervention Areas and Strategic Objective	Key informant interviews Programme and process documentations Context/needs analysis Evaluation reports
1.2 How appropriate (relevant, coherent) is the portfolio to FSL sector needs and priorities?	Which of the Priority Intervention Areas of the strategy see the most programmatic focus? How well do FSL programmes address stated needs of the communities in intervention areas? What kinds of FSL features appear commonly across East Africa programmes?	Key informant interviews Needs assessments Evaluation reports
RQ2 What have been the key results, best practices, and learnings from IR's FSL portfolio since 2019?		
2.1 What are the lessons learned and best practices of effective programming?	What have been the main strengths and key successes of East Africa programmes? What have been the overall internal and external factors affecting results in East Africa? The degree to which programmes highlighted adaptive management to both/either internal or external factors.	Key informant interviews Evaluation reports Learning products
2.2 What are the lessons learned and best practices in terms of programme sustainability?	What have been key sustainability strategies employed in East Africa programmes? The degree exit planning was implemented.	Key informant interviews Evaluation reports Programme documentation Context analysis
2.3 What are the lessons and best practices of programme innovation?	How has IR EA defined innovation and what innovative practices have been implemented? What lessons have been observed and/or learned in design and implementation of innovative practice? What innovative practices can be considered good practice for scaling?	Evaluation reports Programme documentation Project narratives
RQ3 What are the lessons and best practices of programme innovation?		
3.1 What are critical programming considerations	The extent to which projects consider cross-cutting themes in programming (protection, GAD inclusivity, resilience).	Evaluation reports Programme documentation

for IRW in East Africa?	To degree to which innovative practices and learning is documented and disseminated.	Learning products
3.2 What are critical advocacy considerations for IRW in East Africa?	Which FSL areas are seeing specific (targeting/tailored) programming and why. Identifying which areas of need/focus are underrepresented within the portfolio.	Key informant interviews Evaluation reports Programme documentation Learning products
3.3 What are key funding considerations for IRW in East Africa.	Identifying which areas of need/focus are underrepresented within the portfolio. Identifying which areas/interventions regional donors are prioritising.	Key informant interviews Regional strategic documentation

Appendix 2: Research Approach

This section presents details on the methodology for this review, drawn from the inception report.

The scope of the review is determined by three key research questions (RQs). These questions were developed in accordance with the TOR and through inception discussions between the IRW and the ET. These are:

RQ1: To what extent is the 2019-2022 project portfolio strategically positioned against sector needs and stated strategic objectives?

RQ2: How effective, sustainable and innovative was programming in the 2019-2022 portfolio?

RQ3: What are the takeaways and learning from RQ 1 and 2 that should inform East Africa strategic focus in terms of programme, advocacy and funding planning?

The RT will examine 10 sample projects from the IRW East Africa portfolio to generate findings under each of the RQs.

Each RQ and sub-RQs are presented in grey below, followed by explanation of how the RQ/lines of inquiry will be examined.

RQ1: To what extent is the 2019-2022 project portfolio strategically positioned against sector needs and stated strategic objectives?

- 1.1. How aligned is the portfolio to the 2019 FSL and 2019-2022 regional strategic objectives?
- 1.2. How appropriate (relevant, coherent) is the portfolio to FSL sector needs and priorities?

This question assesses the strategic positioning of the East Africa FSL project portfolio by examining how *appropriate* and *aligned* sample projects were to the wider sector and to IRW internal strategies. RQ1 specifically answers Research Objective 1.²⁸

For RQ 1.1., alignment refers to how well sample projects reflect and operationalise strategic priorities of IRW. For this review, the sample projects will be assessed against the 2019 FSL Strategy and the 2019-2022 strategy, particularly for its complementarity and adherence to strategic framework elements such as Global Goals, Priority Intervention Areas and Strategic Objectives.

For RQ 1.2., appropriateness draws from the OECD DAC Criteria of relevance and coherence:²⁹ given the FSL sector's needs, this question will explore if projects are doing the right things and how well they fit with wider programmes and activities. Project documentation (such as needs assessments and evaluation reports) will provide evidence of the suitability of programmes to its context, while key informant interviews (KIIs) will provide insight into the priorities and needs of the wider FSL sector.

RQ2: How effective, sustainable and innovative was programming in the 2019-2022 portfolio?

- 2.1. What are the lessons learned and best practices of effective programming?
- 2.2. What are the lessons learned and best practices in terms of programme sustainability?

²⁸ Objective 1: To assess the relevance of East Africa's FSL interventions in relation to alignment with IRW policies and strategies, and appropriateness to need.

²⁹ OECD DAC. (n.d.). Evaluation Criteria. [Accessed here](#).

2.3. What are the lessons and best practices of programme innovation?

To provide structure in assessing effectiveness, RQ2 will examine the sample projects for key lessons and best practices that emerge out of the research domains: effective programming, achievements towards sustainability, and innovation. RQ2 specifically answers Research Objective 2.³⁰

For this question, best practices found in sample projects refer to approaches that align to sector-specific practices known to produce good or effective results. Lessons describe what should or should not be done based on the reflections of direct experience. Key elements of lessons learned and best practices are presented in *Table 5*. A combination of these elements will be considered when identifying and assessing the key lessons and best practices in the sample projects.

Table 5. Key elements of lessons learned and best practices.³¹

Lessons Learned	Best Practices
A lesson learned is based on a positive or negative experience on the part of a project or programme.	An emerging good practice should demonstrate consistent, successful results and measurable impact.
A lesson learned should specify the context from which it is derived, and within which it may be relevant for future use.	An emerging good practice implies a mapped logic indicating a clear cause-effect process through which it is possible to derive a model or methodology for replication.
A lesson learned explains how or why something did or did not work.	An emerging good practice is supported by documented evidence of sustainable benefit
A lesson learned should indicate how well it contributes to the broader goals of the project or programme or strategy.	An emerging good practice has an established and clear contribution to IRW strategy or policy goals and demonstrates how that policy or practice aligns, directly or indirectly, to the needs of relevant rightsholders.

Findings for this RQ draw from what staff themselves have identified and documented as best practices and lessons learned. For RQ 2.3 in particular, the RT will analyse process documentation on what projects classified as ‘innovation’: potential examples include novel approaches to implementing interventions/activities, creating key new partnerships or efficient ways to manage programmes.

RQ3: What are the takeaways and learning from RQ 1 and 2 that should inform East Africa strategic focus in term of programme, advocacy and funding planning?

- 3.1. What are critical programming considerations for IRW in East Africa?
- 3.2. What are critical advocacy considerations for IRW in East Africa?
- 3.3. What are key funding considerations for IRW in East Africa.

RQ3 will focus on what has been learned through RQ 1 (alignment and relevance of projects) and RQ 2 (best practices and lessons learned) to support the development and planning of East Africa’s regional strategy and focus. Additionally, the findings will aim to support the strategic priorities outlined in the

³⁰ Objective 2: To examine the key process and programme results of select projects (2019 – 2023) with the purpose of identifying learnings and best practices.

³¹ Adapted from: ILO. (2012). Dissemination of Lessons Learned and Emerging Good Practices. [Accessed here.](#)

new IRW Global Strategy.RQ2 specifically answers Research Objective 3.³²

This RQ is future-looking and will synthesise the evidence and learning, which will inform the recommendations in two areas: operational recommendations and strategic recommendations:

- **Operational Recommendations:** These are specific technical recommendations that will enable effective, efficient and quality FSL programming in East Africa.
- **Strategic Recommendations:** Based on answers to RQ1 – RQ3, these are specific recommendations that focus on the medium to long-term and centre around strategic positioning, i.e. recommendations that provide direction on how the IR EA can work towards strengthening relevance, effectiveness and impact.

If sufficient project information is provided by IR on the wider EA FSL portfolio (i.e., 55 projects outlined in the inception phase), then the RT will present high-level trends and patterns on sectors of focus and donor interest.

³² Objective 3: What are the takeaways and learning from RQ 1 and 2 that should inform East Africa strategic focus in term of programme, advocacy and funding planning?

Appendix 3: List of Key Informants

The following key informants contributed directly to this review. Please note that the review gathered inputs from a wider range of stakeholders through remote interviews, project inventory, email correspondence and written feedback on drafts.

Name	Country	Role / Programme
Regional Staff		
Yusuf Ahmed	Regional office	Regional Director for East Africa
Michael Ndichu	Regional office	Regional Food Security and Livelihoods Manager
Mohamed Abduwahid Omar	Regional office	Regional Humanitarian Manager
Country Teams		
Hassan Abdi Abdille	Kenya	Country Director
Mohamed Noor Mohamed Gaile	Kenya	Food Security and Livelihoods Coordinator
Kader Hassan	Somalia	FSL Specialist
Mohamed Aded	Somalia	MEAL Coordinator
Muniral Islam	South Sudan	Head of Programmes
Koboji Emmanuel Duku	South Sudan	MEAL Coordinator
Kedir Musema Hameza	Ethiopia	Head of Programmes
Abbas Shukri	Ethiopia	UKAM Project Manager
Mohammed Yosuf Ahmed	Ethiopia	Livelihood and Food Security Coordinator
Elsadig Elnour	Sudan	Country Director
Mohammad Golam Sorwar	Sudan	Head of Programmes
Shibah Mohamed Ali	Sudan	Senior Programme Manager
Gafar Saeed Bushara Bagadi	Sudan	Project Coordinator (Livelihoods)
Ilham Mubarak	Sudan	MEAL Coordinator
Global Staff		
Leo Nalugon	UK (HQ)	Global Food Security and Livelihoods Advisor
Affan Cheema	UK (HQ)	Director of International Programmes
Jeremie Ouangrawa	USA (IR USA)	International Programme Coordinator (Africa) – FP for DREEHA, SHEEP and BRACC programmes

Appendix 4: Topical Outlines for Interviews

These topical outlines were used to guide semi-structured KIIs

NOTE: Each question is mapped to the corresponding/relevant EQ and sub-EQ in **green**. Evidence from each question will be triangulated across responses and with the household survey, presented in the findings.

Programme Staff Questions

Introduction

1. Explain your participation in the Islamic Relief East Africa Food Security and Livelihoods Programmes. What is your role and what are your responsibilities in the programme?
1. In what ways does your role/team support the programme?
2. When did you first become engaged with the programme (e.g. design, inception, implementation phase)?
3. Please describe your project as it relates to other country-wide programmes.

RQ1 To what extent is the 2019-2022 project portfolio strategically positioned against sector needs and stated strategic objectives?

1. What types of activities have you implemented in your work? Who benefits from these programmes and how? (probe specifically around how benefits may be different for men and women, able-bodied and disabled participants, etc.)
2. Which areas of FSL and climate resilience were most commonly addressed through project activities?
3. What partners and vendors do you have formal engagement with? What partners and vendors do you have informal engagement with? How do these partnerships support FSL activities and increase the quality of services available? Which partnerships are the most/least useful? Why?
4. What disaster response interventions were implemented during the programme period? Which shocks/stresses did these interventions target? How have they impacted the ability to respond and manage disasters?
5. How have programme activities supported school enrollment and retention? Is this equal between girls and boys? In what areas did you provide teacher training? How has that training been implemented in classrooms?
6. What type(s) of infrastructure have you constructed/repared through this programme? How is that infrastructure used in the community (e.g. agriculture, sanitation, drinking)? Who uses it most frequently? Who is responsible for its long-term maintenance?
7. What types of cash-based interventions were implemented (cash for work, unconditional cash transfers, etc)? How did participants use CBI?
8. What have been some of the alternative income sources created through programme activities? How have participants capitalized on market linkages created by the programme?

9. How have communities utilized savings groups? Have you noticed trends in savings group participation? How have savings groups provided training on accessing financial services and/or money management?

RQ2 How effective, sustainable and innovative was programming in the 2019-2022 portfolio?

1. Which activities were most impactful? Why? Which activities did not lead to expected results? Why? Which activities, if any, have continued without programmatic support?
2. How did country and regional shocks and stresses affect your project? How did you adapt activities due to these factors? How sensitive were activities to external factors?
3. Were there any changes to household income as a result of participation in the project? Where did the changes in income occur? (Probe for gender differences, the type of project: livestock, inputs, asset provision, etc.) What did households do with additional income? Were farmers able to meet household/livelihood needs with this money (fully, partially, not at all)?
4. Do participants produce enough to feed their families? Have there been any documented changes in household food security? If so, what are they? What elements of the programme appear to have contributed to these changes (provision of inputs, tools and other technology; capacity building; agricultural associations)? (Probe: observations of child nutrition and well-being)

RQ3 What are the takeaways and lessons learned from RQ1 and RQ2 that should inform East Africa strategic focus in terms of programme advocacy and funding planning?

1. What have been the key resilience outcomes of the programme? (probe for indirect or unintended effects) In your opinion, how sustainable are these results? What medium- and long-term impacts of programme activities can be observed?
2. Please describe the programme monitoring system you used to measure outcomes or impacts. What are the challenges or gaps to this system?
3. How have you documented and disseminated innovative practices and learning from programme implementation?
4. How have project activities specifically addressed the needs of women, children, and people with disabilities? Was this enough? How could this be strengthened?

Regional/Strategic Staff Questions

Introduction

2. Explain your participation in the Islamic Relief East Africa Food Security and Livelihoods Programmes. What is your role and what are your responsibilities in the programme?
3. In what ways does your role/team support the programme?
4. When did you first become engaged with the programme (e.g. design, inception, implementation phase)?
5. Please describe your country's projects as they relate to the overall East Africa FSL Programme.

RQ1 To what extent is the 2019-2022 project portfolio strategically positioned against sector needs and stated strategic objectives?

1. Which of the Priority Intervention Areas featured most prominently across your country's projects? Why? Which areas of FSL and climate resilience were most commonly addressed through project activities? What factors influenced the focus of the programme on these areas?
2. How did country and regional shocks and stresses affect your programme? How did you adapt project activities due to these factors? How sensitive were activities to external factors?
3. What government programmes are active here? What NGO programmes are active here? How have IR projects complemented existing programmes? How do you promote coherence and synergy between programmes? To what extent do you think this is working? How common is duplication of similar activities/interventions? What are some limitations to coordination/collaboration?
4. To what extent has DRR programming been implemented in FSL programming?
5. What is IREA's role in DRR? What is the government's role? What is the community's role in reducing the impact of shocks/stresses?
6. What do you think IREA adds to the global WASH/FSL network? How does IREA contribute to the global/regional cluster?
7. How have cross-cutting themes (e.g. Gender, Environment, Disability and Conflict Transformation; Policy Influencing and Advocacy) been implemented in programming?

RQ2 How effective, sustainable and innovative was programming in the 2019-2022 portfolio?

1. What, if any, long- or mid-term impacts of CBI have you identified? Have cash for work programmes resulted in sustained employment?
2. Does this programme have a strategy to continue activities if IRW/other funding stops? Why or why not?
3. How has the programme addressed funding gaps for FSL activities?
4. Which activities across projects have consistently been effective at improving food security and livelihoods?

RQ3 What are the takeaways and lessons learned from RQ1 and RQ2 that should inform East Africa strategic focus in terms of programme advocacy and funding planning?

1. Thus far, what have been the most effective programming strategies to promote long-term/durable FSL solutions for IDP and other vulnerable populations? How has this been

demonstrated? What other strategies can strengthen FSL programming? How can IREA help improve climate resilient livelihoods and disaster response at scale? What additional resources, capacities, and guidance does your team need in order to achieve that goal?

2. What have been the key resilience outcomes of the programme? (probe for indirect or unintended effects) In your opinion, how sustainable are these results? What medium- and long-term impacts of programme activities can be observed?
3. Please describe the programme monitoring system you used to measure outcomes or impacts. What are the challenges or gaps to this system? Is there coordination between IR EA countries for this monitoring?
4. How have you documented and disseminated innovative practices and learning from programme implementation?
5. How have project activities specifically addressed the needs of women, children, and people with disabilities? Was this enough? How could this be strengthened?

Appendix 5: Full Project Narratives

This appendix presents summary narratives of the programmes examined in the portfolio.

Enhancing Food Security, Stability and Resilience of Drought Affected Pastoralist and Agro-Pastoralist Communities (EFSSR) in Afar

Ethiopia

EFSSR is an IRUSA funded programme in the Afar regional state of Ethiopia. Afar is one of Ethiopia's most pastoral and agro-pastoral regions and experiences significant humanitarian crises due to recurrent climatic shocks. Droughts, floods, rising temperatures, and irregular rainfall have reduced pastoral areas and negatively impacted water access for these communities. Climate change has increased the frequency of extreme weather events, overwhelming existing coping mechanisms and resilience capacities. In addition, conflict in northern Ethiopia has contributed to displacement, a lack of market access, food insecurity, breakdown of existing infrastructure and services, and high rates of malnutrition.³³

This project was implemented in response to these conditions and focused on food security, stability, and resilience, which aligned with IR Strategic Objectives 1 and 2. Priority areas included poor animal health services, lack of veterinary medicines, limited knowledge and practices in crop cultivation, insufficient supply of crop seeds, and few income sources—particularly for women.

To address agricultural priorities, agro-pastoralists were provided fast maturing and drought resistant seeds and small-scale agriculture tools to support cultivation of their land. They also received training in agronomic practices such as irrigation, cultivation methods, and crop management. Financial services like establishing VSLAs, training in business skills and marketing, and provision of credit services were implemented to increase and diversify income. The average income per household more than doubled between baseline and endline, and 85% of households had two or more income sources. Many interventions, such as the VSLAs, gave primary or sole priority to women.

To sustainably improve DRR/M, the project trained eighty-one DRR committee members on early warning information, data collection, analysis and dissemination, and community mobilization for DRR activities. Additional technical support and follow-up was provided. Despite conflict disrupting the project, an increase from 8% to 60.8% of households receiving DRR information was accomplished by endline. While the project identified some success in their DRR programming, DRR functionality malfunctioned along with other public services during the conflict in Northern Ethiopia and Tigray.

In the survey conducted at baseline, many pastoralists and agro-pastoralists indicated that they had lost more than 70% of their livestock holdings due to the current drought. Through the project, 280 women-headed households each received 5 local restocking goats (1 male and 4 female). Households also received vouchers for animal health treatment services, and about 1,250 restocking shoats were treated to prevent diseases and parasites. Animal health providers received capacity building trainings, drugs and kits to support their services. PVPs increased their income by selling veterinary drugs and providing services, and CAHWs received alternative income by providing animal health services to the community.

³³ JAGOLA Development Consultancy PLC. A Preliminary Report on Enhancing Food Security, Stability, and Resilience of Drought-Affected Pastoralists and Agro-Pastoralists Communities in AWRA, EWA, and Gulina Woredas of Afar Region. January 2023.

Reduced Vulnerability and Strengthening the Capacity of Pastoralist Households to Withstand Drought Shock in Ethiopia is a project funded by IRUK and FCDO that began in December 2021 and will continue through November 2024. Drought deeply affected the project area in the years leading up to and during implementation. Animal health deteriorated due to droughts, exposing people to disease and preventing them from migrating to access pasture and water. At market, sick, weak animals receive a lower price. Because of this, household purchasing power decreased, and pastoralists had to sell livestock to purchase cereals for food, further reducing the size of the herd and making it unviable to continue the pastoralist lifestyle. This impacts not only individual households but the overall economy of the Afdher zone.³⁴ The pastoralist community lost up to 70% of its livestock over the three years leading up to project implementation, and many pastoralists have become displaced as a result.

Primary project intervention areas include WASH, veterinary health care, DRR, agriculture, and financial services. Thus far, the project has trained CAHWs and animal health technicians on disease surveillance, mapping, and data analysis and reporting and equipped them with basic veterinary kits and medications in order to provide quality, localized animal health services in hard to reach areas.³⁵ Select households unable to afford treatment for their animals also received free livestock treatment through private veterinary pharmacies linked to CAHWs. According to district livestock and pastoral development office, livestock mortality declined 13% as a result of increased access to livestock treatment services.

DRR interventions include a mobile phone alert system, which provides early warning information to 450 individuals. As part of the intervention, these individuals were provided mobile phones and trained how to use the information to track water and fodder. 88% of head of households received early warning information, 82% said they used the information during the dry season, and 87% said the information helped them better manage and plan for drought risk.

WASH focused activities focusing on water treatment for safe consumption resulted in 72% of respondents indicating they had started boiling, adding chlorine, or otherwise treating drinking water. The percentage of respondents reporting that they had experienced outbreaks of diarrhea, cholera, or other water-borne illnesses in their household had dropped from 90% at baseline to 27% at endline.

Key initiatives undertaken to prepare for the next growing season included identification and registration of fodder producing participants, land preparation for fodder production, identification and procurement of fodder seed, distribution of agricultural tools and construction of irrigation canals. The project successfully installed surface floating river intake in one of five intervention locations and has already started providing irrigation that services 10 hectares of land for 150 households. An irrigation canal of 400 meters length has been completed while the remaining four irrigation canals are underway.

The project has formed five Rural Savings and Credit Cooperatives (RUSACCOs) by fodder producing groups, and members have received training on leadership, governance and better financial management practices. The groups have also been provided seed money for initial operations.

³⁴ IR Ethiopia. UK AID Match Application. 2018.

³⁵ IR Ethiopia. UK Aid Match II Annual Review: Narrative Report. 2022.

This project's income generating activities, irrigation and agricultural initiatives, and animal health initiatives aligned with Strategic Initiative 2, which sought to address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability within the region.

Empowering Local Communities through Integrated Interventions in Mandera & Wajir Counties

Kenya

Empowering Local Communities through Integrated Interventions in Mandera & Wajir Counties began in 2020 just as COVID-19 measures were introduced in Kenya. While some activities were delayed and short implementation timelines prevented the completion of long-term interventions, this project successfully implemented Education, WASH, and Peace and Cohesion initiatives.

Mandera and Wajir Counties are located in a highly politically charged region where clan conflicts occur over natural resources and power. In order to promote peace and enhance social cohesion within communities, the project focused on capacity building in 15 peace groups in order to address the recurrent inter- and intra-clan conflict. Ninety-eight percent of peace group members surveyed agreed that there was an increase in peaceful coexistence among community members at endline.³⁶

The effects of drought further exacerbate these issues and impact the water supply in both rural and urban areas. Agriculture is almost entirely rain-fed, the scorching effect of droughts leads to desertification and bio-diversity loss, and the rivers, which provide water for human consumption, depend on rainfall to recharge.³⁷ In order to increase access to potable water, the project rehabilitated and developed strategic water facilities and strengthened the capacity and skills of 10 water users' associations.

While Free Primary Education (FPE) in Kenya has been successful, overcrowding in schools, funding, gender disparities, and the impacts of HIV on the education sector have continued to be a challenge. Over the life of the project, IRK increased access to education for children and particularly students with special needs by providing adaptive learning materials and assistive devices, constructing classrooms, a dining hall, and VIP latrines, and training teachers and Board of Management members. They specifically addressed attendance of female students by providing reusable sanitary towels and soaps to girls attending primary and secondary school. At endline, the mean population of girls enrolled in schools increased by 18%.

In order to increase income for women, the project provided seed grants for women entrepreneurs and trained 150 women in relevant business practices and life skills to aid in business operations. In conjunction with interventions with schools and micro-businesses, the project increased access to solar power in homes and businesses to allow children to study and do homework more comfortably and business owners to extend hours of operation. Prior to 2021, a majority of rightsholders had no source of power, but at endline, 97% had access to solar power in their homes or micro-business.

³⁶ IR Kenya. Empowering Local Communities through Integrated Interventions in Mandera and Wajir Counties: Endline Evaluation. February 2023.

³⁷ IR Kenya. Country Strategy. 2017-2021

ICReP was a 2-year sustainable development project in Mandera and Kilifi counties. Agriculture accounts for 24% of Kenya's GDP as well as indirectly contributing an additional 27% of GDP. A majority of informal employment in rural areas is within the agriculture sector, particularly smallholder farming, which is dependent on rain-fed agriculture. Recent droughts and floods have resulted in large economic losses, adversely affecting food security, livelihoods, and overall development of communities, especially those with limited adaptive capacity.³⁸

The frequency of extreme climate events has increased in recent years, often leading to displacement of communities and migration of farmers and pastoralists. Many traditionally pastoral communities have become sedentary, which impacts traditional land use and land tenure regimes. This can result in conflicts over natural resources and increased insecurity.

In order to improve access to natural resources, the project drilled boreholes, constructed a piped water network, built a drip irrigation system to enhance agricultural productivity, which allows farmers to farm independent of the two planting seasons, and installed water taps and kiosks to facilitate water access. They also rehabilitated the riverbank in Garashi, planting trees to protect the area and existing water facilities from future flooding.

School enrolment and attendance are low, as are the transition rates between education levels (ECD-to-primary, primary-to-secondary). Once students leave school, youth unemployment rates are high, partially due to a lack of technical, market-driven skills. They also lack access to credit and are therefore unable to start their own businesses or generate income. This is particularly acute in North Eastern Kenya, where youth unemployment and underemployment rates are as high as 66%.

Fifteen GSLA groups merged into two cooperative groups and were linked to financial institutions and county government department of trade. In order to support small businesses, goats and chicks were supplied to female headed households, 2 fishponds were constructed and stocked with 1,100 fingerlings per pond, and a community-based livestock and farm inputs shop was established. Farm tools and other items were supplied to rightsholders to boost their productivity.

70.8% of the population in Kilifi County and 87% of the population in Mandera Country live below the poverty line compared to 45.9% nationally. Low levels of productivity due to low uptake of technology, poor agronomic practices, high illiteracy rates, frequently natural disasters, inadequate infrastructure and access to key services, and undiversified livelihood opportunities all contribute to poverty in the region.

Trainings and workshops were key components of the project and focused on a variety of groups such as farmers, students, community leaders, and environmental clubs and topics. Eight hundred nineteen smallholder farmers were trained in climate smart agronomic practices and received follow up from to ensure the practices were being adopted. Following the different types of training, farmers have improved agricultural productivity and household food security. Fisher groups also received training to help diversify livelihood nutrition. Farmers also received agricultural inputs such as drought resistant seeds, tools and equipment. Additional forums on child protection and gender issues were conducted.³⁹

³⁸ IR Kenya. Integrated Community Resilience Programme Project Proposal. 2018.

³⁹ IR Kenya. Integrated Community Resiliency Programme (ICREP) Final Report. November 26, 2021.

Strengthening Agricultural Resilience in Awdal, Somaliland (SARiA)

Somalia

SARiA was an 18-month climate change and environment protection project in the Awdal and Marodijeh regions of Somalia. The project aligned with two major themes: Empowering families and communities (Theme 2) and addressing the root causes of disasters and vulnerabilities (Theme 3). Activities for this project include agricultural interventions, provision of climate smart technologies, rehabilitation of key WASH infrastructure, the formation of cooperatives, and early warning systems DRR trainings.

Climate change has caused the agricultural production rate to decline, and many farmers and agro-pastoralists are unable to meet their daily food needs. Frequent droughts, Covid-19 impacts, and inflation have contributed to a drastic drop in the amount of produce farmers are able to sell. Limited options for adaptation, access to water, resources, and services make it increasingly difficult for farmers and agro-pastoralists to continue in this lifestyle.

In order to address these challenges, the project established a climate smart village farm and installed irrigation pipes that were also able to distribute water to nearby farms.⁴⁰ Farmers were provided improved seeds and tools in order for them to resume and expand their agricultural production. A twenty-one day training on good agricultural practices such as land preparation, soil management, irrigation management, and crop production was conducted by the project, and 965 small-scale farmers attended with the intent of passing the training information on to other farmers in their villages.

In response to flash flooding, farmers participated in a cash for work programme that rehabilitated water ponds, and a second cash for work programme hired workers to rehabilitate and de-silt a communal earth dam. Two gabio walls were also constructed to reduce overflowing water and soil erosion from flooding. Four roof water catchments were also constructed to support WASH activities.

Thirty Community Animal Health Workers from four villages attended a one-week training to support increased productivity through reduced livestock morbidity. Veterinary medication and equipment was supplied to Baki district's animal health post so that CAHWs could access medicine to treat livestock in their communities. One hundred ninety-two pastoral households each received ten households (9 female goats, 1 billy goat) in order to restock lost due to recurrent drought.

The SARiA project also prioritized climate smart technology. Along with the technology implemented in the village farm, 500 households also received energy-saving cookstoves, and 300 school-aged girls received home solar lights to use at night for their studies.

Health, Education and Agricultural Livelihood Support in Balcad, Benadir & Beledweyne -- Somalia (HEAL II)

Somalia

HEAL II was an integrated and coordinated recovery project in Balcad, Banadir, and Beledweyne that provided primary health care services and resources to increase food production.

Flash floods occur yearly around the Juba and Shebelle river valleys, and recent floods have severely damaged WASH facilities and destroyed channels along the river that were used for irrigation. These areas

⁴⁰ IR Somalia. Strengthen Agricultural Resilience in Awdal (SARIA) 2nd Interim Report. 2021.

have limited infrastructure, increasing the vulnerability of smallholder farmers and rural economies. In Beledweyne town, flooding destroyed the homes of many IDPs, and shelter remains a priority. Through the HEAL II project, IRS constructed corrugated iron sheet shelters for 100 households.

Due to continual flooding, drought, and insecurity, the area has experienced an influx of IDPs, and this increase erodes existing capacities of host communities to support them. The absence of waste management leaves the public unprotected from hazardous waste, and this is further compounded by the collapse of latrines due to flooding. To address this vulnerability, 20 flood proof latrines were constructed in camps across three villages, and four garbage disposal pits were established in selected camps. A water tank and water kiosks were constructed in order to provide constant access to clean and safe water. Water management committees were also trained to reduce the risk of water borne diseases and maintain water facility points to ensure safe and equitable water consumption long term. Additional training on hygiene and sanitation, GBV, and sexual reproductive health were conducted within the broader community.

At the local level, communities lack DRR plans to facilitate information sharing on early warning networks in order to mobilize communities at the onset of drought.

Two hundred fifty people participated in cash for work activities, rehabilitating a canal for five villages. The rehabilitation of the canal improved agricultural production by enabling farmers to sustainably irrigate their farmland.

Health interventions came out of the establishment of three Health Centres in Shibis, Daynile, and Balcad, which the project equipped in order to provide primary health care services in the above-mentioned areas. Patients received medical treatment for common illnesses, and the project supported this being free of cost by providing staff salaries, essential equipment, clinical supplies and consumables, laboratory supplies, and pharmaceuticals. Through the health centres, individuals received outpatient consultations, children received immunizations, and babies were delivered. Additionally, mobile clinics that rotated between IDP camps provide essential health care services for those unable to access the Health Centres.

Under Education interventions, the project constructed a library at Balcad Evegreen School and provided textbooks, lab equipment, and other learning materials. In addition, twenty teachers were paid incentive payments of \$70 per month to support retention and reduce the burden of school fees for parents.

Farmers received agricultural inputs such as seeds, tools, fertilizers, pesticides, and tillage ploughing hours in order to increase food production. Some farmers also received training on integrated pest management and other agronomic practices. One hundred female heads of household were able to scale up small businesses through microfinance cash support, which also increased household income and livelihoods.

Food Security and Livelihoods Improvement Project in Kapoeta East

South Sudan

The Food Security and Livelihoods Improvement Project aimed to enhance community economic empowerment by addressing the main drivers of vulnerability in Kapoeta East. South Sudan's economic, food security and livelihood crisis is driven by interlinking factors such as natural disasters, conflict and poor governance. Despite a tentative peace deal, fighting continues in most frontline states. Conflict has caused internal displacement, and an influx of approximately 2 million returning refugees and IDPs

requires expanded and improved infrastructure and services.⁴¹

South Sudan has a low resilience to external shocks, in part due to the non-diversified economy and reliance on oil prices. Forty-eight percent of the population face crisis, emergency, and acute food insecurity while 34% are classified as severely food and nutritionally insecure.

Under IREA's FSL strategies, the project distributed farming tools, and seeds to farming groups and women's vegetable groups and provided training to farmers on basic agronomic practices. Seven Community Agriculture Extension Workers (CAEWs) were trained and then deployed to support smallholder farmers through education, provision of agricultural inputs, and access to markets. Four women poultry groups were formed, and the members were trained on basic poultry production. Two Farmer Field Schools were established and provide a community space where farmers and vegetable groups are taught good agronomic and business practices. The storage facility on site prevents post-harvest losses.

CAHWs were trained and provided with paravet kits and bicycles to facilitate movement through the community. At the time of reporting, CAHWs had treated cattle, goats, poultry, and dogs as well as provided support to 301 pastoralist households through basic animal awareness, improving hygiene and sanitation of their herds, reducing morbidity among livestock, and increasing animal health and productivity.⁴²

At the intersection of agricultural production and WASH, two solar water yards were established in order for vegetable groups to manage climatic stress and continue to grow during dry seasons.

The project conducted a variety of workshops, including gender and peacebuilding workshops and awareness sessions on CMDRR and CMNRM. Additional community awareness sessions focused on issues affecting women and youth livelihoods such as GBV, maternal care, and ownership and control of productive assets, livestock, and land. Six gender empowerment groups were developed by endline in order to address challenges specific to women.

Building Resilience for Yei IDPs and Host Communities (BRIYC)

South Sudan

BRIYICS was an 18 month FSL project that recently concluded in Yei. The purpose of the project was to reduce the immediate impacts of displacement, improve living conditions, and build resilience for the vulnerable IDP population in Yei.

Due to years of prolonged conflict, insufficient access to essential services, and natural disasters, an estimated 60% of the country's population was expected to face high levels of acute food insecurity in the first year of the project's implementation.⁴³ Nearly 4 million people have been displaced, and more than half of IDPs and one-third of returnees live in settlements where they rely on food and cash assistance or host community donations as their primary source of food. Children comprise 61% of IDPs and are at risk of neglect, abuse, exploitation, forced recruitment, child labour, and SGBV.

⁴¹ IR South Sudan. Islamic Relief South Sudan (IRSS) Final Strategic Plan. 2019-2024.

⁴² IR South Sudan. Food Security and Livelihood Improvement in Kapoeta East (FLIP) Final Report. 2020.

⁴³ IR South Sudan. Building Resilience Initiatives for Yei IDPs and Host Communities (BRIYIC) Project Proposal).

Water infrastructure is unequally distributed. In Yei, a majority of households relied on unsafe water sources and practiced open defecation due to limited access to basic sanitation. Existing infrastructure is inadequate for an influx of IDPs and returnees, and competition over resources has already caused tension between IDPs and host communities, so alternative water sources and rehabilitation of existing sources is necessary to cope with increased use.

In order to mitigate resource-related conflict, the project upgraded two boreholes to water yards, drilled two new boreholes and rehabilitated ten previously non-functional boreholes, providing clean and safe water access to 13,500 people. In order to ensure proper operation, maintenance and protection of the water sources, the project trained twelve Water Management Committees. At baseline, most respondents (78.0%) are less than thirty minutes from water sources compared to 7.7% at baseline. The construction of pit latrines, education about hygiene and sanitation, and provision of WASH NFIs, hygiene kits, and hand-washing facilities have improved WASH outcomes at both the household and community level.

Heavy flooding and intercommunal conflict have caused food shortages due to low production. Many farmers lack sustainable access to affordable, locally adaptable, quality seeds. Violence, flooding, covid, and soaring food prices amplified food insecurity and severely impacted people's livelihoods and access to food via markets, livestock and farming. Despite representing 60% of all agricultural workers, women have even more limited access to productive assets such as crop production, livestock rearing, and owned land.

Through the project, agricultural inputs (seeds and tools) were provided to 600 farmers, who were then trained in improved agronomic practices. Ten CAEWs were also trained to mentor farmers on improved practices such as line planting, early planting, and proper spacing. Additionally, Unconditional Cash Transfers were provided to some participants in order to purchase food, pay school fees and pay for healthcare.⁴⁴

Finally, three community-based protection committees were formed and trained in order to increase community awareness around GBV. Additional programs related to social cohesion, GBV, and protection were conducted through radio talk shows and awareness sessions. At endline, 72.0% of respondents indicated that there had been a reduction in GBV and protection risk due to these interventions.

Integrated Development Project to Improve Basic Services for Vulnerable Communities in West Kordofan and Gadaref States

Sudan

Integrated Development Project to Improve Basic Services for Vulnerable Communities in West Kordofan and Gadaref States was an 18 month multi-sector project with activities focused on education, WASH, and FSL. Despite sustained humanitarian assistance, conflict, poverty, and food insecurity continue to contribute to the deterioration of livelihoods, and escalation of preventable diseases and malnutrition.⁴⁵ 2.5 million IDPs live in Sudan, and a majority of households reported insufficient food for at least one month of the year. ON average, households experienced food insufficiency for a full six months.

⁴⁴ IR South Sudan. Building Resilience Initiatives for Yei IDPs and host Communities (BBRIYIC) Interim Report. 2022

⁴⁵ IR Sudan. Project Proposal.

Conflict has increased the number of IDPs in Sudan, and this growth has increased pressure on health facilities, which were already in need of rehabilitation. Health facilities are understaffed, medicines are not consistently available, and the strain on the healthcare system from Covid-19 lead to facility closures throughout Sudan.

Flooding in Central Darfur damaged hundreds of water sources, contaminating water, destroying thousands of latrines, and increasing the likelihood of disease outbreaks. Women and girls are predominantly responsible for fetching and storing water, which puts them at a greater risk of contracting illnesses due to poor WASH practices. Additionally, they face the threat of GBV while fetching water. Less than 1% of rape survivors receive clinical management of rape, and a majority of healthcare staff at the PHC lack basic CMR training.

WASH activities include the rehabilitation of solar energy equipped water yards, training on the operation and management of the solar systems, the rehabilitation and improvement of two hafirs and Um-Bilail Earth Dam, the replacement of water tanks with improved 10,000 gallon tanks, and the construction of two water treatment units and two school latrines. Workshops on the WASH approach and hygiene awareness were conducted, and waste disposal and cleaning tools were distributed to eight villages.

Under the education theme, school enrolment and retention improved through the rehabilitation of damaged classrooms, establishment of five school clubs, and provision of water tanks and hand washing facilities. Supplies such as furniture, school uniforms, textbooks, and chalk were provided for teachers and students. One hundred twenty subject teachers and 120 PTA members received training on topics such as life skills, school management and child protection. Forty youth from El Obeid Vocational Institute were trained on basic electricity connections, welding techniques, and leather production techniques.

Finally, FSL interventions addressed agricultural production and livestock. Inputs such as improved seeds, goats, and farming hand tools were distributed to farmers and farmer associations, and the Pastoral Department received animal fodder seeds for cultivation. Farmer associations also received seven small enterprises and financial secretaries were trained in bookkeeping and daily business management. Workshops were conducted on agro-processing, animal feed production and preservation, animal husbandry, nursery operation, environmental conservation, and business management. Community members were trained as CAHWs and equipped with veterinary kits and medications to support the community-based animal healthcare system.⁴⁶

Integrated Life-Saving Interventions to Improve Access to Basic Services and Sustainability for Conflict Affected Vulnerable Communities in Jebel Marra, Central Darfur

Sudan

Integrated Life-Saving Interventions to Improve Access to Basic Services and Sustainability for Conflict Affected Vulnerable Communities in Jebel Marra, Central Darfur sought to address the needs of conflict affected people in West Jebel Marra and Central Darfur, whose livelihoods have been disrupted due to conflict and displacement. Poor harvest, hyperinflation, and increased cost of living have resulted in

⁴⁶ IR Sudan. Integrated Development Project to Improve Basic Services for Vulnerable Communities in West Kordofan and Gadaref States Final Narrative Report. 2022

people adopting negative coping strategies that plunge them further into poverty. This high cost of living continued through the project life cycle, resulting in a majority of households unable to meet their basic needs. Despite the strain on the project budget which resulted in some targets being reduced, IRS successfully petitioned WFP to increase their targets for the Cash Based Transfer program in order for more people to receive the CBT.

Through the project, 55 healthcare workers were deployed to 10 PHCs and 70 healthcare staff were trained on emergency obstetric care, psychosocial support for SGBV victims and survivors, or Safe Motherhood Initiative and Focused Antenatal Care.⁴⁷ IRS supported six vaccination campaigns, which brought vaccines to vulnerable households in hard-to-reach areas. Children under 5 with Severe Acute Malnutrition and PLW received treatment and kitchen and home garden training and inputs such as vegetable seeds and small-scale irrigation pumps to support sustained nutrition outcomes. A majority of households were able to establish gardens and consume or sell the harvest at the local market. During the project life cycle, children in the nutrition program achieved a recovery rate of 95%, though there was also a high rate of readmission due to food insecurity at the household level.

Improvement of water facilities increased the percentage of people from target areas accessing water from protected and clean sources from 35% to 65%, and the percentage of people with access to 15 liters of water per person per day increased from 45% at baseline to 55% at endline. IRS rehabilitated 35 handpumps and upgraded two existing handpumps to mini water yards with hybrid solar and diesel power. Water associations were trained to repair and maintain water sources, including how to test water quality in order to reduce waterborne illnesses. Forty existing latrines were rehabilitated, and an additional 50 latrines were constructed in schools and in the community. This contributed to the reduction of open defecation from 76% to 38%.

IRS distributed cash crop seeds to 800 households, and farmers were trained on topics such as improved and sustainable farming techniques and covered crop rotation, use of organic manure, simple and cost-effective irrigation techniques, and minimizing post-harvest losses. Water pumps to improve access to water for farming activities were distributed to 200 farmers and 40 Community Agricultural Extension Agents. Other farmers received training on animal husbandry and were provided with a female goat to improve their household assets. Two slaughter slabs were constructed in conjunction of the training in order to increase market activities involving the selling and buying of animals for slaughter. The department of Animal Health provided training for forty trainees on veterinary extension, and they supported the project's animal vaccination campaign, which successfully vaccinated 57,520 animals.

In conjunction with the Locality Ministry of Health, IRS established an SGBV Recovery Center at the Nertiti Rural Hospital, where 126 people received services by endline. They also established a Gender and Information Desk at the Nertiti Police Station and trained 200 law enforcement officers on SGBV and CP risks and mitigation strategies. An additional ten SGBV Information Desks were established at the community level and linked to Community Protection Units.

⁴⁷ IR Sudan. Integrated Lifesaving Interventions to Improve Access to Basic Services and Sustainability for Conflict Affected Vulnerable Communities in Jebel Marra, Central Darfur Final Narrative Report. 2022.

Appendix 6: List of Lessons Learned and Leading Practices

The following presents key learning and leading practices discussed in the Research Findings.

Table 6. Key lessons learned around strengthening implementation

Key learning: implementation processes	
Greater focus needs to be placed on collecting and using monitoring data (verification surveys, thematic studies, case studies) to enable course correction and ongoing understanding of programme impact during the implementation period. Mid-line evaluations in particular is an important component of project performance and should always be conducted.	Kenya
Assign community facilitators who are based locally or close to the project areas. Selecting facilitators far from project sites makes monitoring difficult.	Ethiopia
The most effective means to verify and vet the list of registered rightsholders was to ensure community vetting system is being strictly adhered to.	Somalia
Best practices: effective programming	
Livestock	
Procure livestock from vetted vendors (who are preferably local, to prevent instances of disease and death.	Ethiopia, Kenya
Targeted livestock restocking can help pastoralist communities recover important productive assets after severe drought or disease outbreaks decimate herds. This supports recovery of livelihoods and food security	Ethiopia
Livestock should not be distributed during the drought season since the rightsholders will be affected and not be able to sustain the animals.	Kenya
Agriculture	
Multi-sectoral interventions have greater impact than standalone activities. Combining agriculture with livestock, financial inclusion and/or DRR components is a strong way to enable food insecurity in a holistic manner.	Ethiopia, Somalia
Agriculture groups are good ways to support large target populations, for example those facing drought shocks and conditions.	Ethiopia
Working in groups, especially farmer groups, promotes social cohesion, motivation and accountability amongst each other.	South Sudan, Sudan
Financial Inclusion	
Support financial inclusion through GSLAs; work with local research and policy institutes to customise and contextualise GSLA guidelines to target communities – where contextualization is necessary (i.e. supporting sharia-compliant activities)	Region wide

Key learning: programme sustainability	
Participation of community members in construction activities saves on labour costs and increases ownership, making projects more sustainable. Community members are therefore more likely to take responsibility to use, protect, and maintain facilities/outcomes.	Ethiopia
Form and capacitate local committees in support implementation, who then become well positioned to take over project activities after close.	Ethiopia, Kenya
Continuous HHs hygiene and sanitation awareness through application of Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach has enabled communities adopt very fast towards establishing their own HH latrines including other sanitary components.	South Sudan
Community-based DRR programming require more resources (i.e., time, staff, and budget) in order to have a lasting change/impacts in target communities. Only longer-term recovery or community resilience building programmes can address chronic and multi-layer needs and vulnerabilities of communities.	Somalia
Good sector practice	
Use 50% of the prepared land for fodder production and the remaining 50% for food crop due to the long effect of the drought and the need to address and improve their household level food insecurity and nutritional needs.	Ethiopia
Building storage facilities is a good way to extend food availability. Coupling this with community trainings on food handling and storage is a standard in agriculture programming.	Kenya
Creation of a working, respectful and cordial relationship between community members and law enforcement agencies is key and vital in addressing SGBV, and ensuring that victims and survivors get justice.	Sudan
Engaging with UN agencies and partners for implementation can have long-lasting strategic benefits, such as access to the UN Procurement System. This enables access to supplies and materials at zero/lower costs.	Sudan

Appendix 7: Research Timeline

Table 7. Timeline for this evaluation

Activity		Timeframe (2023)
Inception	Inception/Scoping Activities	June
	Inception Report Writing	June
	<i>Deliverable:</i> Draft Inception Report	28 June
	IRW review draft	July
	TANGO implements feedback	July
	<i>Deliverable:</i> Final Inception Report	17 July
Data Collection	Secondary data review	July
	Primary data collection (remote & in-person)	August – September
Analysis & Reporting	Analysis and reporting	September
	<i>Deliverable:</i> Submission of Draft 1	29 September
Feedback & Finalisation	IRW review Draft 1	02 – 13 October
	TANGO submits revised findings and conclusions with insights	18 October
	<i>Deliverable:</i> TANGO submits Draft 2	20 October
	IRW review Draft 2	23 – 27 October
	<i>Deliverable:</i> Final submission	03 Nov TBD
	<i>Deliverable:</i> Conclusions and Recommendations Presentation	November 2023

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