



EDUU
Education and Cultural Heritage
Enhancement for Social Cohesion in Iraq



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EDUU

Education and Cultural Heritage Enhancement for Social Cohesion in Iraq

Final External Evaluation Report

The project is founded
by the European Union



Disclaimer

This evaluation is supported and guided by the University of Bologna and presented by Barbara Lilliu. The report does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the European Commission.

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Table of Contents

DISCLAIMER	2
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
EVALUATION PURPOSE AND SCOPE	4
FINDINGS	5
RECOMMENDATIONS	6
<u>1. INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>2. SCOPE, APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION</u>	<u>11</u>
2.1 LIMITATIONS & CONSTRAINTS	13
<u>3. FINDINGS</u>	<u>14</u>
3.1 RELEVANCE & COHERENCE	15
3.2 DESIGN AND INTERVENTION LOGIC	17
3.3 CAPACITY STRENGTHENING OF HERITAGE PERSONNEL	18
3.4: ENGAGING WITH SECONDARY SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES	25
3.5: CREATING NEW EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL OFFERS FOR MUSEUMS	28
3.6: EFFICIENCY	30
3.7: WHAT'S NEXT?	31
<u>4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>32</u>
<u>ANNEX I: EVALUATION MATRIX/GRID</u>	<u>33</u>

Executive Summary

Evaluation Purpose and Scope

EDUU is a 30-month project (38 month with the extension) founded by the European Union (EU), specifically by the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)-Local Authorities (LAs) Programme in Iraq (2015-2017) and coordinated by the University of Bologna (UNIBO) in cooperation with the University of Turin (UNITO), the Centro Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi di Torino (CRAST) and the Iraqi Universities of Qadisiyah (QU), Kufa (UoK), and Baghdad (UoB). Additionally, the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH), the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities and the Youth Committee of the Italian National Commission for UNESCO acted as associates.

The overall objective of the project is: *to contribute to the reconciliation of the Iraqi civil society by reinforcing the idea that Iraqi society is a mixture of ancient and modern cultural traits and a multi-cultural and pluralistic State raising awareness on the common heritage of the Iraqi people and on land management.*

The project has 7 specific objectives/intended outcomes:

- (Oc1): To increase the knowledge of pre-Islamic societies in Iraq through archaeological and environmental research in the governorates of Al-Qadisiyah and Wasit, and raise awareness on Iraqi cultural heritage.
- (Oc2): To better protect cultural heritage and to promote its use as a tool for dialogue between different sectors of society by improving the skills of SBAH personnel and community leaders.
- (Oc3): To promote interest in the common cultural heritage and identity of Iraqi society among younger generations through courses in secondary schools and rural communities.
- (Oc4): To improve the local museum assets and engage civil society in cultural heritage initiatives promoted by museums.
- (Oc5): To promote and disseminate in Iraq and internationally the value of cultural heritage as a tool for community building.
- (Oc6): To improve the local museums' assets and empower local authorities and societies at large in order to assure action and sustainability over time.
- (Oc7): To improve the management skills of Iraqi partners.

The purpose of this evaluation is to review the project's experience and the project's achievement of the expected outcomes in relation to the project's main objectives. Particularly, the evaluation aims to achieve the following accountability and learning objectives:

- Review project performance throughout the three years of implementation;
- Assess project impact by identifying changes in people's lives, as compared to previous evaluations (WP1) and intended sustainability.

- Identify key lessons learned;
- Identify the appropriateness of the implementation methodology and any emerging needs to inform future work.

Findings

The review of the project documentation, background information, and feedback from key informants shows that the EDUU project has managed to consistently operate and engage target groups within a fast changing and complex context, which is a testimony to the **relevance** of the initiative to their needs and priorities. The project is based on a thorough knowledge of the complexities linked to the context in which it operates, and the gaps related to the lack of communication within a variety of stakeholders engaged in the promotion and protection of cultural heritage. For this reason, the project has proven to be **highly flexible** and adaptive to the challenging, ever-changing Iraqi context.

The analysis of the intervention logic suggests that the project is well structured and relies on the sound formulation of specific objectives, which properly link concepts and ideas that are relevant to the attainment of the overall project goal. Despite these positive aspects, at intended outcome and activity levels, the formulated indicators mainly captured quantitative aspects without also including **qualitative and gender-sensitive indicators**.

The following key findings are related to the levels of interventions addressed by the specific objectives and related work packages:

- **Capacity Strengthening of Heritage Personnel:** EDUU's methodology has been generating important achievements that are impactful at multiple levels and sustainable in the long term. The project **effectively** increased target group knowledge and practical skills through exposing them to new concepts and best practices. The evaluation results have found that the project, through a solid partnership between European and Iraqi universities, successfully demonstrated how to engage a variety of stakeholders to cooperate on the protection and promotion of cultural heritage. Moreover, it attracted and involved other segments of society, such as private businesses, and it bridged gaps of communication among Iraqi Institutions, setting up the basis for a strengthened cooperation on the common ground of cultural heritage. All these factors **impacted heritage personnel at individual, organizational and societal levels**, engineering an initial change of perspective and guaranteeing buy-in and **sustainability**.
- **Engagement with Secondary Schools and Communities:** The workshops and field trips organized in the schools targeted around 300 students in Baghdad, Qadisiyah and Najaf. These activities were coordinated by the Iraqi universities. The coordinator of the EDUU project, the University of Bologna, had a marginal supervision role. The evaluation findings showed that this factor had both positive and less positive effects.

One of the positive effects is that Iraqi universities showed a lot of enthusiasm in organizing the workshops and school trips. They felt empowered and **local ownership** was strengthened. However, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) could have been better coordinated and is an area that needs further improvement for future initiatives. Overall, the evaluation found that the experience was positive for both Iraqi universities and secondary schools' students. Nonetheless, it was an initial attempt that would need further development to maximize its potential impact through other initiatives and projects. On the **sustainability** side, the College of Arts of the University of Baghdad, in cooperation with the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Iraq, committed to continue the work in the schools.

- **New educational and cultural offerings for museums:** A didactic space was created in the Iraqi national Museum in Baghdad and thorough renovations were carried out to create the King Ghazi landscape museum. The linkages between the work carried out in the schools and the logic behind the renovations of the museums is evident: both aimed to enhance the awareness of the Iraqi pre-Islamic past to enhance social cohesion. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, exploitation and sustainability activities were put on hold. The impact these components of the project will have on young students and the wider public remains to be seen.

This evaluation has addressed the project's **efficiency** by looking specifically at the project's managerial aspects and coordination mechanisms. The working methodologies of the European project partners easily integrated one another and, as explained during the interviews, this synergy was based on mutual respect and common goals. The relationship between the coordinator and its Iraqi partners is constantly evolving. It is an empowering process that started with the WALADU project, during which the universities were the main target group, and continued through EDUU, during which they became full-fledged partners.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the evaluation, and on the conclusions in the previous sections, the following recommendations have been formulated:

R1: To conduct an in-depth study to better understand gender barriers and inequalities faced by academics, archaeologists and workers in the heritage sector in Iraq. The study should be conducted by a team of female researchers from European and Iraqi universities so as to minimize bias and inspire trust. The findings of the study should inform future projects' mitigation strategies and possibly the inclusion of gender- sensitive indicators in M&E tools.

R2: To establish a systematized M&E system to better support Iraqi universities in measuring achievements. This will enhance their capacity to collect feedback and slowly foster a cultural shift. Moreover, it will allow the team and its partners to gain a clearer picture of the relative

contributions that the different implementation strategies being promoted by the local partners are likely to make to the achievement of the project's objectives.

R3: To capitalize on the experiences gained with the various civil society strata and the best practices established by this project to further enhance local partnerships and networks for fundraising purposes. The innovative approach and positive achievements of this project can constitute the basis of a solid fundraising strategy that should also involve private donors and foundations.

R4: To expand on the initial achievements with secondary schools and communities through more initiatives and meaningful engagement, including regular rounds of feedback on the implementation of future activities.

R5: To build stronger partnerships to sustain advocacy and policy efforts to advance the promotion and protection of cultural heritage at the national level. Support could be sought among international stakeholders to maximize the impact at various policy levels.

1.Introduction

Over the past four decades, Iraq has suffered through conflict and war which has severely degraded its society and cultural systems. Every conflict inflicted progressive damages to the country's cultural heritage and repeatedly weakened its cultural infrastructure.¹

Sanctions imposed by the United Nations after the First Gulf War in 1991 and the US-led 2003 invasion spurred the reconfiguration of state institutions based on ethnic and religious quotas. This environment enabled the ascension of sectarian divisions, the absence of rule of law and the disastrous post-conflict reconstruction². The tensions between the competing and overlapping power structures exacerbated the social tensions and had long-term repercussions on the country's economy, education and cultural setting.³

Communities mobilized around political objectives based on their ethnicity or sect, which came at the expense of a common national identity and the pluralistic politics of co-existence that is often a prerequisite for stabilization and good governance⁴. Additionally, the distribution of hundreds of billions of Iraqi State funds since 2003 is based on this system, known as the Muhasasa, enshrining sectarian identity as an unwritten power share, which has had major repercussions on the development, governance and progress of the country⁵.

The rise of the Islamic State in 2014 was an outcome of this inability of Iraq's politicians to enact major reforms to create employment and deliver basic services such as education and health, among others. The majority of Iraq's population, and especially young people, are increasingly frustrated by the inability of governments to offer any meaningful change and respect social and political rights⁶. In October 2019, they took to the streets *en masse* to protest against the government corruption, mismanagement, high unemployment and lack of essential services. The protests, one of the biggest in the country's history, developed to call for a total overhaul of the political system, including a new electoral law, early elections held under UN supervision and constitutional reform⁷. Due to Covid-19 protesters were forced to pause their physical presence in the streets and squares of the capital, especially with the continuous increase in cases and deaths from the pandemic. However, they remain vocal about the fact that most of their demands have still not been met⁸ and their call for political reform will only grow over the next few years.

¹ Mehiyar Kathem, Giovanni Fontana Antonelli, Elke Selter, Damien Helly, with Sophie Desmidt "The Role of the European Union in the Protection and Enhancement of Cultural Heritage in Conflict and Post-conflict Contexts in the Middle East Region- The Example of Iraq", EASA October 2020, page 19

² Ranj Alaaldin, "Sectarianism, Governance and Iraq's Future", Booking Institutions 2018, page 7

³ Ibidem Mehiyar Kathem

⁴ Ibidem Ranj Alaaldin

⁵ Ibidem Mehiyar Kathem, and "The Fight for a New Iraq "by Mina Al-Oraibi, The New York Times, November 2019.

Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/05/opinion/iraq-protests.html>

⁶ Ibidem Mehiyar Kathem

⁷ Shirin Jaafari, "Before Coronavirus, young Iraqis held some of the biggest protests in the country's history", The World, May 2020. Available at: <https://www.pri.org/stories/2020-05-05/coronavirus-young-iraqis-held-some-biggest-protests-countrys-history>

⁸ Hayder Al Shakeri, "The Al-Kadhimi Government and the Future of Iraq's Protest", ISPI. Available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publicazione/al-kadhimi-government-and-future-iraqs-protests-27272>

In this context of growing inequalities, increasing poverty rates and lack of basic services, the resources allocated to prioritize cultural heritage were at a minimum. Moreover, due to the fall in oil prices in 2020 (which covers more than 90% of government revenue⁹) the Government of Iraq stated that it would need to secure international loans to pay for government salaries, which will in turn put more pressure on its people and stability¹⁰.

Iraq's cultural heritage has been deeply impacted over the years by the failed economy and the implementation of the quota-based political system that has brushed aside the idea of a national identity¹¹. The management of the cultural heritage is an extension of the *mushassas*, which have created powerful groups in the region that compete with the state. Therefore, there is no real support for national identity and citizenship because it is not in the interest of political parties to build a national consensus among the Iraqi public¹².

In this context, international support for Iraq's cultural infrastructure and heritage sectors becomes important to enforce a sense of identity and belonging in order for development and change to take place. Cultural heritage preservation and protection is a critical and integral part of the larger post-conflict recovery and could play a pivotal role in the post-oil reality in Iraq. Even though cultural heritage will not be the answer to the many challenges facing Iraqi society, it can be an important entry-point towards fostering national discussions, help transition Iraq to a sustainable economy, and move the needle towards building an Iraqi society based on knowledge and an appreciation of shared histories¹³.

The EDUU¹⁴ project has been operating within this context by building an EU-Iraq partnership around education and cultural heritage enhancements that links universities, secondary schools, and museums together in these shared goals. The 38-month project¹⁵ was founded by the European Union (EU), specifically by the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Local Authorities (LAs) Programme in Iraq (2015-2017), and coordinated by the University of Bologna (UNIBO) in cooperation with the University of Turin (UNITO), the Centro Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi di Torino (CRAS) and the Iraqi Universities of Qadisiyah (QU), Kufa (UoK), and Baghdad (UoB). Additionally, the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH), the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities and the Youth Committee of the Italian National Commission for UNESCO acted as associates.

The overall objective of the project is *to contribute to the reconciliation of the Iraqi civil society by reinforcing the idea that Iraqi society is a mixture of ancient and modern cultural traits and a multi-cultural and pluralistic State raising awareness on the common heritage of the Iraqi people and on land management.*

⁹ WFP, "Iraq Market Monitoring Report", Issue N.30, April 2020, page 2

¹⁰ Ibidem Mehiyar Kathem, page 22

¹¹ Rashid International, "The Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq as a Violation of Human Rights- Submission for the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights", 2016, p.5

¹² Ibidem Ranj Alaaldin

¹³ Ibidem Mehiyar Kathem, page 22

¹⁴ Eduu means "to know" in the Akkadian language that was spoken by the inhabitants of the ancient Mesopotamia from the 3rd through the 1st millennia BC

¹⁵ The project was initially 30 months but a no-cost extension of 8 months was granted by the EU

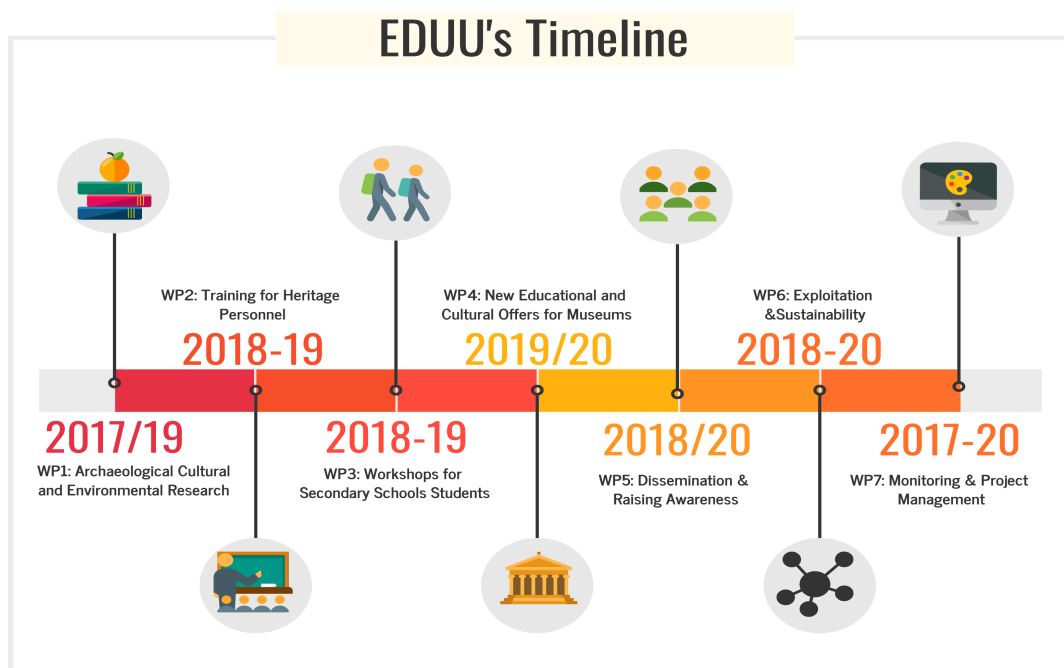
The project has 7 specific objectives/outcomes:

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- (Oc4): To improve the local museum assets and engage civil society in cultural heritage initiatives promoted by museums.
- (Oc5): To promote and disseminate in Iraq and internationally the value of cultural heritage as a tool for community building.
- (Oc6): To improve the local museums' assets, and empower local authorities and societies at large, to support action and sustainability over time.
- (Oc7): To improve management skills of Iraqi partners.

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives and outcomes, the EDUU project involves a broad spectrum of activities that are encompassed in seven work packages (WPs) interrelated with each other and listed below:

- WP 1: Archaeological, Cultural and Environmental Research
- WP 2: Training of Heritage Personnel
- WP 3: Workshops for Secondary School Students
- WP 4: Development of New Educational and Cultural Offers for Museums
- WP 5: Dissemination Activities for Raising Awareness
- WP 6: Exploitation & Sustainability
- WP 7: Monitoring & Project Management

The roll-out of the WPs, as well as the project's timeline, is depicted in the following diagram:



2.Scope, Approach and Methodology of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to review, from a learning perspective, the project's experience and its achievement of the expected outcomes in relation to its main objectives. Particularly, the evaluation aims to achieve the following accountability and learning objectives:

The accountability purpose of the evaluation aims to:

- Review project performance throughout the three years of implementation;
- Assess project impact by identifying changes in people's lives, as compared to previous evaluations (WP1) and intended sustainability.

The learning component of the evaluation aims to:

- Identify key lessons learned;
- Identify the appropriateness of the implementation methodology and any emerging needs to inform future work.

Based on the above-mentioned evaluation objectives, the consultant has developed a theoretical framework outlining the standards of reference for the evaluation based on the OECD/DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and cross-cutting issues. The evaluation grid, attached in Annex I, encompasses these key elements and criteria against which the project achievements will be assessed.

The evaluation was conducted between July and November 2020 and employed several tools, mostly qualitative, to collect both primary and secondary data. Given the aforementioned approach, and the peculiarities of the context in Iraq, the main features of the evaluation were:



To employ adaptive learning.

The evaluation had to continuously adapt due to Covid-19 restrictions and the lack of access to the target groups.



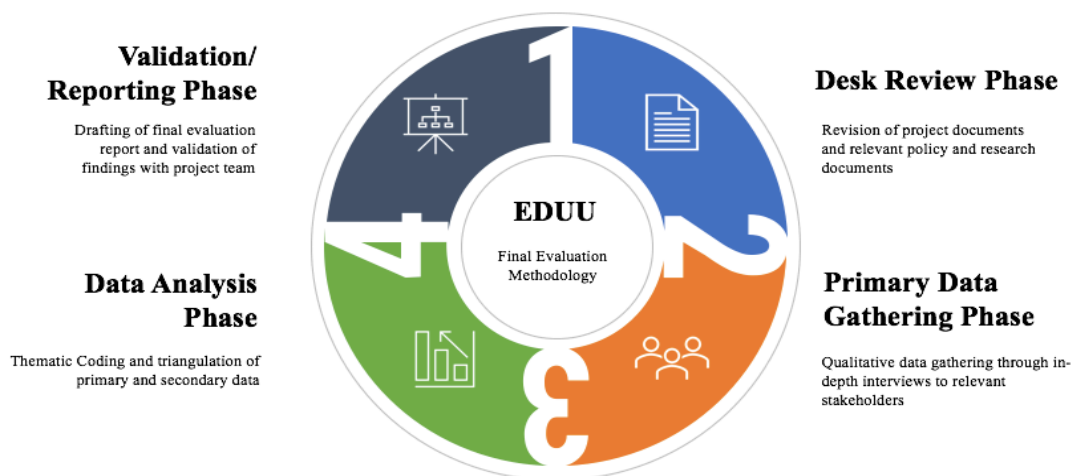
To actively listen and communicate.

The approach acknowledges that the staff and stakeholders that closely engaged with the project are indeed the experts. They have ideas for alternative approaches, but sometimes not the possibility to share them beyond conventional reporting. The evaluation listened to them and attempted to capture their views on the project implementation and the outcome generated in such a peculiar (including Covid-19 restrictions) context.

The evaluation process consisted of four phases: desk review, data gathering, data analysis and synthesis.

- The **inception/desk review phase** entailed a review of the project’s technical documentation (including the project field work and other published articles), and other relevant EU and Iraqi policy and research document documents, which were instrumental to refining the evaluation methodological approach, work plan and data collection tools.
- The **data-gathering phase** entailed a series of direct consultations with key informant groups who have been involved in the project experience. The direct consultations were conducted remotely through Zoom and Skype calls. The evaluation developed semi-structured, in-depth interviews which were used to discuss implementation methodologies and outcomes with project staff (4 staff from the university of Bologna, 3 from university of Turin/CRAST, 3 university of Kufa) and key stakeholders (including representatives of the SBAH, the donor, and other key informants involved with the work in the museums and the schools) identified in coordination with EDUU’s staff. A total of 18 stakeholders were interviewed. The evaluation also tried to gathered information from the students involved in the school activities through a video monitoring attempt that did not reach the expected outcomes due to the government-imposed lockdown for the Covid-19 pandemic and other logistical difficulties
- The **data analysis phase** was carried out through thematic coding (grounded theory). The coding was carried out primarily on the basis of frequency: for example, how many respondents had a “similar” answer or stated similar ideas, and how could those then be logically understood and labeled? The lists of emerging trends and themes were finalized once saturation was reached, meaning that no additional themes were emerging from new sources. The themes were then grouped under the main pillars/work packages of this project.
- The **reporting phase** involved drafting and finalizing this final evaluation report highlighting learning outcomes and approaches to inform future work.

The phases of the evaluation are illustrated in the following diagram:



2.1 Limitations & constraints

During this evaluation, a number of limitations and constraints were encountered. These include:

- Covid-19 pandemic and access to stakeholders: This evaluation was carried out during the lockdown for the Covid-19 pandemic in Iraq. Reaching out to target groups and stakeholders was therefore problematic due to the lack of digital infrastructure in most private houses and scarce connectivity of smartphones. Moreover, it was impossible to organize focus group discussions due to both social distancing rules and lockdown. Virtual meetings/sessions with more than one participant over Zoom or Microsoft Teams was almost impossible for the same reasons mentioned above.

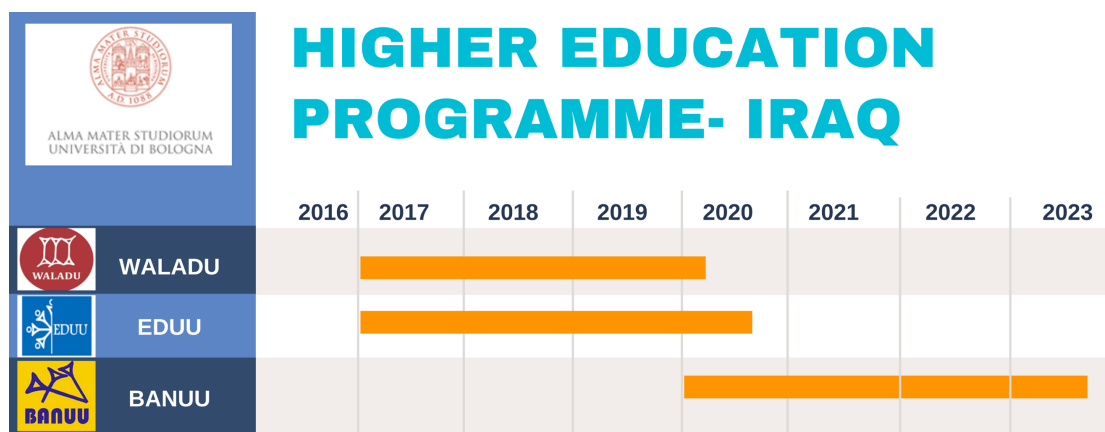
The lack of access to emails and computers was also the reason why the evaluation did not send a questionnaire to collect quantitative data from the target groups, and instead opted for Key Informant Interviews (KII).

- Access to secondary school students: The activities in the secondary schools were carried out between the end of 2018 and throughout 2019. The students that participated in the activities have moved on to other grades and schools. The majority were therefore nearly impossible to get in touch with. The evaluation, with the help of the Iraqi coordinators for this activity, attempted to gather the feedback of some of them that stayed in touch with their teachers through short videos recorded on their smartphones (video monitoring). The attempt was not successful due to logistical restrictions linked to the Covid-19 lockdown.

3. Findings

The EDUU project is part of the Higher Education and Cultural Heritage Programme established by the University of Bologna, in cooperation with its partners, in Iraq.

The programme includes three interrelated projects all supported by the European Union (EU). The first project, WALADU, was funded between 2017-2019 within the framework of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building Key Action 2 in the field of higher education. Its key objective is to modernize and restructure BA courses in archaeology, in line with EU standards, and increase opportunities in the labor market for graduates. The second project is EDUU, the subject of this evaluation, and the third one is BANUU spanning 2020-2023 and funded by Erasmus+ Capacity Building KA2 of the EU. The objective of BANUU is to build on WALADU and EDUU to strengthen the employability and entrepreneurship of Iraqi students of archaeology and cultural heritage. The implementation timeline of the programme is depicted in the table below:



Given the interrelations among the three projects, this evaluation will also refer to WALADU and BANUU to highlight correlations and, above all, to identify common methodologies and lessons learned.

The following findings are divided according to the main components of the project: (i) capacity strengthening of heritage personnel, specifically of the State Board of Antiquity and Heritage (SBAH; (ii) awareness raising through workshops in secondary schools and the work in the communities; (iii) creating new educational and cultural offerings for museums. Additional, general reflections on the relevance, coherence and efficiency of the project are also included. Each component is analyzed through the lens of the evaluation criteria (effectiveness, impact and sustainability) while focusing on best practices for implementation methodology. The work related to the research and excavation campaigns (WP1), which was previously evaluated by an external consultant, will be considered according to its contribution/interrelations and impact on the other components of the project. Gender has been analyzed as a cross-cutting theme.

3.1 Relevance & Coherence

The EDUU project rests on the premise that cultural heritage, in a country that has multiple cultural groups such as Iraq, can act as an important symbol of co-existence and continuity. Promoting dialogue between different sectors of civil society leads to a concept of a cultural heritage that is functional and understood by all and, has the potential for developing tourism and local economies, which is equally significant to rural communities and for a national cultural rebuilding.

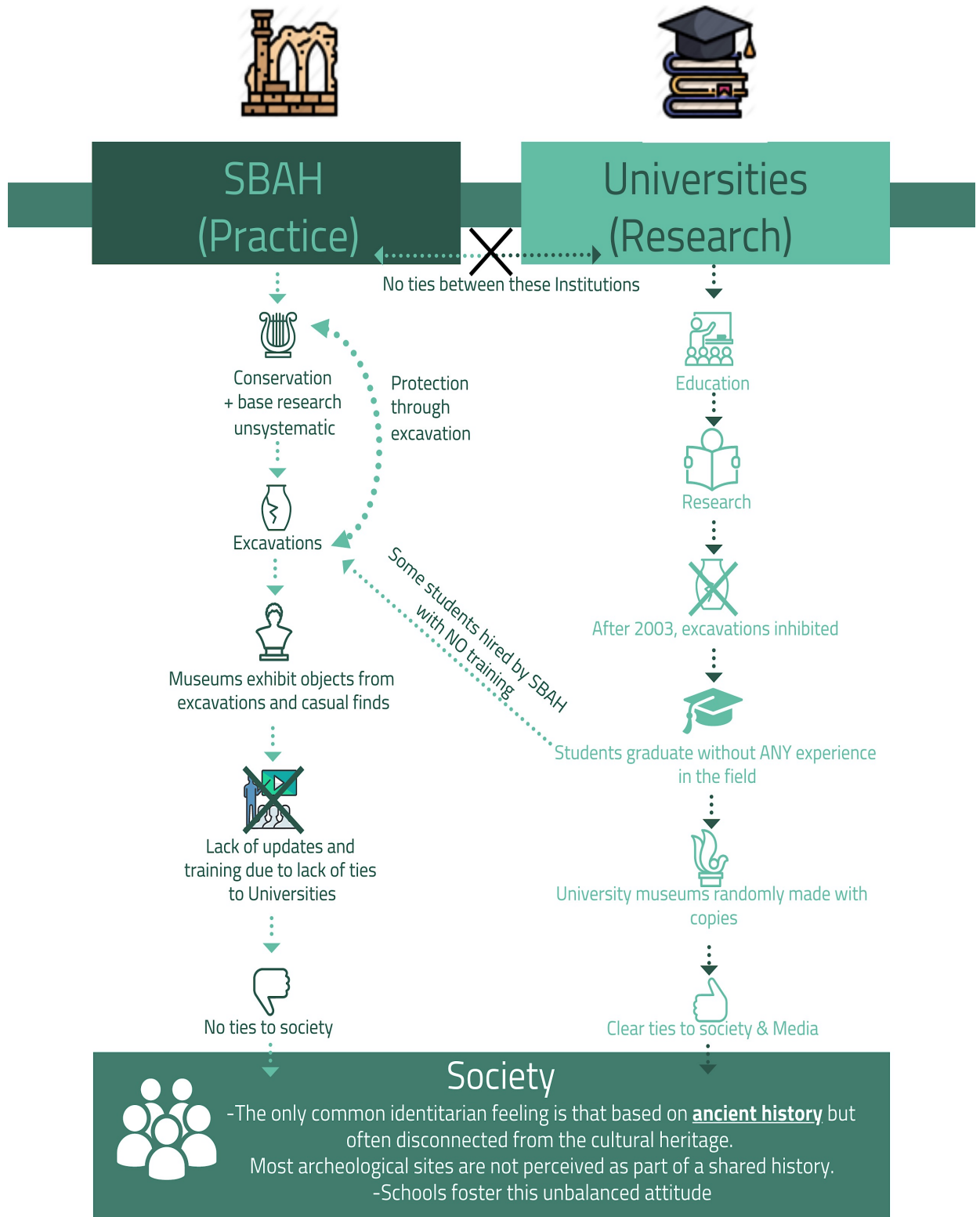
As mentioned in the background section of this report, Iraqi Ministries and state institutions are distributed on the basis of the *mushassa* (quota-apportionment) system, which has created institutional paralysis, a lack of cooperation and dialogue, an absence of reform and poor resources allocation for rehabilitating Iraq's heritage. The institutional paralysis prevented them to be more effective and responsive to the general needs of the Iraqi population, let alone in addressing cultural needs. The State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) for instance, a key actor in the protection of cultural heritage in the country, suffers insufficient budgetary support and lack of training for its officers which has prevented them from becoming a proactive rather than a reactive institution.

Academia and university systems constitute additional, important components of a country's heritage landscape. In Iraq, the academic communities were, and still are, an underutilized resource to address the promotion and protection of Iraq's cultural heritage. Building on the support to higher education institutions started with the WALADU project, this intervention recognized the role of academic communities and higher institutions as active civil society actors. This intervention facilitated dialogue and knowledge strengthening between them and institutions such as the SBAH to counter the detrimental effects of the country's damaged cultural landscape. Moreover, building on existing expertise and a keen interest of the Iraqi partners to actively contribute to the protection of the cultural heritage as a mean to reach social cohesion, the EDUU project fostered connections with communities and secondary schools (please see the diagram below for a visual representation of the pre-project situation).

Specifically, EDUU adopted a blended methodology to address the needs of its target groups. The blended methodology combined research and practical activities, including: trainings, excavation campaigns and landscape archeology, validation and dissemination campaigns. The project assisted Iraqi academics to further improve their practical skills and academic production, both in quality and quantity, to better document their vast heritage. Additionally, the project established a fruitful working relationship with the SBAH by delivering a tailored capacity building path and several concerted tools that addressed knowledge gaps.

Rural communities living nearby archeological sites and younger generations are also considered to be target populations needed for meeting the larger objective of utilizing heritage for increased social cohesion. They are essential layers of society that the project engaged with because of the much bigger role they can play for the protection and promotion of heritage, as well as the potential to develop local economies in the near future.

EDUU Pre-Project Situation Diagram



The initial connections fostered by the project to effectively engage this significant stratum of Iraqi society are envisaged to be further developed through the support of museum institutions. These are identified by the project as key institutions for attracting younger generations and the public at large. This is intended to create a bond between them and their shared pre-Islamic identity by strategically highlighting the importance of Mesopotamian civilizations towards promoting a shared sense of belonging within modern day Iraq.

The project has managed to consistently operate and engage target groups within a fast changing and complex context, which is a testimony to the **relevance** of the initiative to target groups' needs and priorities. Due to the student protest first and the Covid-19 outbreak later, the second half of the project's operations slowed down. The slower operations mostly affected the rehabilitation work in museums and the dissemination and sustainability activities. A high degree of **flexibility** and adaptation is one of the characteristics of the EDUU project that interviewed stakeholders referred to most often. The project mediated through constant dialogue and accommodated, as needed, requests coming from target groups; a few examples include the development of specific tools, *ad hoc* trainings for the SBAH officers, and additional research on local communities living nearby archaeological sites and their perceptions of their heritage. These examples indicate that the project, through its adaptive, participative and open methodology, remained relevant over time.

The project is well aligned with several international instruments, including the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Cultural and World Heritage of 1972, Article 15 of the ICESCR and the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention. Moreover, considering the intersectionality of cultural diversity, heritage and human rights, the project aligns with: the 2016 Joint Statement on Cultural Rights and the Protection of Cultural Heritage, supported by 145 States at the UN Human Rights Council; UN Human Rights Council Resolutions 33/20 of 2016 and 37/ 17 of 2018; UN Security Council Resolutions 2071, 2085, 2100, 2249, 2347 (UNSC 2012a , 2012b , 2013 , 2015 , 2017a); the dedicated work of the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Karima Bennouna, whose report topics have included the intentional destruction of cultural heritage (UN Doc A/HRC/31/59) and the impact of fundamentalism on the enjoyment of cultural rights (UN Doc A/HRC/34/56).

As for the alignment with national policies, Iraq does not have a comprehensive body of law for the protection of its cultural heritage. Iraq does have the law no. 55 for the Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq (2002)¹⁶, with which this project aligns and is therefore relevant to the country's strategy.

3.2 Design and Intervention Logic

The intervention logic is coherent and the results chain is comprehensive. Both mirror the interlinked components of the project: capacity strengthening, the creation of practical tools, and awareness raising and engagement.

¹⁶ Please see: <https://www.cemml.colostate.edu/cultural/09476/iraq07enl.html>

Despite these positive aspects, at intended outcome and activity levels, indicators mainly captured quantitative aspects and lacked qualitative, gender-sensitive indicators. The qualitative indicators would have been useful to gather more information on the target groups' motivations and satisfaction on the implementation and effectiveness of the various activities, especially the activities within secondary schools.

The gender-sensitive indicators could have been used to better capture the differential impact of the activities on men, women, boys and girls which, especially in a traditional society such as Iraq, are extremely relevant. The formulation of sex-disaggregated indicators at the activity level within the logframe is to be praised; however, well-structured monitoring and data collection should cover more than the number of participants in the activities to objectively grasp and integrate multidimensionality and gender mainstreaming. This is a process that should start from project/programme design and be woven throughout implementation and M&E.

The development of gender-sensitive indicators for this type of project is therefore indispensable to add a gender dimension to the academic research in the archaeological field, practical activities (excavations) and awareness raising on the protection of heritage. Some examples of how to include a gender dimension for future reference could include: consider differences in accessing research opportunities provided by the project; consider changes in the organizational culture of partners, specifically Iraqi universities and SBAH, which have gender impacts within the working place; consider identifying the barriers for women in accessing, using and benefiting from cultural heritage within communities. The collection of gender-sensitive data should be thus required, and closely monitored, to ensure accuracy from each project partner. A special focus should be put on Iraqi partners to engineer a change in perspective towards gender mainstreaming.

In conclusion, the project structure shows well-defined and interconnected areas of focus mirrored in its specific objectives, however, in practice this configuration could have been better supported by the monitoring tools through integrated quantitative, qualitative and gender-sensitive indicators. For future initiatives, it will be pivotal to add more robust M&E approaches and data collection tools favoring an increasingly multidimensional analysis throughout the project's implementation.

3.3 Capacity Strengthening of Heritage Personnel

The capacity strengthening developed by the EDUU project, consisted of a series of blended trainings, held mainly in 2018, targeting the **SBAH officers, museums operators, university students and researchers, and community leaders**. The course topics spanned from: *History of Archaeological Restoration and Museology* (held in Baghdad in 2018) to *Cultural heritage: Preservation and Spreading of Awareness* (held in Kufa and Qadisiyah 2018) and *English Language for Archaeology* (held in all three universities in 2018). Additionally, an online course developed through the e-learning platform of the University of Bologna was offered

on “*The Museum and the Society. Some Concepts of Collection Management, Communication Strategies and the Educational Impact of Museums*”. In 2019, the project further trained SBAH chief keepers and keepers on promoting the use of heritage as a tool favouring dialogue and mitigating social tensions, and two SBAH officials to improve their skills on GIS and remote sensing as well as to introduce them to the best practices of selected Italian museums. The latter was held in Italy, at the Universities of Bologna and Turin in November 2019.

Please see the diagram below for more detailed information on participant numbers and training hours delivered by the project.

EDUU's Capacity Strengthening in Numbers



To assess the effectiveness of this component, the evaluation started by analysing the strategy and **methodology** employed to organize and deliver the trainings. As mentioned in the diagram, the capacity strengthening involved all partners and employed a blended

methodology of practical sessions and theoretical lectures, and of in-person and e-learning courses. The knowledge and skills of target groups has been strengthened not only through trainings but also through field work carried out in parallel under WP1. During the field work campaigns in Wasit, Qadisiyah and Najaf, the teams coordinated by the universities of Bologna and Turin—in cooperation with the universities of Qadisiyah, Kufa and Baghdad— included SBAH officers, students, researchers and at times community leaders. The fieldwork, organized in short missions twice a year, consisted of excavations and exploration/documentation of the mentioned areas using innovative techniques, among which landscape archeology. This work resulted in several scientific publications,¹⁷ three archaeological surveys and the study titled “Local Voices on Heritage ” which aimed to understand the perceptions of local communities living nearby archaeological sites over their past and present history,

The fieldwork aimed to increase knowledge of pre-Islamic societies and also constituted an integration with the university courses developed through WALADU, the previous project. The lack of practical follow-up, in combination with formal lectures in the Iraqi universities, was one of the main issues that emerged from the implementation of the previous project, which also aimed to establish internships in cooperation with national authorities and the partner universities. Therefore, integrating the internships of the university students with EDUU’s fieldwork was a clever strategy to provide further support to students and researchers, and to establish linkages with the previous project, thereby guaranteeing continuity and sustainability.

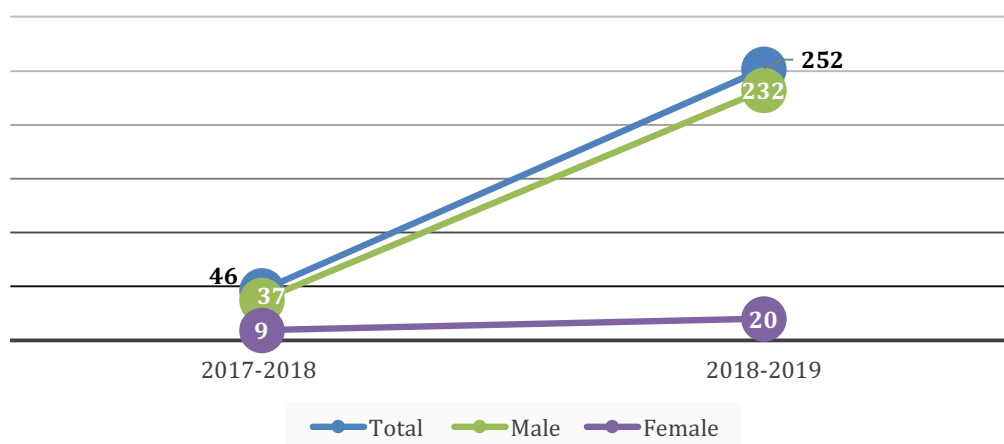
The feedback received by the interviewed stakeholders on the overall **effectiveness** of the capacity strengthening was very positive. The majority of stakeholders highlighted that the courses met their needs and addressed important gaps. Most of them indicated that the English Language courses and the practical follow-ups, such as the guided tours, were the most useful. Specifically, some stakeholders stressed the importance of “*understanding the new ways,*” referring to the use of tools such as GIS, or how to fill a database and document the archaeological finds, how to conduct field research and how to promote the local cultural heritage through multimedia.

What has been evidenced through the interviews as a recurrent theme was the bottom-up approach adopted by the implementers towards the identification of target group needs, both in terms of training or production of tools in support of the activities, such as informative materials. One example is the production of “*Discover your past. An Introductory guide to Archaeology and history of the Kufa Region,*” a booklet based on the results of the fieldwork from both archaeological and anthropological surveys. The booklet idea came directly from the SBAH (Kufa division) and it was produced in cooperation between them and the researchers from the University of Bologna.

¹⁷ For a complete list of the publications please see: <https://site.unibo.it/eduu/en/work-package-1-archaeological-cultural-and-environmental-research/results>

The lack of coordination between the Iraqi universities and the SBAH initially affected the officers' participation in the trainings (please see the chart below for more info). As evidenced in previous paragraphs and in the pre-project diagram, the absence of communication and relationship between these two institutions was one of main issues addressed by EDUU. The coordinator acted as a mediator and throughout the project both participation and cooperation remarkably increased. Stakeholders noted within the evaluation's efforts that, before this project, there has never been a structured attempt to strengthen the cooperation between these two institutions. EDUU was indeed successful in achieving this result and in navigating such a politically complex environment.

Number of SBAH Participant to trainings from 2017 to 2019



As evidenced from the graph, the overall participation in the trainings increased over the years. However, women's participation stayed low. Even if this data is specific to one target group, a clear issue related to the general women's participation in the project's activities emerged. The interviews with implementing staff evidenced that this was more an issue in conservative areas, such as Kufa, rather than in Baghdad. Moreover, participation in indoor activities, for example trainings in the universities, was less problematic compared to participation in outdoor activities, such as fieldwork. Interviewing women was challenging also during the data collection for the survey "Local Voices on Heritage" conducted in the communities, as reported in their methodology, not to mention the low number of scientific publications authored by female researchers.

It is widely known that years of strong conservative culture in the country led to the marginalization of women from economic, social and cultural life. Iraqi women today suffer from high levels of inequality, exacerbated by cultural and social norms, lack of awareness and institutional and legal barriers. The EDUU coordinator tackled the low participation of women by "strongly advising" Iraqi partners to include them in the project activities, especially in more conservative areas. Additionally, as stated during the interviews, having a team of researchers and supervisors that equally includes men and women contributed to generating some, even tough not enough, success stories. Universities in Iraq are a patriarchal environment and to better address women's inclusion in future projects, it would

be advisable to conduct an in-depth study concerning the barriers faced by them at various levels. Such a study could be pivotal in identifying mitigation and support strategies for inclusion, especially in light of the continuation of work through the new project, BANUU, which is addressing employment opportunities linked to the promotion of cultural heritage. Moreover, a study can also serve to identify baseline gender-sensitive indicators which, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, would need to be included in the logical framework of future initiatives.

The M&E process set up by the project to evaluate the capacity-strengthening component included evaluation forms at the end of the trainings and discussion forums during the fieldwork. Evaluation forms often did not capture if trainees truly internalized skills and knowledge. The addition of discussion forums during the fieldwork provided the participants the opportunity to share doubts and get more clarifications. Similarly the trainers benefited from the opportunity to fine tune teaching methodology. The goal of the trainers, as stated during the interviews, was to make sure that at least a few relevant topics were completely understood. A constant feedback flow through questionnaires and discussions, therefore, fed into the training methodology.

Regrettably, this virtuous cycle is not evidenced by the project's official reports or any other official documentation. Further investigation suggested that the teaching methodology during an excavation, for example, is made of so many customary practices that is difficult to systematize it through data and reporting. Throughout EDUU several interesting implementation strategies have been applied that will surely feed into the implementation of future initiatives, including BANUU, and will become best practices in the long run. One of these is indeed the mentioned feedback process. Therefore, even if it might be challenging, it is essential for these strategies to be documented both during the reporting phase and perhaps, through an *ad hoc* document to allow replicability by local project partners and interested stakeholders

3.3.1 Long term effects and sustainability of capacity strengthening

According to most interviewed stakeholders, besides the individual level at which the project undoubtedly impacted, the long-term effects of the fieldwork and capacity strengthening are the relationships and networks established. The strength of this intervention, and that of the overall education programme established by the University of Bologna, is that its long term cooperation will continue to operate even without external funding. This factor helped in fostering and establishing trust among the Iraqi partners towards the work of the University of Bologna, which was crucial for the achievements of EDUU's outcomes. Additional avenues for expanding networking were provided by the University of Turin, that operates through the CRAST—Centro Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi di Torino per il Medio Oriente e l'Asia—and that, due to the many years of work in Iraq, has strong ties at the institutional level within the Baghdad area. They also manage the Iraqi-Italian Center for Archaeological Sciences and Restoration of Baghdad that was used as a facility for the delivery of the training courses.

Moreover, through the fieldwork several tools and resources were produced that are, and will continue to be, extremely useful for SBAH officers, university students and researchers.

One example is the WebGIS platform. This platform includes more than 6.000 archaeological sites mapped throughout the EDUU project. As mentioned in interviews with some SBAH representatives, the WebGIS platform is a practical tool that can be used even without knowledge of the English language. Moreover, it helps to identify the exact position of the sites and, subsequently, it facilitates the organization of routine monitoring and management of resources according to distance and location. The platform is also a useful tool to better understand the richness of the Iraqi territory. Data shows that in Iraq there are around 15.000 archaeological sites, including heritage monuments and mosques—and not even half of the country has been mapped. In the Al-Diwaniyah area alone there are 3500 sites, the majority of which were not yet known, not even by SBAH officers that were mapped through EDUU. Additionally, there is not a central registry for the archaeological sites, which reiterates the usefulness and long-term effects of the work and the tools produced by the project. The WebGIS platform is scheduled to be handed over to the SBAH after the end of the project and can be consulted at this [link](#). Two SBAH officers were trained on how to use the GIS technology to expand on the database and continue the work independently. One of them largely reported to this evaluation the benefits of having this knowledge in-house, to strengthen the SBAH efficiency and foster a spill over effect throughout the local offices.

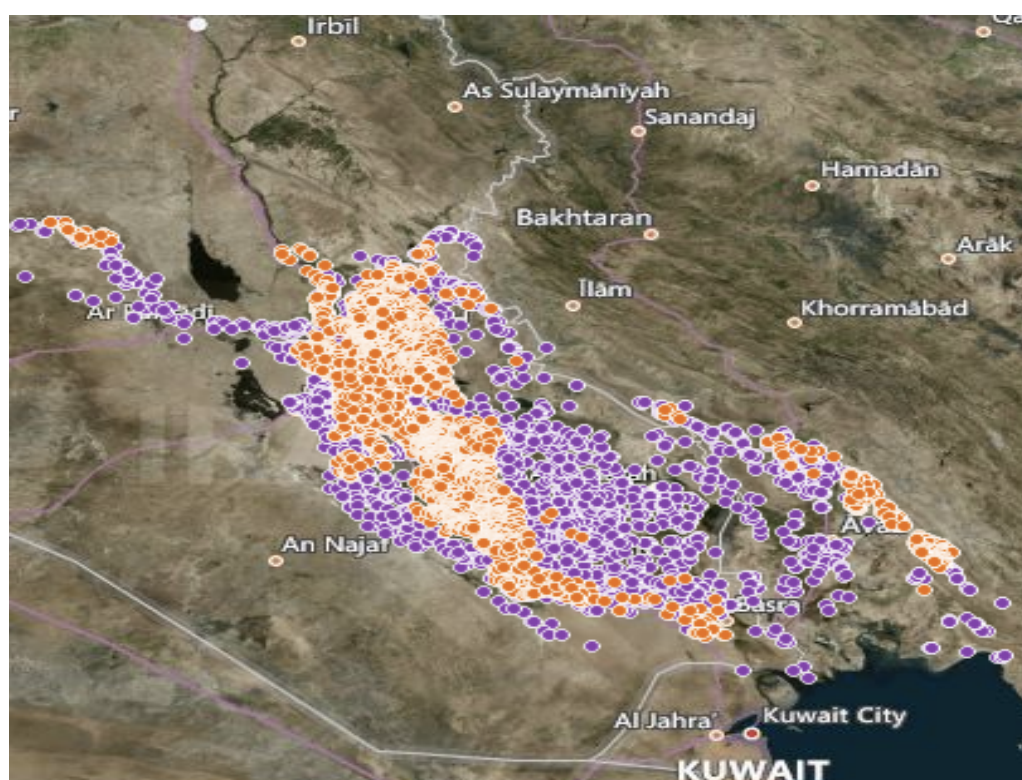
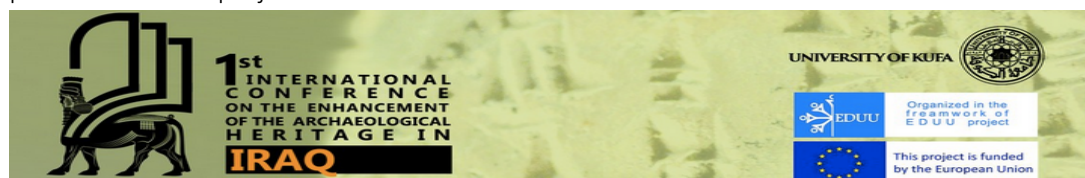


Figure 1: The sites mapped through EDUU project as seen in the WebGIS platform

Strengthened academic production is another important achievement of this project. Research and articles have been published in national and international journals. All the publications have been made open access to be available to university students, researchers and other heritage operators. This scientific production constitutes a valuable additional resource for the Iraqi universities and enhances the reputation of their faculties, therefore attracting more international partners. For example, the university of Kufa has been able to

consistently increase its international partnership portfolio thanks to both WALADU and EDUU. As explained by a representative of the university during the interview, the opportunities provided by both projects in terms of enhancing capacities, teaching methodologies and networking brought more projects and partnerships with the British Council and Universities in Korea, just to mention some. Most of these partnerships have been consolidated after the ICEAHI international conference held in Najaf in January 2018, as part of the EDUU project.



This conference set an important benchmark for future, similar initiatives; it attracted investments from local businesses. The conference was seen as an opportunity to enhance cultural tourism, for both nationals and international tourists, as opposed to the current religious/faith tourism that is mainly internal. Therefore, it was the perfect opportunity for the Iraqi local business to invest in it, to strengthen its network and cooperation opportunities. This initial linkage with the Iraqi local private sector constitutes an opportunity to capitalize on through the BANUU project.

As part of the project's dissemination strategy, another conference was organized in Bologna in April 2019 as well as a series of outreach events. The dissemination strategy- depicted in the diagram below-, also included social media engagement and the creation of a dedicated website. The outreach events were pivotal to enhancing the visibility and sustainability of the project as they put the project on the radar of the international community, showing the importance of working in this sector for the stabilization and social cohesion of Iraq.

EDUU Dissemination Strategy



In conclusion, the capacity strengthening path set forth by the EDUU project was effective in achieving the intended outcome of increasing the knowledge of pre-Islamic societies and of raising awareness on Iraqi cultural heritage among its target groups. Through the solid partnership between European and Iraqi universities the project showed, to other potential international partners, that high-level cooperation towards the protection and promotion of cultural heritage is possible in Iraq. Moreover, the project attracted and involved other segments of society, such as the private sector, that were not accessible to project partners at the beginning of this process. Finally, it bridged gaps of communication among Iraqi Institutions, setting up the basis for a strengthened cooperation on the common ground of cultural heritage. All these factors impacted multiple levels (individual, organizational and societal) and engineered an initial change of perspective that will be strengthened through the BANUU project.

3.4: Engaging with Secondary Schools & Communities

The work in **secondary schools** in Baghdad, Qadisiyah and Najaf was coordinated and implemented by the Iraqi universities. The rationale behind this strategic decision was twofold: 1) thrusting the universities outside their comfort zone to better connect with other education actors and 2) strengthening the local ownership of the project.

The activities that involved around 300 students aimed to foster dialogue and promote interest in the common pre-Islamic identity. Several workshops were held in the schools by university professors with similar methodologies, which included: an initial presentation about the project followed by a collective reading of comic books and an open discussion.

"The Road to Baghdad" Comic Book Series



The project developed three comic books, available in three languages—Arabic, English and Italian—called “**The Road to Baghdad**”¹⁸. Each comic book tells a different story, one is set in a museum, another tells about the importance of the landscape and the third about being an archeologist. All comic books focused on conveying the value of protecting and promoting cultural heritage and the importance of an Iraqi society to nurture the younger generations’

¹⁸ For more info and to download the comic books please see: <https://site.unibo.it/eduu/en/schools/the-promotion-of-iraqi-cultural-heritage-among-students>

sense of belonging and identity. The comic books offered a valuable support to the activity in the schools and were also distributed to UNESCO, one of the associates of the project. Moreover, SBAH officers, as stated during the interview, were also widely distributing them in villages and other schools whenever the opportunity presented itself.

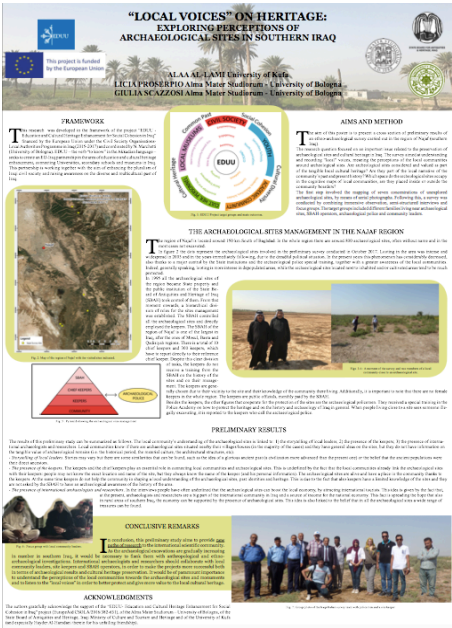
The activities envisaged by the project for the schools also included trips to museums and archeological sites. The destination differed according to the area: the students from the schools in Baghdad went to visit the National Iraq Museum located in their city; the students from Najaf were accompanied by a tour guide to the Islamic site of Al-Hirah, where archaeological excavations coordinated by the SBAH are currently in progress; students from Qadisiyah visited the ancient city of Nippur. The school trips aimed to give the students, and their families, a direct experience of their cultural heritage to boost their interest in their shared history.

In this activity's implementation, the University of Bologna had a marginal supervision role, which had both positive and less positive effects. One of the positive effects is that Iraqi universities showed a lot of enthusiasm in organizing the workshops and school trips. They felt empowered, as stated during the interviews, by the freedom to act given by the coordinator. This was a factor that undoubtedly improved the local ownership of the activity. Additionally, according to some university stakeholders and especially in Diwanyah and Najaf, the Iraqi universities employed a systematic approach towards the organization of the workshops and school trips, showing good managerial capacity. However, the M&E part could have been better coordinated and is an area that needs further improvement. The direct feedback from the students, and parents, was not collected during the implementation, making it difficult to assess the real effectiveness or long-term effects of this activity. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, it was not possible for this evaluation to engage students and collect their direct feedback, thereby allowing triangulation of first-hand information with other data collected. Therefore, no conclusive findings can be elaborated on the students' experience rather than the deduction that it was an interesting initiative. As previously stated, it was a positive experience for the Iraqi universities, both in terms of connection with other actors of the civil society and in terms of empowerment. Nonetheless, it was an initial attempt that would need further development to maximize its potential impact through other initiatives and projects.

On the **sustainability** side, it is worth mentioning that the College of Arts of the University of Baghdad¹⁹, in cooperation with the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Iraq, committed to continue the work in the schools. This is indeed a perfect opportunity to further improve the approach to awareness raising and information sharing with young students initiated by EDUU and, possibly, using more innovative approaches and methodologies. Additionally, best practices through systematized and advanced M&E techniques, such as video monitoring, could be implemented and collected for learning, expansion and replicability purposes.

¹⁹ The College of Arts is one of the main bodies of the University of Baghdad. It is composed of eight departments: English Language, Arabic Language, Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology, History, Geography and Archaeology.

The engagement of the **communities** residing in the villages nearby the archaeological sites relies on the concepts of “Community Archaeology”. Often the communities living around the sites are disenfranchised due to either the physical destruction of the heritage itself or due to lack of knowledge. Through community archaeology, members of the community are actively involved and work together with the archeological mission in the area in which they live for the valorization of their heritage. This practice aims to incorporate every individual from a range of demographics. An emphasis is placed on how engagement between archaeology and the public can be created, and how public values can be incorporated, created and maintained within the archaeological practice. This can be achieved through a wide range of different activities, including engagement during the excavation, post-excavation, artifact handling and educational tours.



The EDUU project engaged the local communities through the involvement of community leaders in the capacity strengthening path and through their direct involvement in the archeological surveys. Moreover, field research to better understand the perception of local communities towards the surrounding sites was conducted. The findings of this ethno-archaeological fieldwork, that was not envisaged at project proposal stage, were presented in two conferences. The latest of which was held in Helsinki in September 2019. This fieldwork constitutes the basis upon which the community engagement activities can be further strengthened. It clearly highlights, for example, the necessity to involve community leaders, site keepers and local SBAH officers in the cultural heritage preservation initiatives in order to be more successful. Moreover, it explains the peoples’ perception towards the archeological sites as potential economic assets due to the possibility of finding hidden treasures or to attract foreigners, rather than solely for historical importance. From the data collection for this evaluation, it also emerged that researchers were struck from the lack of awareness on cultural heritage of women and girls in the villages. All this valuable information can be further capitalized through BANUU. The project already envisages several activities to promote entrepreneurship in the field of cultural heritage however, these that can be further strengthened through a more gender-sensitive approach to awareness raising as well as other community involvement activities.

In conclusion, it would be safe to affirm that through the EDUU project, the connections between the universities and the local communities around them have been strengthened. This work, as stated, is only in its initial stage, which makes it imperative to continue raising awareness, engaging community representatives, and working with young people to guarantee more impact and sustainability. This project’s use of innovative methodologies to conduct archaeological fieldwork, such as community and landscape archaeology (used

throughout the surveys) is indeed among the most interesting features. These are not normally used in Iraq and it was only through the employment of such methodologies that complex concepts, that are normally for insiders within the archaeological community, have been passed through to the civil society. An important outcome generated by the project that needs to be emphasized.

3.5: Creating New Educational and Cultural Offers for Museums

This activity aimed to develop tools for attracting a wider public audience to museums. Initially, it was supposed to target university museums. However, the targets were changed because the implementers realized that university museums were not functional in attracting more people. Therefore, the focus shifted toward the Iraq Museum in Baghdad and the King Ghazi Palace.

For each museum, a different approach was defined based on their purpose and historical importance. **The Iraq Museum in Baghdad** was chosen due to the previous work with the CRAFT and their strong relationship which will guarantee more sustainability. The request to establish a didactic space for kids came directly from the museum's director, Ms. Amira Eidan. More than 20 years ago, the museum—which was well known in the region—had a didactic space for kids that attracted a lot of families. Such a space was currently missing and the EDUU implementers have decided to accommodate this request. A lot of work and effort was dedicated to the realization of the didactic space. Once the space was selected every detail was shared, discussed and decided on in cooperation with the museum, including the hiring of experts in cuneiform inscriptions to develop a set of interactive toys. The room was finalized and inaugurated in mid-January 2020.



Figure 2: The didactic space inside the Iraq Museum in Baghdad

What the impact of this new space for kids and their family might be it is too early to say. After the inauguration in January, the Covid-19 pandemic put all the envisaged dissemination activities on hold. Currently, there are promising commitments from schools to bring the students to experience the new space once the situation normalized. Moreover, project partners established a relationship with a local non-profit organization, called “Friends of Baghdad Museum”²⁰, which committed to coordinate the didactic activities in the future. This will guarantee more sustainability, however to assess the real impact of this initiative, it would be

²⁰ https://www.friendsofbaghdadmuseum.com/home#block-yui_3_17_2_1_1596553613254_10241

important to better understand if the volume of visitors will increase in the future and also to gather direct feedback from the kids.

The same can be said for the [King Ghazi](#) palace that was renovated into a museum. The palace, located in the province of Diwaniyah, was suggested and then chosen for its popularity among local people. The building is surrounded by a big park where locals used to spend their time. The creation of this new museum, according to the coordinator of this project, was to set a best practice for the requalification, adaptation and reuse of a historic building in Iraq.



Picture 2: One of the renovated rooms inside the King Ghazi Museum

The renovations of the museum, renamed [King Ghazi Landscape Museum](#), followed the core concept of evidencing the strict relationship between people and their territory over the millennia. The museum includes 6 exhibition rooms and a didactic space similar to the one developed for the Iraq museum in Baghdad.

In addition to the physical renovations, the project produced several visual products, such as videos (one for each museum) and a very informative and finely crafted museum guide and catalogue solely for the King Ghazi museum.

The linkages between the work carried out in the schools and the logic behind the renovations of the museums is evident. Both aimed to enhance awareness of the Iraqi pre-Islamic past to enhance social cohesion. As previously stated, what impact these components of the project will have on the young students and wider public remains to be seen. The value of having another initiative that is currently being implemented and that can further follow-up on EDUU's achievements with the civil society is by far favouring the long-term sustainability of this project. This is particularly relevant considering that the activities related to WP6- that envisaged the creation of a student and cultural associations- did not produce the expected outcomes. One of the main reasons was due to the Covid-19 pandemic that put most of the activities on hold. The second reason was because the idea of creating a new student/cultural association, as per the project proposal, was not valid anymore. There are many vibrant students or young people associations in Iraq, and it would have been redundant to add a new one. Instead, the way forward was exploring what was already out there, which is exactly what the BANUU project has been doing. Therefore, as a mitigation strategy the project implemented WP6 in association with WP4 (the activities in the museums

described in this paragraph) with the result of having one already existing association ensuring the implementation of the activities for kids in Baghdad, therefore ensuring sustainability, and more possibilities still to be explored for the King Ghazi museum through current and upcoming initiatives.

3.6: Efficiency

This evaluation has addressed the project's efficiency by looking specifically at the project's coordination and decision-making mechanisms. The financial aspects and related cumbersome administrative procedures have been already addressed through an audit and will not be encompassed in this report.

The participatory implementation methodology adopted mirrored the working relationship between project partners. Both the universities of Bologna and Turin have long-standing experience in the country and high expertise in the field of humanities. Their working methodologies easily integrated one another and, as explained during the interviews, this synergy was based on mutual respect and common goals. The geographical division was also a smooth process since the CRAFT expertise focuses more on the Baghdad district and the University of Bologna, through its long-term partnership with the universities of Kufa and Qadisiyah, has a wider geographical reach. Moreover, the CRAFT was essential (due to its different legal status than the University of Bologna) in solving complex procurement and shipping issues, another factor deemed crucial for the efficiency of this project.

The relationship between the coordinator and its Iraqi partners is constantly evolving. It is an empowering process that started with the WALADU project, during which the universities were the main target group, and continued through EDUU, during which they became full-fledged partners. However, it has been evidenced by this evaluation that the adopted monitoring strategy needs further improvements, especially when it comes to activities coordinated by the Iraqi counterparts. The purpose would be two-fold: (i) strengthening data gathering and analysis, including gender-sensitive data, and (ii) better systematization and presentation of best practices. As previously stated, the project implementation should be better documented, specifically in terms of participatory implementation methodologies or best practices in linking the different segments of the society. The mere reporting of the activity outputs is not correctly depicting a far more complex implementation environment and achievements. Enriching the data collection to include multidimensional indicators and, therefore, a more in-depth analysis will surely benefit all the project partners and stakeholders.

Besides the cooperation amongst partners, the cooperation with the donor has been reported by stakeholders to be fruitful and supportive. The EUD representatives were always available to clarify administrative issues or to discuss changes related to the work plan or activities.

Iraq experienced a lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This put the project activities on hold for a while; once the lockdown was over, problems related to the lack of digital

infrastructure became evident. Therefore, considering a possible recrudescence of the medical emergency, it will be important to start reshaping the implementation methodology favoring the use of structured, blended approaches that includes both an online and physical presence, including also investments on digital infrastructures where possible, to efficiently and effectively reach future project objectives.

3.7: What's next?

This evaluation, within its data collection phase, collected and explored stakeholders' suggestions on what next steps would be necessary to continue building on the achievements of the EDUU's project at a wider level.

It is evident that there is need to continue working towards a further engagement of a diverse range of stakeholders to protect and promote cultural heritage and head towards a healthy cohesion of Iraqi society. To this end, the donor community—and specifically the European Union—should consider better harnessing the opportunity to integrate and widen its support to cultural heritage interventions. Currently the EU mostly relies on UNESCO (which in Iraq will become the only recipient of the European grants in this sector) which also means being bound to its priorities. This will probably create a gap between the EU and other valid stakeholders, which can be detrimental to developing strong and more sustainable policies and relations with the people and institutions.

Moreover, there is space to strengthen the action's impact at the policy level, possibly throughout BANUU's lifespan. The University of Bologna is already advocating for the approval of legislation in support of rescue archaeology. This will address the many sectoral budgetary concerns and will be an opening of a wide range of working opportunities for cultural heritage workers and archeologists. It would therefore be crucial for this effort to be sustained by other national and international actors, so as to gain more leverage in supporting the passing of the policy and ergo fostering long-term change.

The project already secured buy-in from local heritage stakeholders, within relevant state agencies, and across civil society, including amongst different strata of society and communities. The project built trust and long-term partnerships. Similarly, the development of local private sector networks is just at an initial stage, but essential to create job opportunities in the heritage sector. This—alongside more capacity strengthening for site keepers, youth and community key figures—is the way forward that the University of Bologna is pursuing through BANUU. However, a more structured fundraising strategy (by addressing private donors and foundations, for example) could guarantee more integrated interventions (by envisaging other innovative job-creation activities) and longer-term sustainable change.

4. Conclusions & Recommendations

The review of the project documentation, background information, and feedback from key informants shows that the EDUU project has managed to consistently operate and engage target groups within a fast changing and complex context, which is a testimony to the [relevance](#) of the initiative. The project is based on a thorough knowledge of the complexities linked to the context in which it operates, and the gaps related to the lack of communication within a variety of stakeholders engaged in the promotion and protection of cultural heritage.

The project throughout its 38-months of implementation was effective in generating knowledge and strengthening existing capacity, building trust and long-term partnerships. Moreover, it had an impact [at individual, organizational and societal levels](#), engineering an initial change of perspective and guaranteeing buy-in and [sustainability](#). These are the achievements upon which, the University of Bologna and its partners would need to capitalize through BANUU and other future initiatives.

Based on the findings of the evaluation and on the conclusions in the previous sections, the following [recommendations](#) have been formulated:

R1: To conduct an in-depth study to better understand gender barriers and inequalities faced by academics, archaeologists and workers in the heritage sector in Iraq. The study should be conducted by a team of female researchers from European and Iraqi universities so as to minimize bias and inspire trust. The findings of the study should inform future projects' mitigation strategies and possibly the inclusion of gender- sensitive indicators in M&E tools.

R2: To establish a systematized M&E system to better support Iraqi universities in measuring achievements. This will enhance their capacity to collect feedback and slowly foster a cultural shift. Moreover, it will allow the team and its partners to gain a clearer picture of the relative contributions that the different implementation strategies being promoted by the local partners are likely to make to the achievement of the project's objectives.

R3: To capitalize on the experiences gained with the various civil society stratum and the best practices established by this project to further enhance local partnerships and networks for fundraising purposes. The innovative approach and positive achievements of this project can constitute the basis of a solid fundraising strategy that should also involve private donors and foundations.

R4: To expand on the initial achievements with secondary schools and communities through more initiatives and meaningful engagement, including regular rounds of feedback on the implementation of future activities.

R5: To build stronger partnerships to sustain advocacy and policy efforts to advance the promotion and protection of cultural heritage at the national level. As previously mentioned, support could be sought among international stakeholders to maximize the impact at various policy levels.

Annex I: Evaluation Matrix/Grid

Questions	Sub –Questions	Measures or Indicators	Target or Standard	Baseline Data	Data Sources	Data Collection
<p><u>Relevance:</u> To what extent is EDUU’s design consistent with the target group needs and priorities?</p> <p>To what extent has the project been relevant to current international and national policies on cultural heritage?</p>	<p>- To what extent did EDUU’s project approach and objectives address issues relevant for students, researchers and SBAH officers in Iraq?</p> <p>- What were the main elements that contributed most and those which were lacking or would need further improvement?</p> <p>- How were the strategies and project elaborated? To what extent was the process participatory?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of participation and interaction of the target groups and stakeholders in the project’s design • Differences between project strategies and national priorities • Existence of NA or baseline • Adequacy of logframe and indicators 			<p>Feedback from EDUU staff (each university), target groups</p> <p>Project material</p>	<p>Interviews with key informants/</p> <p>Review of relevant material</p>

	<p>- To what extent have human rights, gender, environment/climate, and disadvantaged/marginalized perspectives been taken into account within the project's design?</p>			
<p><u>Effectiveness:</u> To what extent have EDUU's expected outcomes been achieved?</p> <p>What factors influenced achievement or non-achievement of the project's purpose?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the project effectively and sustainably strengthened research/SBAH staff capacity in Iraq? Has the project effectively raised awareness and promoted cultural heritage preservation among secondary school students? To what extent target groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching methodologies and materials/feedback from students on the quality of teaching and transfer of knowledge # of paper published by researchers and students Level of satisfaction about the course by target groups (organizational and quality, including online courses) Feedback from visitors on the new museums learning itinerary (disaggregated by gender, if possible) 	<p>Project records, including self-appraisal forms (if any)/feedback of target population</p> <p>Project records/feedback of Uni staff and target groups, official records</p>	<p>Interviews/review of relevant material</p> <p>Interviews/questionnaires/review of relevant material</p>

(Researchers, SBAH staff, Uni and SC students) were satisfied with training courses (including MOOC) and activities?

- To what extent the project has effectively strengthened local museum resources and capacities to offer learning itineraries?
 - To what extent has the project effectively raised awareness of Iraqi society?
 - To what extent students and wider public engaged/enrolled in museums associations?
- Quality of activities/satisfaction of attendees
 - Engagement and feedback by high-level institutional officials (disaggregation)/inclusion of women and people with special needs

- To what extent did ministerial stakeholders participate in workshops and other activities of the project?

Efficiency: How well have the activities transformed the available resources into the intended outputs or results, in terms of quantity, quality and time?

How well can EDUU's costs be justified by the achievements?

To what extent did the implementation mechanism and distribution of roles facilitate the attainment of the

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How successful were project partners in overcoming management issues? • Are roles and responsibilities between the involved institutions (project partners and associates) clear and appropriate? • Have financial resources been managed in a transparent and appropriate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and use of implementation strategies (checks and balances mechanism – SC and consortium assembly) • Identification of financial procedures, following donor's requirements, internal distribution of resources • Identification or risk management at different levels | <p>Project records/

feedback of FH staff and project stakeholders</p> | <p>Review of relevant material/

interviews</p> |
|--|---|--|---|

outcomes/results?	<p>fashion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are risks appropriately managed, including flexible adaptation to unforeseen situations (e.g. political changes, Covid-19) in the country?
<p><u>Impact</u>: How have the lives of the EDUU project beneficiaries changed?</p> <p>To what extent did the project benefit women and men equally?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the EDUU project activities affected research studies, students, parents, SBAH staff, community leaders and ministerial officials? • To what extent has the project contributed to changes in awareness, new practices, policies, etc. that are relevant for the protection of the Iraqi past and its • Level of engagements of target groups and final beneficiaries in cultural heritage preservation • Perception of respondents (especially students) about their awareness on their common past and importance of cultural heritage preservation (disaggregation) • Attitude of community members towards the promotion and engagement in cultural heritage • Attitude of institution towards the promotion

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cultural heritage? To what extent do results differ between men and women? 	of cultural heritage involving schools and universities		
<p><u>Sustainability:</u> To what extent has EDUU attained sustainability to date?</p> <p>Which measures would ensure and improve sustainability, and potentially replications of the approach?</p> <p>To what extent has the EDUU project successfully aligned with other similar initiatives at the national and international levels, and do those linkages support sustainability?</p> <p><u>Cross-cutting themes:</u> How were cross-cutting themes (gender equality, conflict</p>	<p>What factors hinder or support the long-term sustainability of key project outputs?</p> <p>To what extent has the sustainability strategy (on networking and fostering engagement through cultural association) been developed and implemented?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced capacity of target groups Possibility of replication External/internal factors guaranteeing the engagement of young people in cultural association (gender bias) 	<p>Project records/feedback of FH staff and target population</p>	<p>Review of relevant material/ interviews and focus groups</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-cutting themes were adequately integrated in the design 	<p>Project records/feedback of FH Staff and project</p>	<p>Review of relevant material/</p>

sensitivity, good governance, climate change adaptation and mitigation) addressed in the project documentation and activities?

	and implementation of the project	stakeholders	interviews and focus groups
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