

The Completion of a New Museum for Basrah in Iraq

CPF Funded Project (CPL-014-16)

Impact Evaluation Report

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Basrah Museum Committee

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Acronyms

| | |
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| ARCA | Association for Research into Crimes Against Art |
| AUB | American University of Beirut |
| BCP | Basra Provincial Council |
| BG | Basra Governorate |
| BISI | British Institute for the Study of Iraq |
| CEO | Chief executive officer |
| CPF | Cultural Protection Fund |
| CRAST | The Italian-Iraqi Cultural Centre |
| DG | Director General |
| FB | Facebook |
| FGD | Focus group discussion |
| FOBM | Friends of Basrah Museum |
| HR | Human resource |
| ICCROM | International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property |
| ITP | British Museum's International Training Programme |
| KII | Key informant interview |
| LMS | Library management system |
| MMA | Metropolitan Museum of Art |
| MoCTA | Iraqi Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities |
| MoU | Memorandum of understanding |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| NN | Nahrein Network |
| SBAH | Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage |
| SOP | Standard operating procedures |
| UNAMI | United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |

Executive Summary

Background

The Friends of the Basrah Museum (FOBM), a UK-registered charity, was awarded a series of CPF grants totalling £771,725 to implement 'The Completion of a New Museum for Basrah in Iraq' Project between 2017 and early 2020. The project built on a previous phase of British engagement with the creation of a new archaeological museum in Basra during which FOBM was established to provide support to an enterprise led by the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH). The Museum was opened in September 2016 with a single gallery. The CPF grant allowed for completing three other galleries, furnish a library space, and provide training on museum management, interpretation, and library management. The main outcome was the official opening of the new galleries in March 2019. FOBM merged with The British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI) in 2020.

Heritage and Society Outcomes

The evaluation assessed the sustainability of the CPF Heritage and Society Outcomes as follows.

Heritage Outcomes

1. Cultural heritage at risk is safeguarded for future generations (*mandatory outcome*).

About 2,500 archaeological objects previously stored at the Iraq Museum in Baghdad to protect them against risks are effectively safeguarded in the Basrah Museum where the public can enjoy them and learn about the value of this cultural heritage. A modern heritage building, previously neglected, has been preserved, restored, and adapted to house the collection. Set within the context of Iraq's heritage sector recovery, the project has endowed southern Iraq with a major museum and created a trend for the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of former presidential palaces.

2. Cultural heritage at risk is better managed and prepared for potential threats.

To date, the Basrah Museum is the only provincial museum in federal Iraq displaying a complete collection of original objects with their safety entrusted to the local Antiquities and Heritage Inspectorate that has oversight over the Museum. Adequate measures are in place to ensure the security, preservation, documentation, and display of the collection and the maintenance of the building. A competent and dedicated, albeit reduced, team allows the Museum to perform its basic functions of safeguarding the heritage under its care and making it accessible to the general public.

3. Local organisations and communities have increased capacity and/or resilience to care for and protect cultural heritage.

The Basra Antiquities and Heritage Inspectorate is empowered to care for the Museum and lead on its development, whereas the capacity of the Museum staff has been enhanced to preserve the collection and building.

Society Outcomes

1. Local people have developed skills, potentially leading to increased professional or other opportunities.

The Museum staff and volunteers, together with other members of the Iraqi heritage community, have enhanced their skills through training, coaching, an interactive approach, and international exposure. A good number of them have been able to broaden their professional opportunities in the cultural heritage sector and their civic engagement. Iraqi companies and craftsmen contracted to restore the building have developed their skills and are able to use them in ongoing and future heritage rehabilitation projects. The Museum project has contributed to building the capacities of a new generation of cultural heritage professionals.

2. [The profile of people engaging with cultural heritage is more diverse with respect to gender imbalances, age, ability, sexuality, ethnicity and social/religious background where appropriate.](#)

Whereas the Iraqi heritage sector is male dominated, women have benefitted from skills development and have been well represented amongst Museum volunteers, although they are still few amongst Museum staff. Visitors are equally distributed between men and women, and there is a growing trend of visitors from other regions of Iraq, the Gulf, Southern Iran, and further afield. The Museum has the potential to attract more people, including less privileged youths through government school visits.

3. [Local communities have a better understanding of their cultural heritage and value it more.](#)

The Museum adequately covers the history of Basra while, at the same time, mirroring the Iraqi national curriculum. Basic interpretation material is available in Arabic and English and will be enhanced. Visitors are able to learn about and more deeply value their heritage and history through the gallery exhibitions and displays designed by Iraqis to be visually attractive and relatable to local people. Replicas of larger iconic artefacts are exhibited outside the Museum with plans to increase their number. Through engagement with volunteers, civic societies, and the private sector, the Museum has raised the awareness of cultural heritage in the wider community. Further developing the educational role of the Museum is an on-going process.

4. [Local communities have played a more active role in protecting their cultural heritage or sharing it with others, potentially leading to increased social cohesion and a greater sense of well-being.](#)

The Museum is a cultural attraction for Basra residents and visitors. It has become a cultural landmark bringing pride to the people of Basra and the Iraqi heritage community at large. Increased public awareness of cultural heritage has led to over 600 looted items being returned and now protected. The knowledge of the Museum in the community is spreading thanks to trainees, volunteers, school and university groups and other visitors who promote it through word of mouth and the social media. It is also starting to be marketed by travel agencies and tour operators.

Lessons Learnt

[In the complex political, institutional and security setting of post-conflict Iraq, and with a relatively modest budget, the success of the project rested on a combination of factors:](#)

- Its underpinning philosophy, i.e. providing support to an Iraqi-led enterprise while ensuring the involvement of a broad range of local stakeholders.
- A strong charismatic leadership in the Basra Antiquities and Heritage Inspectorate able to work around bureaucratic red tape, have his vision endorsed by SBAH, and leverage financial support from provincial authorities.

- The relative informality under which FOBM, a small charity, operated as UK project lead with limited project management capacity, considerable pro bono input, and great dedication to an initiative directly related to its stated objects.
- Partnership with HWH & Associates, a British engineering firm with an office in Basra, providing local intelligence and project facilitation in an unstable environment.
- CPF's flexibility to adapt its financial procedures to FOBM's circumstances as a charity lacking capital funds, and to challenges encountered during implementation.
- The timeliness and cumulative impact of the CPF-grant which significantly enhanced the achievements of the first phase of the Museum project while combining positively with other improvements happening in Basra and within the Iraqi museum sector at large

The evaluation identified as the main drawback FOBM's over reliance on the Iraqi project leader to navigate the Iraqi environment and a complex bureaucracy, leading to a misevaluation of the Museum's capacities to sustain project outcomes on skills development, the volunteers programme, and the Museum's educational role.

Recommendations

Now that the Basrah Museum is firmly established, the FOBM Committee under BISI's umbrella is looking to focus its support on non-core projects generated by the Museum (e.g. special exhibitions, training, publishing, public programmes), and on the continued development of the Museum Library, with priority projects identified in collaboration with the Iraqi authorities. To facilitate BISI's future engagement and maximise its positive impact on the Museum's sustainability, the evaluation offers the following recommendations:

1. Reconsider ways of engaging with the Museum and its environment

- Ensure a regular presence of the ground
- Build a local network
- Formalise relations with the authorities
- Adopt a conflict sensitive approach
- Factor sustainability risks and their management into BISI's engagement

2. Focus support on areas where BISI can make a difference

- Provide support in a strategic way
- Prioritise interpretation
- Work out a sustainable model for the Museum Library
- Help revive the volunteer programme
- Support educational programmes for schools
- Other public programmes and events
- Communication and marketing
- Capacity-building and training opportunities

1. Background

1.1 British Engagement with the Basrah Museum

The Basrah Museum was initially conceived in 2007 as a British legacy project with original discussions involving the British Army – which occupied the Basra¹ region in 2003 and withdrew in stages between 2007 and 2009 – and the British Museum, particularly Dr John Curtis, then Keeper of the Department of the Middle East. There had been an archaeological museum in Basra but, like several other provincial museums in the country, it was partially looted in 1991 and not reopened afterwards (see Section 4.6). Remaining objects had been transferred to the storage rooms of the Iraq (National) Museum in Baghdad while the Ottoman building housing the original Basrah Museum was converted into the Basra Antiquities and Heritage Inspectorate (henceforth Inspectorate).

In 2008-2009, while ensuring support from the Iraqi Council of Ministers, [the Basra Provincial Council \(BCP\)](#), [the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage \(SBAH\)](#) – which has authority over archaeological museums in Iraq – and other concerned Iraqi and UK institutions and people, John Curtis and the British Army worked closely with Qahtan Al-Abeed, a young archaeologist from Basra and staff member of the Inspectorate whom SBAH had designated as Director of the new museum to be. The so-called Lakeside Palace was identified as a suitable building (see next section).

A UK Steering Committee was established to take the plan forward. Thanks to several meetings with the Iraqi side, it was agreed that the Steering Committee would work closely with SBAH to develop a museum, and that it would be an Iraqi enterprise to which the British side would provide support.

The British Army engineers had initially estimated that £10M would be needed to restore the Lakeside Palace and turn it into a museum. A new estimate prepared by Mott MacDonald, a British civil engineering firm with an office in Basra, came to slightly under £3M including display cases.

With no prospect of British government funding, [Friends of the Basrah Museum \(FOBM\)](#) was formed in July 2010 as a registered charity in the UK to raise funds for the project and provide other needed support. A MoU was signed in London on 1 December 2010 between Qais Al-Rasheed, SBAH Chairman, and Sir Terence Clark, FOBM Chairman, setting out the parties' respective commitments towards the realisation of the 'Basrah Museum of Antiquities.' SBAH committed to designate the Lakeside Palace as the new Basrah Museum of Antiquities and to cover its future running costs, possibly in conjunction with the BPC. FOBM committed to endeavour to raise funds to refurbish the Lakeside Palace, convert it for use as a museum and install display cases, and to provide support for non-core projects generated by the museum (e.g. special exhibitions, training, publishing, public programmes).

In compliance with this, FOBM undertook to raise funds from the private sector, thus allowing the first stage of the project to be carried out with assets of around £350,000, largely thanks to generous funding from the BP Foundation.

Between 2012 and 2016, two tranches of refurbishment were undertaken by Iraqi construction firm Bur Alaman with quality surveying by Mott MacDonald and, eventually, HWH & Associates. Work included structural security features, electrical appliances and plumbing, and the renovation of decorative elements.

¹ Basra is spelled with a final "h" only when referring to the Basrah Museum and Gallery.

The main outcome of this phase was the opening, on 27 September 2016, of 'The Basrah Museum of Civilisation' housing a single completed exhibition hall, the Basrah Gallery, with objects displayed in twenty showcases ordered from German manufacturer Reier. An education room was also partially completed.

In the initial round of CPF grant applications in 2016, FOBM was awarded £460,000 to complete the new museum and provide training ('The Completion of a New Museum for Basrah in Iraq' Project). Joan Porter MacIver was appointed as the UK Project Coordinator to assist the trustees in delivering the project. Activities were to be conducted in partnership with SBAH and HMW and Associates. Fifty-four additional display cases for the Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian Galleries were ordered from Reier through an accelerated EU procurement process. Two training workshops were organised with institutional partners - one in January 2018 for museum management (in Basra) and another in December 2018 for recording, labelling and interpretation (in Amman, Jordan).

In October 2017 the CPF provided an uplift grant of £70,600 to fund the refurbishment of the three additional gallery spaces and for security systems, necessary as the BCP was unable to provide funding due to frozen government budgets.

An additional CPF impact grant (£208,825) was awarded in January 2019 to establish a furnished library space and procure a backup generator. Later training programmes were organised as part of this grant including a one-day workshop at the Museum in March 2019, a week in December 2019 (at the Shoman Library, Amman) and two weeks in December 2019-January 2020 (in the Basrah Museum Library).

A Learning Room, which was not included in the original CPF grant applications, was also refurbished and partially furnished. FOBM received a grant of \$10,000 raised through an anonymous donation to undertake work on this space.

The three new galleries were officially opened on 19 March 2019.

The CPF grants awarded for the project totalled £771,725. The CPF project came to an end in February 2020 with two activities not fully completed: the labelling of objects after the December 2018 Amman workshop and the library project.

FOBM unsuccessfully submitted a further grant application to the CPF 2020–21 Impact Round focusing on the education and community outreach programmes, the development of a business plan, additional support for developing the library/resource centre project, and completion of the gallery text panels and display including digital technology.

In October 2020, FOBM formally merged with The British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI). BISI had been involved in the development of the Basrah Museum from the earliest days through sponsorship of several of Al-Abeed's capacity-building and planning visits to the UK and the organisation of an international conference to complement the September 2016 official opening ceremony. Under BISI's umbrella, an FOBM Committee was established whose remit is to provide support for non-core projects generated by the Museum and for the continued development of the Museum Library.

1.2 The Museum Building and Lakeside Complex

The Museum is located on the banks of the Shatt Al-Arab waterway some 3 km south-east of Basra's historic city centre. It is one of several prestigious buildings within an eighty-five-hectare walled compound intersected by the Saraji Creek and dotted with artificial lakes. The site was developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a presidential palaces compound around a late Ottoman era palace known as the Saraji or Agha Jaafar Palace. The British Army stationed in Basra between 2003 and 2009 named the compound 'The Lakeside Complex.' To date, Iraqis still refer to the area as the 'Presidential Palaces Compound.'

The Museum building, erected in the early 1990s, was apparently intended for hosting an Arab head of state during a summit. Its late-Baathist architecture is a loose interpretation of Ottoman and Basrawi styles. The edifice is some 2,500 square meter wide over two floors. Its luxurious exterior and interior decoration includes finely carved wood *shanashil* (bay windows with lattice work), wooden doors adorned with modern Arabic calligraphy, columns with polished stone overlay, patterned tile floors, and polychrome Islamic-style stucco ceilings said to have been executed by Moroccan craftsmen. Like other Saddam Hussein era palaces, the former ruler's monograph is embossed or engraved on the architectural features throughout the building. During the second tranche of refurbishment, the decision was made to cover rather than remove the monographs. An impressive domed foyer opens into four main halls on the ground floor and a staircase leading to the upper floor where other, less grandiose halls are located.

The Museum is a remarkable and visionary instance of Iraqi-led adaptive reuse of a Baathist palatial building at a time when the trend was to leave such reminders of the previous dictatorial era to decay. The idea of restoring and repurposing the palace as a new museum for Basra was proposed by Major Rupert Burrige of the Royal Engineers. Agreement was then sought from Al-Abeed, who in due course drew up plans for the design of the galleries and displays. Under his leadership and with funding channelled through FOBM, works were executed by Iraqi contractors and craftsmen, most of them trained on the job by a handful of experienced peers. This pioneering initiative played no little role in the 2022 government decision to turn some of former presidential palaces into museums (see Sections 4.3 and 4.6). Such buildings do not only stand as testimonies of the excesses of the previous ruler but by being owned back by Iraqis, they are becoming heritage in their own rights.

Besides British support, the Museum has leveraged interest, albeit more modest, from other international sponsors. In 2018, France, through UNESCO, equipped a conservation lab for books and manuscripts. Germany funded the refurbishment and equipment of a conference room in 2020. Both facilities are located on the first floor next to the library. In 2022, Italy gifted a cast of a winged bull (*lamassu*) from the Assyrian capital of Nimrud, previously exhibited at the entrance of the Rome Colosseum and at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The original is housed in the Iraq Museum.

The *lamassu* now guards the access gate of the Museum, overlooking a replica of the Lion of Babylon set in the front courtyard. These powerful symbols of Iraqi history and identity are the first pieces of what is intended to become a 'Garden of Civilisation' that should feature, among others, copies of the Ziggurat of Ur and Babylon's Ishtar Gate. The plan is to develop the garden inside the Museum's perimeter fence erected in 2020 thanks to funding from the Basra Governorate (BG)².

The Iraqi and British initiators of the Basrah Museum project had envisioned that the entire Lakeside Complex could one day become a cultural park. The Natural History Museum under the University of Basra has been relocated to a small pavilion on the road between the gateway to the compound and the Basrah Museum, and there have been discussions to turn the Saraji Palace into a museum of the

² The BG replaced the BCP in December 2019 (see Section 3.12).

modern history of Iraq or Basra. To date, the only other attractions in the compound are, next to the Museum, two reed guesthouses (*mudhif-s*) typical of the Iraqi marshlands and a series of traditional boats built by the 'Ark for Iraq' project, also supported by a CPF-grant, and, further afield across the Saraji Creek, an EU-funded family park with ride machines and other amusements.

1.3 Galleries, Displays and Collections

The four galleries are located on the ground floor on about 1,000 square meters of exhibition space. Each gallery is painted in a different hue: deep purple-brown, almond green, bright orange, and red. Together with the multi-coloured geometric floor patterns and Islamic-style stucco on the ceilings, the ensemble has a stunning visual effect and is highly 'Instagramable.'

A total of 2,500 objects, transferred from the storage rooms of the Iraq Museum, are exhibited in 74 conservation grade, earthquake resistant, bespoke cases, mostly pedestal, all with interior LED lighting. On several occasions, seismic quakes in nearby Iran were felt in Basra yet the cases and objects remained intact. The size of the exhibition space and number of objects on display make the Basrah Museum the largest provincial museum under SBAH.

The 650 objects in the Basrah Gallery, mostly from the Parthian, Sasanian and Islamic periods, consist mainly of pottery, glass vessels, terracotta figurines and vessels, tiles and bricks, architectural ornaments, two sarcophagi and a large numismatic collection including Hellenistic coins. The Babylonian Gallery features items from the entire period with a focus on the Kassite era (c. 1600 - 1100 BC). The Sumerian Hall displays material from the Halaf civilisation (5500 BC) to the Third dynasty of Ur (c. 2000 BC). In the Assyrian Hall, most objects date to the Neo-Assyrian era (9th- 8th century BC).

Objects have been selected with great care by Al-Abeed and Dr Lamia Al-Gailani – a senior Iraqi archaeologist and one of the founding trustees of FOBM who passed away in January 2019 – to tell the history of the Basra region and the history of Iraq from 5000 BC down to 539 BC. The striking colours of the gallery walls, their lavish ceilings, the sleek design of the display cases and the focused lighting provide an enhancing environment for thoughtfully arranged if relatively modest objects such as Ottoman perfume bottles and incense jars, Babylonian duck-shaped weights, Sumerian foundation pegs, cuneiform tablets, cylinder seals, and small statues. This comes in contrast with most other Iraqi museums where little attention is given to object placement and their display style.

1.4 Institutional Environment and Leadership

The Museum operates under a highly centralised governance system. When implementing the project, FOBM and the Museum management had to work within the constraints imposed by the institutional environment.

Like other former presidential palaces, the Museum building is a fixed asset of the Ministry of Planning, which has granted the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities (MoCTA) the right to use and maintain it. The Museum has the status of a unit of the Basra Inspectorate. Units are the lowest administrative levels in the Iraqi public sector. Other Inspectorate units are Heritage, Investigations & Excavations, Communication, Legal Affairs, Administrative Affairs, and Accounting. The Basra Inspectorate is one of fifteen such divisions, one in each province of federal Iraq (i.e. excluding the Kurdistan Region), reporting to the SBAH Investigation & Excavations Directorate in

Baghdad.³ Inspectorates are led by directors of antiquities and heritage who, in principle, must refer up to SBAH Chairman on all management decisions and do not have room to engage independently into planning exercises. In turn, MoCTA has authority over SBAH in all matters including the staffing policy, budget allocation and even down to the museums' opening hours.

By official agreement, MoCTA covers staff salaries and electricity expenses of inspectorates whereas provincial governments directly cover maintenance costs. Subject to SBAH's approval, inspectorates may submit requests to governorates to fund expenses beyond regular maintenance such as equipment purchase, upgrading work or activities, including for provincial museums. Inspectorates can also receive in kind donations. Material outputs provided by FOBM before and under the CPF-funded project were bestowed to the Museum using this channel. So were the physical assets donated by the German, French, and Italian governments.

Revenues generated by archaeology museums accrue in full to the Ministry of Finance with no mechanism to allocate a proportion back to SBAH and the museums themselves. The main source of revenue is ticketing with the pricing policy decided at the ministerial level. The renting of spaces to third parties is legally possible but, in practice, limited to events. Local private sector companies or NGOs may contribute marginally to a museum's maintenance either to compensate for the renting of spaces or through sponsorship.

1.5 Rationale for the Evaluation

In November 2022, BISI was given the opportunity to assess the impact of 'The Completion of a New Museum for Basrah in Iraq' thanks to a CFP evaluation grant.

During the time elapsed since the project was completed, [several developments had weakened the links between BISI and the Basrah Museum](#) – the merger of FOBM with BISI, leadership changes within the Museum and the Iraqi heritage sector, major popular unrest precipitating a political crisis in Iraq, and the global Covid-19 pandemic. This afforded BISI few opportunities to follow up on aftermaths of the project. In this context, BISI welcomed the opportunity to undertake an evaluation of its grant project on several grounds.

[Measuring the project's medium-term impact](#) was expected to illuminate if and how it had sustained its key aims of protecting cultural heritage and ensuring that it was better understood (CPF Heritage and Society Outcomes). Specifically, BISI was keen to understand how recent developments had affected the capacity of the Museum to care for its collections, play its role as an education and cultural hub, maintain the necessary staffing level and skills, and carry out activities that could not be fully completed during the project lifetime.

BISI was also hoping to broaden the scope of the assessment by [looking at the impact of the Museum in the local environment](#), both within the regional context of Basra and at the national level. Worthy of consideration was how the Museum was now viewed by its management and staff, visitors, and the local authorities and wider community in Basra.

Finally, BISI was eager to [reengage with the Museum to continue providing support to its activities and growth](#). The evaluation was expected to be a vehicle for re-establishing communication with the new leadership and decision-makers, identifying lessons learnt from the project, and finding out how BISI could best contribute to the sustainable operation and maintenance of the Museum longer term.

³ SBAH structure is available here: <https://sbah.gov.iq/sbah-structure/>

2. Methodology

2.1 Evaluation Team

To lead the evaluation process, BISI commissioned Dr Géraldine Chatelard who had previous experience of Iraq's heritage, library and academic sectors and had performed several project evaluations. Tamara Alattiya (see Section 4.2) was commissioned as Basra-based Evaluation Coordinator. Joan Porter MacIver, former FOBM project Coordinator, BISI Vice Chair (to November 2022) and and Co-Chair of the BISI FOBM Committee acted as BISI/FOBM Project Evaluation Coordinator. Ali Khadr, BISI Executive Officer, assisted on several aspects. The methodology was developed by Chatelard in close coordination with Alattiya and Porter MacIver, and with input from Dr John Curtis, BISI Trustee and President and Co-Chair of the FOBM Committee. In addition to the core team, three local Museum volunteers were mobilised to conduct a visitor survey.

2.2 Objectives

- A. Consider the medium- and longer-term impacts of the project in delivering CPF Heritage and Society Outcomes:

Heritage Outcomes

1. Cultural heritage at risk is safeguarded for future generations (*mandatory outcome*).
2. Cultural heritage at risk is better managed and prepared for potential threats.
3. Local organisations and communities have increased capacity and/or resilience to care for and protect cultural heritage.

Society Outcomes

1. Local people have developed skills, potentially leading to increased professional or other opportunities.
2. The profile of people engaging with cultural heritage is more diverse with respect to gender imbalances, age, ability, sexuality, ethnicity and social/religious background where appropriate.
3. Local communities have a better understanding of their cultural heritage and value it more.
4. Local communities have played a more active role in protecting their cultural heritage or sharing it with others, potentially leading to increased social cohesion and a greater sense of well-being.

- B. Document successes, challenges and lessons learnt, particularly:

1. Understand the impact that the museum has had in the local environment (Basra and national level) and how it is viewed by the people (museum staff, volunteers, visitors, Basra wider community);
2. Check BISI's assumptions/impressions as regards the way the museum has developed into an education and cultural hub, and the existing scope for improved targeted staffing levels and increased museum activities.

- C. Create a knowledge base to design and carry out relevant follow-up activities and consolidate project sustainability.

2.3 Scope

To measure the impact of the project three years after its completion and the sustainability of the heritage and society outcomes, the first step was to examine the self-evaluation FOBM submitted to the CPF at the end of the project as contained in two documents — a narrative ‘Evaluation Report’ (February 2020) and a ‘Progress Report’ in table form (March 2020). In them, FOBM had assessed the achievement of [twelve project objectives](#) and set forth expectations for their sustainability or completion when targets had not been fully met.

[Some of these objectives were output oriented](#), e. g. ‘Objective 6: To enable the cultural heritage of Basra and the region to be better promoted and explained through labels and displays.’ In such cases, the situation of outputs at the end of the CPF grant was the obvious baseline against which to measure if outputs had been maintained and, whenever relevant, if FOBM’s expectations about their completion had been met.

[Other objectives were more clearly outcome oriented](#), e. g. ‘Objective 1: To provide a secure and well managed environment for display and storage of cultural heritage with the completion of three remaining galleries.’ In this case, it was implicit that the planned output (the completion of three remaining galleries) was intended to *contribute to* rather than achieve by itself larger safeguarding and management outcomes.

The phrasing of such objectives indicated that the CPF funded project was part of a larger undertaking, that it built upon a previous phase of achievements – the overall objective being to complete and not to create a museum, and that the two main stakeholders were engaged in a long-term relationship intended to last beyond the CPF project lifecycle.

Hence, to better capture the scope of the CPF project’s achievements and impact on the safeguarding of cultural heritage and public engagement with this heritage, the evaluation was performed at three levels:

- With a focus on outputs, the sustainability of the CPF project achievements in January 2023 was measured against the situation of the twelve project objectives at the end of the grant period (February 2020), which served as a baseline. Findings are presented in Section 3.
- A longer and wider view on impact was afforded by considering the perception, experience, and expectations of Iraqi stakeholders about the Basrah Museum in general, including, when relevant, the specific activities implemented as part of the CPF grant. Section 4 focuses on this level.
- It finally appeared important to write into the assessment the effect of BISI’s reengagement with the Museum made possible by the evaluation process. Section 5 reports on this aspect.

By combining these three levels, the evaluation has aimed to contextualise its appraisal of the CPF grant’s impact on heritage and society while proposing lessons to be learnt and practical recommendations to BISI relevant to the Iraqi context and its specific challenges.

2.4 General Questions

The following broad questions framed the evaluation process and served as basis to develop data collection tools:

- How have the achievements reported by FOBM at the end project evolved?
- What factors have impacted their sustainability positively and/or negatively?
- Beyond the achievements reported by FOBM, what is the impact of the Basrah Museum on its broader environment?
- Have setbacks been addressed, how, to what extent and with what implications?
- What lessons can be learnt from the evaluation process?
- How can lessons learnt be utilised to improve BISI's future engagement with the Basrah Museum and the long-term sustainability of heritage and society outcomes?

2.5 Data Collection Methods

- **Literature Review**

The Senior Evaluator reviewed project documents (FOBM/BISI grant applications, bids, self-evaluation reports, other relevant documents communicated by BISI and the Basrah Museum management) listed in Annex 8.1.

- **Field Trip**

Porter MacIver, Khadr and Chatelard undertook a field trip to Basra from 15 to 20 January 2023 (see schedule in Annex 8.2). Together with Alattiya, based in Basra, they met stakeholders and key informants, particularly the management and staff of the Museum and local authorities. They also observed the Museum and its environment. Chatelard and Alattiya further trained the volunteer recruits on the implementation of the Museum visitor survey.

Besides collecting data for the evaluation, the field trip was an opportunity for BISI to reengage with the Museum and get to know the new Director of Basra Antiquities and Heritage (henceforth Director of Antiquities) Mustafa Al-Hussiny, appointed in June 2022.

All team members were experienced in working in the Middle East, including Iraq, with three members (Alattiya, Khadr and Chatelard) speaking fluent Arabic. The trip was undertaken with local support at a time when security measures in Basra were at their highest on account of the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup, a major football tournament taking place around the same dates (see Box 3). The schedule was arranged in advance, and the team refrained from any unusual movement without the approval of the local contacts who assessed the situation with BISI/FOBM and other intelligence sources. The team reported back every evening to a designated BISI Trustee. Travel insurance was obtained to permit refunds of cancelled travel and to cover medical and other emergency requirements. Provisions were made to set up Zoom interviews and training of the volunteers had the security situation in Basra not been conducive to travel.

- **Field Observations & Visual Reporting**

Some information useful for the evaluation was best gleaned from observations made in the field during the field trip. Focus was specifically on the physical conditions, maintenance and accessibility of the Museum and Lakeside Complex, the display and conservation status of the collections, and on other cultural institutions the team visited in Basra.

Khalid Tawfeek, photographer, film maker and volunteer for the visitor survey, was charged with visual reporting (photos and short videos) on the Museum. Khadr ensured visual report on the field trip. They made sure subjects consented to have their pictures used to illustrate the evaluation report. In case BISI or the CPF intend to use pictures for public dissemination, faces of human subjects not having given their consent in writing will be blurred. Tawfeek retains ownership of his

photos and has committed not to disseminate those representing human subjects without their consent.

- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**

Chatelard and Alattiya conducted 24 KIIs, one-to-one or with the rest of the team while in Basra, including the current and previous Directors of Basra Antiquities, local authorities, key figures in the culture and education sectors, the Chairman of SBAH, FOBM/BISI Trustees and international experts involved in the project, and the main contractor (Bur Alaman) (see complete list in Annex 8.3). Two thirds of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, the rest via Zoom or WhatsApp.

- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

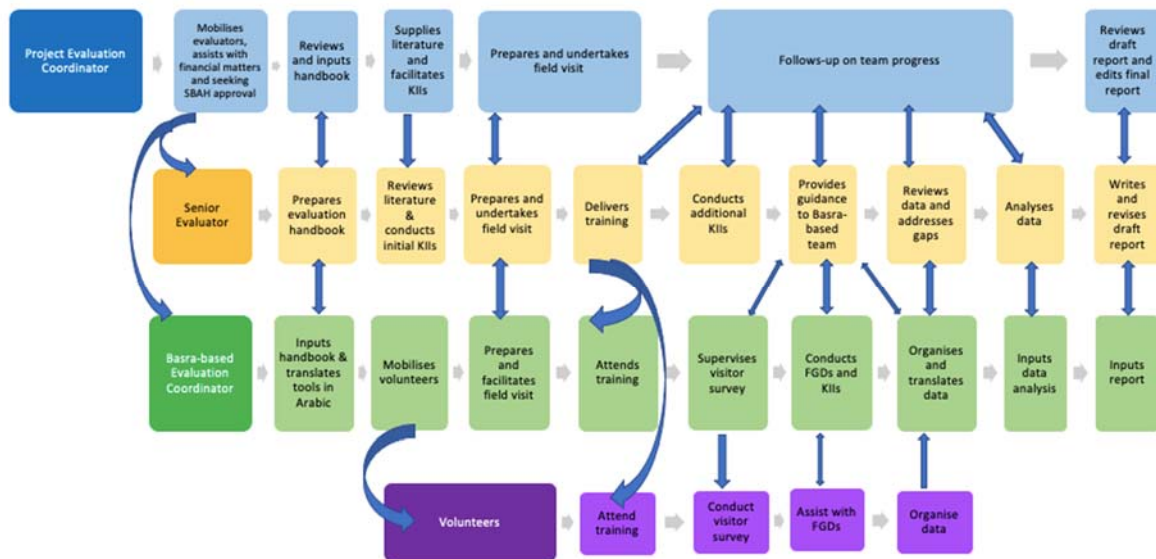
Alattiya and Chatelard facilitated three focus group discussions during the field trip with key Museum staff, Basra entrepreneurs and activists in the cultural and media sector, and Basrah Museum volunteers. At a later stage, Alattiya facilitated a fourth FGD with teachers in Basra government schools. The complete list with participants is in Annex 8.4.

- **Visitor Survey**

In March–April 2023, under the supervision of Alattiya, three volunteers administered 67 questionnaires to individual visitors or small groups, including males and females of different age categories. Survey respondents also included tour groups and schoolteachers. Full survey results are in Annex 8.8.

2.6 Process

A process was worked out between the team members as per the chart below.



2.7 Tools

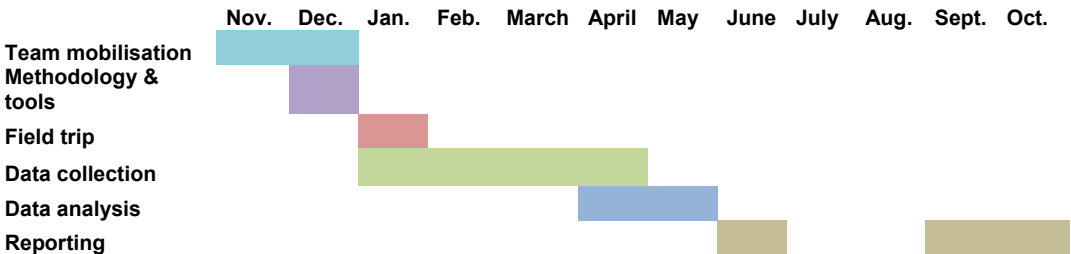
At the inception of the evaluation process, the Senior Evaluator developed a ‘Basrah Museum Evaluation Handbook’ which included the objectives and methodology, a list of tasks and

responsibilities for each team member, the evaluation process chart, a provisional programme of the field visit, a provisional list of KIIs and FGDs, data collections tools (questionnaires for KIIs, guides for FGDs, the questionnaire for the visitor survey), methods for organising data, and a provisional timeline to perform the evaluation.

The handbook was updated to allow for adjusting various items, particularly the timeline, schedule of the field trip and list of KIIs. Questionnaires were also adjusted to make them more relevant to previous findings from the literature review and earlier interviews.

2.8 Timeline

The evaluation was conducted in six main phases between December 2022 and October 2023 with a two-month interruption over the summer.



3. Sustainability of the CPF Project Achievements

In the March 2020 'Progress Report' submitted to the CPF, FOBM listed twelve project objectives with related key indicators, project activities, and percentage completed at end of project.

To measure the sustainability of these achievements three years after the project completion with a focus on outputs rather than on larger outcomes, a first step was to group together some objectives found to be overlapping. A second step was to identify, for each set of objectives, the follow-up activities which FOBM and the Museum management had expected to undertake, or to see undertaken, to sustain and improve the achievements. This was done through a review of the narrative February 2020 'Evaluation Report' and discussions with FOBM Trustees and Project Coordinator, and with Basrah Museum management and staff involved in the project.

A thirteenth step was to check how much of these expectations were met at the inception of the evaluation process (January 2023) through KIIs and FGDs with a broader range of stakeholders and observations during the field visit to Basra.

The fourth step consisted in identifying the factors that had affected the delivery of the expected follow-up activities and the sustainability of the project achievements. To do so, instrumental data sources were KIIs, FGDs and the risks on sustainability that FOBM had identified in the 'After the project ends' section of the grant application and in the February 2020 'Evaluation Report.' Main factors are detailed in Section 3.12.

3.1 Completion of Three Remaining Galleries

Objective 1: To provide a secure and well managed environment for display and storage of cultural heritage with the completion of three remaining galleries.

By the end of the project, 100% of the target had been reached inclusive of:

- The procurement of 54 display cases from German manufacturer Reier for the new galleries, training on the use of cases for two Museum staff, delivery of objects from the Iraq Museum, and fitting and installation of safety and security fixtures (glass doors, CCTV, and fire alarm);
- The completion of the object labels thanks to training delivered to the Museum staff and volunteers, the assistance of UK experts for labelling and developing information display panels to be hung in the galleries, the mounting of English labels in the Basrah Gallery (which already had Arabic labels), and the mounting of Arabic labels in the three new galleries, all in time for the 19 March 2019 opening.

Expectations were that maintenance costs of the galleries and the entire building would be borne locally with additional equipment purchased by the BG. As regards full bilingual signage, FOBM and the Museum management anticipated that it would be an ongoing process with continuous input from UK experts.

In January 2023, improvements had not happened, but security, maintenance, and display/didactic achievements appeared to be adequately if not perfectly sustained:

- The Inspectorate had received no budget allocation for from the BG;

- English labels had been completed with input from UK experts and financial support from BISI for translation over 2020–22. The Inspectorate was unable to cover their printing costs and that of English panels. As for the placement of Arabic labels, which needed some improvement, it had not been a priority in the context of a contentious Inspectorate management turnover and Museum staff depletion (see Section 3.12);
- The staff reported no issue with the glass doors and the CCTV, and only some malfunctioning with lighting in the display cases that they could fix thanks to the spare parts included in the initial order to Reier;
- The Museum had encountered no major maintenance challenge. Small repairs were made by staff members, who purchased fixtures from their own pockets. They also bore the costs of petrol for the two backup generators (about £5/month in the summer when electricity delivery was cut between 2 to 4 hours/day);
- On one occasion, a third party having used the Museum spaces for an event had directly covered the costs of cleaning and some repairs;
- The BG's only contribution to maintenance was the secondment of two cleaners to the Inspectorate who attended to the Museum once a week. This was barely sufficient for a building of that size.

Box 1 – Security & Risk Preparedness

The issue of security was a key concern of SBAH in releasing the objects for transfer to the Museum in 2016 and 2019. According to project documents, accounts by the Museum management and staff and field observations, measures to ensure the safety of the building and the collections were as follows at the time of the evaluation.

- The Museum management and key staff have identified natural disasters, fire, insurrections, and clashes between armed groups as risks to the safety of the collections.
- The first tranche of refurbishment, in 2012, addressed security by bricking up windows on the ground floor, installing steel doors and placing lights around the site.
- The entry door is reinforced. Another reinforced door closes the staircase leading to the first floor where there are unprotected windows and balconies.
- There is no burglar alarm but height armed policemen from the Antiquities and Heritage Police are posted around the clock at the entrance of the Museum building and patrols its surroundings.
- The CCTV system includes one camera at the Museum entrance and three in each room on the ground floor where objects are displayed. Eye recognition cameras are due to be installed as part of the next round of work conducted with funding from the BG.
- The fire alarm is operational and hand-operated extinguishers are available in each room, including on the second floor.
- Showcases are earthquake resistant, bullet and fireproof, and equipped with security locks.
- Three sets of keys for the display cases are stored in different places, including two outside the Museum. A fourth set is kept in Baghdad.
- Metal boxes are available on site to pack the objects and move them to several identified safe places in case of emergency.
- All objects have been marked with SmartWater, a traceable liquid visible under ultraviolet light.

Such security arrangements can be assessed as adequate even if falling short of a fully-fledged risk preparedness and emergency plan. SBAH has so far opposed requests by the Museum management to develop such a plan, saying that responsibility for emergency planning rested with the Iraq Museum.

The Museum's remoteness from populated areas has been both an asset and a liability. The fact that the Lakeside Complex was away from the city centre and could be more easily secured by armed forces played a role in the choice of the Museum location. However, the area has been exposed following the withdrawal of the British Army. In 2008 and again in 2022, local militias fighting for the control of the Lakeside Complex have fired rockets at each other over the Museum. One of them, nominally incorporated into the Iraqi Armed Forces, has now firmly established its sway over the compound with armed men guarding its only gateway. This may act as a deterrent to keep protesters at bay during the recurrent episodes of popular unrest. The downside is that the presence of armed militias, who appear to check visitors randomly, represents a hindrance to public accessibility. The Museum management, highly aware of the situation, has consistently used diplomacy with the Basra Commander of the concerned militia, with what looks so far to be adequate results.

3.2 Skills Development

Objective 2: To develop the museum to provide an environment for the cultural heritage of Basra to be better managed with museum management training for staff.

Objective 4: To deliver basic training in museum management, installation of exhibitions, recording and documentation for a minimum of 3–4 key staff and possibly volunteers.

By the end of the project, 100% of the target had been reached for these overlapping objectives:

- Eight Museum staff and five volunteers had attended training programmes on museum management and on labels, display and interpretation delivered by a group of senior curators from the UK and Canada;
- One volunteer also attended the British Museum's International Training Programme (ITP) in 2019.

Expectations for skills development was that it was to be an on-going initiative within the Museum, with BISI and the Nahrein Network (see Box 2) facilitating outside training opportunities and placements, such as those offered by UNESCO, the MMA, and the British Museum.

In January 2023, skills development achievements did not appear to have been sustained:

- Al-Abeed was no longer in post and his successor had no museum management experience nor training;
- The Covid-19 pandemic had brought international and in-country training offers to a halt;
- Half of the eighteen Museum staff, including half of those trained under the project, had been transferred to postings away from Basra and not replaced;
- Few opportunities had been afforded to those remaining to use their newly acquired skills.

Box 2 – The Nahrein Network

Created in 2017, the Nahrein Network (NN) emerged from discussions held at the conference celebrating the opening of the Basrah Museum in September 2016. The NN is based at University College London, the British Museum, and Kurdistan Institution for Strategic Studies and Scientific Research. It includes among its partners the Universities of Baghdad and Mosul, SBAH, UNESCO Iraq, as well as BISI (and formerly FOBM).

The NN fosters greater collaboration between Iraq and UK higher education institutions for research-based work in the humanities with a sustainable focus, an integrative approach to natural and cultural heritage, and a reparative approach to the past.

Two-thirds of its budget is committed to supporting Iraqi-led research in Iraq and the UK through a research grant scheme, visiting scholarships to bring Iraqi heritage professionals and academics to the UK for two-month placements, graduate studentships, and research workshops and networks.

Professor Eleanor Robson, History Department at UCL, is the NN Director, and Dr Paul Collins, Keeper of the Middle East Department at the British Museum and Chair of BISI Council, is one of the two Co-Directors.

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/nahrein/nahrein-network>

3.3 Object Inventory

Objective 3: To facilitate the completion of an inventory of objects in the Museum and better recording of cultural heritage in the Basra region.

100% of the target had been reached by the end of the project, allowing for the adequate digital recording of the over 2,500 objects received from the Iraq Museum in 2016 and 2019. Under the project, selected staff members were trained on collection management and registers. Additionally, four received specific training on photographic documentation delivered by the MMA. By the end of the project, a Basrah Museum Database had been created and was complete with photographic and descriptive records of all objects housed in the Museum. In the event that the Iraq Museum would send more objects, several competent staff members were able to address their recording.

In January 2023, the Museum Database was available but longer-term HR outcomes were uncertain. Only two staff members remained from the seven trained on recording, of which only the IT Officer had also been trained on photographic documentation. He was the only employee able to access and operate the Database stored in the single computer – provided under the project – in use at the Museum.

3.4 Staff Increase

Objective 5: To enable a skilled workforce of up to 25 people with an aim of increasing the proportion of women.

75% of the target had been met by the end of the project:

- From 6 males and no female at the start of the project, posts in the Museum had risen to 18, including one 1 female, with the total Inspectorate staff reaching 80 including 2 archaeologists (the Director of Antiquities, and the Museum Curator).
- 8 Museum staff members had been trained under the project (see Objectives 2 and 4 above).

Expectations were that the staffing level would be maintained and increased with new posts created with the addition of the library, including for female employees.

In January 2023, there was a marked regression:

- The Museum staff was down to 8, with no female, and only 4 trained under the project.
- Down to 20 employees, the Inspectorate still had only 2 archaeologists as Director of Antiquities and Museum Curator, but post holders had changed since early 2020.

3.5 Interpretation

Objective 6: To enable the cultural heritage of Basra and the region to be better promoted and explained through labels and displays.

70% of the target (labels and displays) had been reached by the end of the project. Bilingual labels and information panels were finalised if not all mounted (see Objective 1) whereas video/digital displays had been discussed but not implemented.

It was expected that full bilingual signage would be an ongoing process after the end of the project (as per Objective 1). As for the digital offer, it was anticipated that FOBM would hold further discussions with the Museum management who, in turn, would seek approval from SBAH, and that the Museum staff and volunteers would collaborate to put together the offer. In the process, the Museum Library would be acting as a resource centre.

In January 2023, some progress had been achieved on signage (see Objective 1) but none on the digital offer. This was due to a combination of factors starting with the shortage of curatorial staff and the disengagement of the volunteers. Besides the fact that the Museum Library was not operational, SBAH had not been engaged on the topic and funding opportunities were unclear.

3.6 Visitor Increase

Objective 7: To ensure local people are more aware of their heritage and how to respect it through aiming to increase visitor numbers to 3–4,000 per month by the end of the project.

90% of the target had been reached by the end of the project:

- The Museum management recorded up to 2,500 paying visitors/month in the first 6 months following the March 2019 opening, which had created a momentum. Most visitors were from Basra and its region with numerous school groups;
- Although opening hours were the same as at the start of the project (9 am - 2:30 pm), the Museum now opened on weekends (Friday and Saturday) with staff working shifts;
- Staff and volunteers had received training on conducting Museum tours, and one staff member had been assigned to school and university groups;

- An important indirect outcome of the project – testifying to an increased awareness about the value of cultural heritage – was the spontaneous return to the Museum of over 600 objects looted in 1991 from the old Basrah Museum and from various archaeological sites.

There were expectations that opening hours would be extended to afternoons and evenings in the summer (when daytime temperature reaches over 50° C) and that opening on weekends would be maintained. The possibility of granting free entrance to school and university groups was discussed. It was also anticipated that the BG would make progress on the plan to develop the area around the Museum as a cultural park and would provide public transport from the city centre, thus ensuring greater visitor numbers to the Museum.

In January 2023, there was a serious regression. After a long period of closure due to the global pandemic and a domestic political crisis (2020–2021), the total number of paying visitors, inclusive of school groups and university students, had reached 8,000 in 2022. The regular opening hours had not been extended, and the Museum was closed on weekends due to the insufficient number of staff able to work shifts and the lack of budget from MoCTA to cover overtimes. The ticketing policy had not changed with a fee extracted from school and university groups. Public transit to the Lakeside Complex had not been made available.

3.7 Volunteer Programme

Objective 8: To involve up to 40 local volunteers in the running of the Museum and protection of cultural heritage in the Basra region.

By the end of the project, the target had been fully met:

- The volunteer programme was launched on the occasion of the Museum opening in March 2019;
- A local NGO was relied upon to mobilise up to 40 volunteers to support with events and other activities at the Museum, with several playing a driving role to promote the venue in the community, particularly on the social media;
- A total of 5 volunteers had been included in the training sessions on museum management, interpretation and library management and 2 had assisted with object labelling.

The volunteer programme was expected to keep developing with a growing number of people, including women, assisting the Museum staff on the library/resource centre project, digital offer, events, communication, outreach, and other activities. FOBM was planning to maintain contacts with the NGO and volunteers and work with them to develop activities.

In January 2023, only a handful of volunteers were still engaging with the Museum. The NGO through which volunteers were mobilised had disengaged, and Al-Abeed’s successors had not been in contact with individual volunteers. BISI had maintaining direct contacts with only those who had attended the training programmes, and its attempts to revive the volunteer programme through alternative local NGOs had not been successful. On the brighter side, a few of the volunteers had continued to engage privately with the Museum by bringing visitors and promoting it on the social media, whereas those who had attended the training programmes were still in contact between themselves and with the 2018–19 Museum staff via a WhatsApp group.

3.8 Community Engagement

Objective 9: To encourage a larger number of people from Basra and S. Iraq to engage with cultural heritage.

100% of the target had been reached by the end of the project:

- FOBM Iraq had been established with Al-Abeed as Chair;
- The CPF-funded 'Ark for Iraq' project – implemented by Safina Projects in partnership with among others, the Basrah Museum, had established an open-air museum of traditional reed buildings and boats next to the Museum where it was running activities;
- The Natural History Museum, under the University of Basra, had moved to a pavilion at the entrance of the Lakeside Complex. Its director, who had attended the first FOBM training programme on museum management, was collaborating with the 'Ark for Iraq' project and willing to work with the Basrah Museum;
- The BCP had approved a plan to develop the whole complex as a cultural park inclusive of public transportation from the city centre, a café on the Museum roof (to be outsourced) and other museums including one dedicated to the 20th c. history of Basra. The latter project was to be led by a volunteer having attended the FOBM and British Museum trainings;
- The head of the History Department at the University of Basra was involved in activities at the Museum and keen to develop programmes for university students.

It was expected that the Museum would keep growing its relations with existing partners, develop new collaborations with schools, universities, cultural institutions, and civic societies, and that it would be a catalyst for the development of the cultural heritage sector in Basra. FOBM Iraq would play a leading role in the process. The plan to develop the area into a cultural complex, which had been part of the original vision for the Museum would succeed, leading to a better visibility and enhanced accessibility of the Museum.

In January 2023, community engagement was at a standstill. The project to develop the area into a cultural complex was stalled for lack of available budget. Following Al-Abeed's change of role, he had not managed to complete the formal registration of FOBM Iraq as an NGO. His successors had not maintained relations with the university and other cultural institutions.

3.9 Visibility

Objective 10: To ensure that activities of the Museum are visible on the social media.

75% of the target had been met at the end of the project:

- Website development was a component of the January 2018 training programme;
- FOBM Facebook (FB) page and website were regularly updated on project activities and its Twitter feed maintained;
- Al-Abeed had created a Basrah Museum FB page with over 4 K followers (see Box 2).

To ensure the sustainability of the communication efforts around the Museum, FOBM trustees were intending to look for assistance to update their FB page more regularly. They also hoped that Al-Abeed would keep maintaining the Museum FB page despite his removal or would hand over its admin rights to his successor. Volunteers were expected to continue promoting the Museum on their

FB pages and Instagram accounts, noting that FB is by far the preferred social media in Iraq whereas institutional websites are seldom used to disseminate or seek information and updates.

In January 2023, the Museum visibility on the social media was adequate but there was room for improvement. Funding to develop a museum website had not been forthcoming, but the Museum current and former management were promoting it online. So were the BG and, as far as could be assessed, some visitors and former volunteers. As a result, it was slightly more visible on the Arabic social media than the Nasiriyah Museum of Civilisation, currently the second largest provincial archaeology museum under SBAH after the Basrah Museum (see Box 4).

Box 3 – The Museum’s Online Presence

As of 15/10/2023

In Arabic

A website for the Basrah Museum was created in 2012 and stopped being maintained in 2015, with its security certificate not renewed: basrahmuseum.ucoz.com

The Museum’s FB page (8.7 K followers), with admin rights held by Al-Abeed, had featured regular updates about activities, including the library project, until July 2022. The last post (05/01/2023) announced the extended opening hours on the occasion of the Arabian Gulf Cup: facebook.com/BasraMuseum

The FB page of the Basra Inspectorate (6.2 K followers), created in February 2021, featured regular updates on the Museum. Admin rights were held by Al-Hussiny, current Director of Antiquities: facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064517273876

SBAH’s FB page (44 K followers) also featured major updates about the Museum: facebook.com/profile.php?id=100067532911971

There was no Instagram account in Arabic in the name of the Basrah Museum, but a large number of posts and reels were featured under متحف البصرة الحضاري (Basra Museum of Civilisation).

In English

The FOBM’s website was under maintenance. When consulted in June 2023 it had been last updated on the occasion of the merger with BISI (Oct. 2020): friendsofbasrahmuseum.org.uk

The last post on FOBM’s FB page was dated 15/02/2021: facebook.com/FOBasrahMuseum/

The SBAH English website provided a link to the FOBM’s website: sbah.gov.iq

The last information about the Museum on BISI’s website also relates to the merger: bisi.ac.uk

There were two Basrah Museum Instagram accounts in English, each with less than 2 K followers: basra_museum and basramuseum

On Instagram, #basrahmuseum had 29 publications and #basramuseum 66.

The Museum was being marketed online by Iraqi, Iranian, Gulf and some European travel agencies as part of guided tours and holiday packages. Few details if any were provided, with the Museum appearing as simply as ‘The History Museum’ or ‘The Museum of Civilisation’ or ‘Saddam’s Palace.’

3.10 Collaboration with Other CPF-Funded Projects

Objective 11: To link project activities with University of Manchester CPF Project to survey and document the pre-Islamic Alexandrian city of Charax Spasinou, as well as 14 other sites in the Basra Province.

75% of the target had been reached by the end of the project. Creating synergies with the Charax Project was a request from the CPF and materialised through the display of Charax objects found by the University of Manchester team in one case in the Basrah Gallery for the Museum opening. Dr Robert Killick, University of Manchester, had also written a text panel about Charax displayed in the gallery. After the opening, objects were sent to the Iraq Museum for recording.

It was expected that the objects would eventually be returned to Basra and that the Charax team would be available to support the Museum on their labels and recording. At the time of the evaluation, object had not been returned from Baghdad. The text panel about Charax was still in place but the case where the objects had been displayed was now housing the statue of a Parthian man from the original Basrah Museum collection.

Alignment of activities and timelines between the Museum and Charax projects were not ideal to ensure closer and more sustained collaboration. Better synergies were established between the Museum activities and those of the 'Ark for Iraq' project, also CPF-funded (see under Objective 8).

3.11 Library Project

Objective 12: To establish an integrated Museum library and educational resource centre for researchers and the public in Basra and for the cultural heritage and archaeology communities.

100% of the target had been reached by the end of the project:

- A library space on the first floor of the Museum building had been refurbished and equipped with shelving, furniture, blinds, an AC unit, and a generator;
- ITC equipment had been purchased and placed in a storage room in the library;
- An adjacent space had been refurbished as a staff room and equipped with an AC unit;
- A stakeholder workshop had been held at the Museum in March 2019 with two UK library consultants who had delivered a report and recommendations;
- Two library training programmes had been implemented in December 2019 and January 2020 for Museum and other SBAH staff and some volunteers;
- Two senior Iraqi university librarians had been involved as trainers and advisers on the implementation of Koha, an open-source Library Management System (LMS);
- One Inspectorate staff member with a degree in librarianship had been assigned as Library Manager and had attended the trainings.

It was anticipated that, shortly after the project end, the library of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, now BISI – with approximately 3,000 books and periodical stored in boxes at the British Embassy and for a period in the French Embassy in Baghdad since the 1990s – would be formally donated and moved to the Museum. Items would then be sorted out, catalogued, and put on shelves with support from volunteers, and under the stewardship of FOBM/BISI and senior Iraqi university librarians. FOBM also expected that new posts would be created for the library, including for females, that books would be fully included in the Museum offer, and that the space would develop

into a resource and learning centre for different types of users (Iraqi and international archaeologists, university students, schools and families).

In January 2023, the material achievements had been adequately sustained and partly improved, but the HR ones had seriously regressed. The librarian initially assigned had been transferred to another governorate. His successor had no academic background in library management but had attended the trainings delivered under the project. No other staff had been assigned to the library. The BISI collection had been donated and transferred to the Museum, and another donation received from Barbara A. Porter, former Director of the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman. A small volunteer group had helped sort out and clean the books, but they had been neither catalogued nor put on shelves. The ITC equipment was still in its boxes. The library furniture was in place and in good condition, but the space was unused. Al-Hussiny, the new Director of Antiquities had no contact with the senior Iraqi librarians who had delivered training on Koha.

3.12 Factors Affecting Sustainability of the Achievements

Sustainability of the CPF project's achievements does not appear to be optimal if measured strictly against the twelve objectives FOBM had set for itself over the limited timeframe of 2016-2019.

Material outputs delivered (refurbishment, display cases and other equipment, labels and panels, etc.) and the online visibility of the Museum were preserved but not improved, with the exception of the delivery of library items. Positive factors to credit are the Museum staff's personal commitments to up keeping the venue and BISI's continued engagement to provide expertise and, whenever possible, financial support.

There was regress on several key indicators – staff number and skills, number of visitors, the volunteer programme and outreach. Although they came as a disappointment, these results were partly anticipated by BISI before undertaking the evaluation. Furthermore, FOBM had correctly, if perhaps too broadly, identified the risks bearing upon the sustainability of the project outcomes in the 'After the project ends' section of the grant application and in its February 2020 'Evaluation Report.'

Worthwhile underlying is that FOBM owned none of the risks that materialised into factors challenging the sustainability of the project's achievements, nor was FOBM in a position to deflect or even mitigate such risks as argued below. A distinction is worth making between circumstantial and other challenging factors that tend to be systemic with implications for BISI's future engagement with the Museum. Consideration will be given to this aspect in the Lessons Learnt and Recommendations Section.

Circumstantial Factors

The global pandemic and Iraqi mass protests, which started in December 2019, extended into late 2021, and prompted a major political crisis leading to a change of government and stalling of the federal budget approval, were detrimental to the completion of activities left pending at the end of the project, particularly those around the library. These same factors prohibited prospects for additional staff training, which BISI and NN could have facilitated in Baghdad, neighbouring countries, or overseas. Perhaps most importantly, they directly forced a closure of the Museum to the public for a good part of 2020 and 2021. The restarting of activities in 2022 was slow and not eased by the appointment, in June, of Al-Hussiny as a new Director of Antiquities, who had to settle

into the job. Communication with BISI, outreach to other cultural actors and institutions in Basra, relations with academia, schools, civic societies, and the private sector were all affected, and so was the number of visitors to the Museum as they plummeted and only started picking up in the last quarter of 2022.

Weakened Leadership

When FOBM's on-the-ground engagement with the Museum project started in 2012, Al-Abeed occupied both positions as Museum Director and Director of Antiquities and so had direct access to both the SBAH Chairman and the BPC and considerable leverage in favour of the project. As of 2017, a position of Museum Curator was created under the authority of the Director of Antiquities, however Al-Abeed continued to assume the leadership of the Museum vis-à-vis Iraqi and international stakeholders, including FOBM.

In December 2019, Al-Abeed was removed from his post by a new Minister. The succession was contentious and without a proper handover. FOBM was asked to engage with the newly appointed Curator, rather than with the new Director of Antiquities (see the Museum succession table in Annex 8.5). This coincided with the retirement of Qais Rasheed, who had signed the MoU with FOBM in 2010 in his capacity as SBAH Chairman and who was eventually appointed Deputy Minister for Tourism and Antiquities, a position key to ensure high level support for the project.

In the absence of Al-Abeed and Rasheed, FOBM pushed forward with pending activities, particularly around the library project, and made provisions for the training of the new Curator, but building trust was all the more challenging given that the Curator had limited museum skills.

Al-Abeed was reinstated six months later, in June 2020, by the succeeding Minister. His capacity to advocate for the Museum and lead on the follow-up activities, including the volunteer programme, had been weakened. The situation was further compounded by the combined effects of the on-going pandemic and domestic political crises.

As of June 2022, Al-Abeed took a five-year leave without pay and was replaced by Al-Hussiny with whom FOBM engaged in earnest during the January 2023 field trip to Basra (see Section 5). Al-Hussiny, new to Basra and without a museum management background, was actively coached by Al-Abeed on every aspect of the Inspectorate job but needed time to gain experience, build his own local and international networks, and assume ownership of the Museum project.

Limited Financial Input from the Iraqi Side

FOBM had expected that SBAH and the Basra provincial authorities (BCP and later BG) would join forces to support the project in its development phase and, eventually, cover the running costs of a 'modern museum' to an adequate level after the end of the CPF grant. As early as 2012–16, there was a feeling that the financial input from the Iraqi side was not matching the considerable investment made by the British side. FOBM was nevertheless hopeful that, with the CPF's additional contribution, the success of the 2019 opening of new galleries, and Al-Abeed's relentless advocacy efforts with the MoCTA and the BCP/BG, higher levels of government support would be forthcoming.

A first point to highlight is that the spending capacity of Iraqi public bodies is erratic: in a highly unstable political environment, the government can go without a budget for two to three years.

A second point is that the MoCTA has consistently received one of the lowest apportionments of the federal budget with which it can only cover staff salaries and the basic maintenance of its facilities. Whenever apportionment is higher, funds go in priority to new hires (see below). Only projects with a high national value may exceptionally receive sufficient political support to be government funded. For other projects where plans and activities go beyond the ordinary operations of the Ministry, reliance for funding is on bilateral and multilateral donors and partners. This has been the case with all museum projects implemented in recent years (see Section 4.6).

A last point regards the provincial authorities. Until 2019, provincial councils relied for their budgets on a mix of public and private resources. In 2019, the BCP was able to provide a US\$2M allocation, spent by the BG in 2020, to build a car park and a fence around the Museum premises, purchase a central AC unit, generators, furniture, and cover small expenses such as the printing of text panels for the galleries. During the 2019-2021 popular unrest, provincial councils were the focus of much popular criticism and suspended. Governorates now rely exclusively on public funding and the MoCTA obstructs allocating them a portion of the federal budget for sizable cultural development initiatives. As a result, the BG has a limited capacity to support the Museum and was not in a position to include the cultural park project in its budgetary request for 2023-2025 (see more on this point in Section 4.3).

Staff Turnover and Skills Depletion

The political, institutional, and economic environment has directly challenged the staffing levels of the Museum and its capacity to retain its HRs after the end of the CPF grant.

The MoCTA is responsible for the staffing policy across its various branches, a task it performs by appointing mostly fresh, inexperienced recruits as is the rule in the Iraqi public sector where employment is a tool of political patronage. The implementation of the CFP-funded project coincided with the voting, in March 2018, of the first federal budget slashing spending on defence and security after the conflict with Daesh. The share allocated to the MoCTA, comparatively higher than in previous years, allowed for several hundred new hires, of which 60, largely unskilled, were appointed to the Basra Inspectorate, all with monthly salaries not above £200. Within two to three years, two-thirds of them had requested and obtained their transfers to the governorates they originated from where living costs were lower than in the big city of Basra and where they could rely on family support.

The chronic shortage of archaeologists at the Inspectorate is also a factor of the economic and employment context in Basra. On the one hand, SBAH archaeologists are not keen to be posted there because of high living costs. On the other hand, archaeology graduates originating from Basra are very few for lack of archaeology departments in local universities. This is because the Iraqi academic offer is labour-market oriented whereas the heritage sector in the Basra Province does not offer attractive employment prospects compared with other sectors, particularly the oil and gas industry.

4. Broader Impact of the Museum on Its Environment

The CPF-funded project has built upon involvement by British and Iraqi stakeholders starting as early as 2008, and on the first phase of the project implemented on the ground as of 2012 and resulting in the opening of the Basrah Gallery in 2016. Furthermore, the entire undertaking has unfolded within the post-2003 cultural heritage sector in Basra and Iraq at large. Against this backdrop, [using the twelve objectives FOBM had set for itself over 2016–2019 appeared too narrow to measure the project’s heritage and society outcomes.](#)

When interviewed during the evaluation process, stakeholders took a step back from the CPF project’s strict timeframe and objectives to view the Basrah Museum’s achievements in a more contextualised way. This prompted the evaluation to take a wider view at the impact of the Museum on its environment and to also consider, to some extent, how the Museum had interacted with changes in the environment.

[What emerges is evidence of a cumulative impact whereby the CPF grant has significantly enhanced the achievements of the first phase of the Museum project while combining positively with other improvements happening in Basra and within the Iraqi museum sector at large.](#)

4.1 Key Museum Staff

In January 2023, the key roles at the Museum were distributed between four staff members out of the eight assigned to the Museum:

- [Muhammad Ali](#), Museum Curator and Head of the Inspectorate’s Heritage Unit, joined the Inspectorate in 2019 after receiving a BA in Islamic Archaeology;
- [Haydar](#), the accountant, mostly managed ticketing;
- [Sarmad](#) oversaw supplies, equipment, and maintenance, with particular attention to the security and safety system;
- [Wisam](#) was the IT officer and in charge of the object database and register and, nominally, the library.

They had benefitted from foundational training and, for two of them, additional skills development.

[As part of the CPF-funded project:](#)

- Sarmad and Wisam were trained in Germany on the handling, fitting, and maintenance of the display cases;
- Wisam, Sarmad and Haydar attended the workshop on the fundamentals of museum management held at the Basrah Museum in January 2018, with trainers from the Ashmolean Museum, The Agha Khan Museum, GlasgowLife and BISI;
- Wisam and Sarmad participated in the object documentation session held at the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman in December 2018, which included visits to Jordanian archaeological sites and museums, meetings with Jordanian heritage professionals, and training by experts from the Glasgow Museums, British Museum and FOBM;
- Wisam and Sarmad were among participants to the training on the basics of library management organised at the Shoman Library in Amman in December 2019 and delivered by senior Jordanian and UK librarians;

- Wisam, Sarmad and Mohammad Ali attended the training on the implementation of the Koha LMS at the Basrah Museum in Dec. 2019 - Jan. 2020, delivered by senior Iraqi librarians;
- Due mention needs to be made of the extensive one-to-one coaching Al-Abeed received – notably from Dr John Curtis and Dr Lamia Al-Gailani – during his numerous stays in the UK. In turn, he shared knowledge and good practices with his staff on the job.

Other opportunities had included:

- Onsite training on the conservation of archaeological objects by a conservator from the Iraqi Museum in 2018;
- A session on the restoration of manuscripts and books organised by UNESCO in the newly established conservation lab at the Museum in 2019;
- Two trainings in photographic documentation delivered by MMA, attended by Wisam in Amman in 2016 and 2018. He was also trained at the Sulaymaniyah Museum in 2020 on the use of SmartWater marks to protect objects under a CPF-funded project led by the University of Reading.

Although short of the staffing level FOBM and Al-Abeed had originally planned for the Museum, **the core team appeared competent, dedicated, close-knit and sharing a strong feeling of ownership.**

Sarmad: “I’ve been involved in everything aspect of the project almost since the beginning, and I feel I have played a personal role in its success. I don’t mind working longer hours and having to pay repairs from my pocket, as I feel the Museum is like my own house.”

All four were multitasking and, with some support from non-key staff members, were able to ensure that **the Museum performed its basic functions of safeguarding the heritage under its care and making it accessible to the general public.**

The conservation and documentation skills they had acquired were put to good use. Display cases had been properly assembled and were being maintained. The object database, complete with photographic documentation, was available in the Museum and two other digital copies were kept in different locations. Objects were regularly checked, particularly after earthquakes, and handling performed with due care, such as when they were marked with SmartWater in 2020 and 2021, at the time when the Museum was closed to the public.

Wisam honed his maintenance skills on the job and was able to attend to small repairs needed for electricity, plumbing and other fixtures. He regularly checked security equipment even if the Museum did not have a written maintenance plan nor an emergency plan. As the main Museum contact person for security, he was coordinating closely with the Antiquity and Heritage Police posted around the clock at the entrance of the venue.

Sarmad, Haydar and Wisam were coached by Al-Abeed on welcoming visitors and leading them on Museum tours. Haydar, who had a special appetite for the role, was the main Museum guide, particularly for school groups. His three colleagues were able to substitute for him whenever needed. They had carefully read and memorised the object labels and information panels and were actively seeking additional contextual information about the displays. Muhammed Ali, with his background in Islamic Archaeology, shared information with the group.

Affiliation with the Basrah Museum was a source of pride for the team of four. They all concurred that their jobs at the Museum had allowed them to acquire knowledge, skills, and responsibilities well beyond that of ordinary mid-level employees in Antiquities and Heritage Inspectorates. They felt

that the training and coaching they had received had given them exposure to best practice in museum management and given them access to international, regional, and national networks of heritage specialists on which they could rely for advice. They also greatly appreciated the ties built with other SBAH staff at the Iraq Museum and with former colleagues at the Basrah Museum who were now posted in other Inspectorates and with whom they were in contact. They were confident that those who had received training under the CPF project were agents of change in their new postings.

4.2 Trained Volunteers

The views expressed by the Museum key staff are consistent with that of two volunteers who were part of the core group involved in training sessions organised with the CPF grant. To build a team spirit and equip selected volunteers with the capacity to play a supportive role at the Museum, FOBM had decided to open each training programme to two to three female volunteers, which also allowed for balancing the gender ratio of the trainees given the Iraqi cultural heritage sector is largely dominated by men. After the end of the CPF funded project, these trained volunteers were part of the small group who continued promoting the Museum on social media.

Tamara, an English translator, writer, and now university lecturer, boosted her skills as a manager of cultural projects. She attended the foundational museum management session and the Amman training on documentation and assisted the Museum staff with the work on English labels. Hired as the Iraq National Project Manager for the Safina Projects, she went on to attend a postgraduate programme with ARCA (Association for Research into Crimes Against Art) in Italy, and, in 2019, the British Museum's ITP in London. Thanks to connections made through her involvement with the Basrah Museum, she further coordinated the early stages of establishing Iraq's new Modern History Museum in the Agha Jaffar Palace in the Lakeside Complex. For this evaluation, Tamara was commissioned to be the Basra-based Coordinator. In mid-2023, she established and fully registered Qantara, a Basra-based cultural heritage NGO aiming, among others, to reengage with the former volunteers and other local supporters to serve the Museum and the local community through educational and outreach activities.

For Ayat, a pharmacy student, engagement with the Basrah Museum was her first semi-professional experience through which she developed her volunteering and English skills. She started as early as 2016, assisting with the preparation of the Basrah Gallery before its opening, and went on to help with the implementation of the conference room supported by the German embassy. She attended the museum management and labelling workshops, the session on manuscript conservation organised by UNESCO, and the Amman Shoman Library training. In 2019, she was selected to attend a series of workshops organised by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) across the country with a view to strengthening youth civic engagement. This brought her to meet participants from other areas of Iraq and invite them to visit Basra where she took them around the city, always making sure to start with a tour of the Museum, opening hours permitting.

Ayat: When I go to a job interview, I say "I was a volunteer at the Basrah Museum." It makes me proud to tell people about my involvement and what I have learnt.

4.3 Provincial Authorities

Provincial authorities, who are engaged in a wide-scale redevelopment of Basra as an economic hub for southern Iraq, do not overlook the importance of the cultural sector. Within the limits imposed by the institutional context, they have consistently supported the Museum's development and operations and intend to continue to do so.

Between 2013 and 2019, the Committee for Culture and Heritage of the BPC was instrumental in unlocking US\$2M for the Museum project even if these funds were not as readily available as FOBM had hoped and could only be spent by the BG in 2020. In its last budgetary request to date, the BG included a provision for the maintenance costs of the Museum up to US\$1,53M (IQD2 billion). The new federal budget, approved in March 2023 to cover 2023, 2024 and 2025, should allow the Museum to address its maintenance needs, including more regular cleaning, repair of the central AC system, and the purchase and installation of an elevator and iris recognition cameras. A provision has also been made for the creation of a website.

During the interview conducted as part of the evaluation, Dr Durgham Al-Ajwadi, the Deputy Governor for Administrative Affairs, expressed praise for the Museum project and disapproval of what he saw as obstruction by the MoCTA to bring the venue to a higher standard. The BG intends to keep requesting federal budget allocations for the Museum to address the maintenance of the building and its premises. It will also put its weight in the balance by lobbying the MoCTA to extend opening hours and days as it did for the January 2023 Arabian Gulf Cup (see box 4). Exceptionally, the BG covered the overtime costs of the staff, but is not ready to make such an arrangement a permanent one and thinks the Museum needs additional staffing from MoCTA. On the other hand, the Governorate is amenable to seconding staff on its payroll to the Museum Library (see below under Section 5) and increase the number of cleaners. Provided MoCTA gives its approval, the BG could also fund training to improve the staff's guiding and possibly English language skills.

Dr Durgham Al-Ajwadi: The Museum has been completed to a great standard. It is a unique accomplishment in which international partners were involved. It is extremely important to the region as it is the first time a museum gives credit to Basra's ancient and rich history which started well before the Islamic period.

There is little doubt that the support the BG could provide to the Museum is impeded by governmental policies that are not in favour of devolution of central power and funds to local authorities. [With the next provincial elections slated for 18 December 2023, the reversal to an elected local authority \(BPC\) may inflect the trend in favour of the Museum.](#)

Provincial authorities have a limited decision-making scope about the development of the Lakeside Complex, which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Planning. According to 2022 media reports, as part of the policy to convert former presidential palaces into public venues the federal government has plans for turning the Complex into the largest public park in the Governorate with involvement from the Ministry of Agriculture and United Nations funding. The Park will function as an extension of the adjacent commercial Baradi'ya District, which is undergoing upscale development including the recent opening of a five-star Mövenpick Hotel and several restaurants and cafés. There is, at present, no indication about government plans for other palatial buildings in the area, and no certainty that they will be converted into cultural rather than commercial venues. As mentioned above, MoCTA sees the development of any sizable cultural project, such as a modern history museum, as its preserve. Whatever choices will be made, development of the area will benefit the Museum as it will provide better linkages with the city.

4.4 Visitors

Along with other museums under SBAH, the Basrah Museum is open to visitors from 9 am to 2:30 pm and closed on the weekend (Friday and Saturday). It also implements a four-tiered entry fee system: IQD1,000 (£0.63) for school pupils, IQD2,000 for university students, IQD3,000 for other Iraqis, and IQD26,000 (£16.40) for foreigners.

Seeking to capture how visitors experience the Museum, a survey was conducted between March and April 2023 as part of the evaluation (full results are available in Annex 8.8). Results were combined with observation during the January field trip, KIIs, and the FGD discussion held with cultural entrepreneurs and activists. Findings can be summarised as follows:

The Museum is a cultural attraction for Basra residents and visitors, and a source of local pride:

- It is a local cultural landmark visited by residents, with a significant number paying return visits, and a few having attended cultural events held at the Museum before and after the pandemic.
- It is a tourist attraction in a context where domestic and international tourism to Basra is developing. Although not a destination in and of itself, it draws Iraqis visiting Basra from other regions of Iraq, international business travellers, and a growing trend of visitors from nearby Kuwait and other Gulf countries.
- Most visitors identify their interest in history and/or heritage as the main driver for their visit.
- Basra residents also visit the Museum for leisure. With its stunning architecture and location on the Shatt Al-Arab, it makes for a pleasant outing with friends, colleagues or relatives. Several expressed pride to show this landmark to visitors.

Social connections are the most important vehicle to disseminate knowledge about the Museum:

- The main source of information about the Museum are word of mouth from friends, colleagues, etc., who have been to the Museum or have heard about it.
- Visitors may know of the Museum from the social media, but most think that it should increase its online visibility and disseminate brochures or leaflets on site and in key locations in the city.

Visitors appreciate the building and displays:

- The choice of the building for a museum receives high validation on account of its historical significance, quality of construction and design, architectural features, size of its exhibition galleries, and location on the Shatt Al-Arab.
- The level of appreciation for the objects exhibited and the way they are displayed is also high although a significant number of visitors expect to see larger or more impressive artefacts and are positive about the 'Garden of Civilisation' project featuring replicas of large iconic heritage pieces.
- Particularly appreciated are diversity in the type of objects, the historical periods and geographical areas covered, and the quality of the display (showcases, lighting, and design and colours of the exhibition halls).

There are shortcomings in terms of accessibility, interpretation, and maintenance:

- Most visitors wish that the Museum was open on the weekend and in the evening in the summer when families come out by the river at night.
- The fact that an armed militia is posted at the entrance of the complex and checks visitors is resented by some but a real impediment to few.
- Lack of road signage leading from Basra city centre to the Museum and poor listing on Google Maps – where it appears as 'Basra Cultural Museum' but is not featured under its Arabic name – are secondary limitations.

- Interpretation of the displays is not to the expected standard: not enough guided tours are available, labels are not always legible and do not provide enough details, panels are too few, and there are neither virtual tours nor leaflets or other free publications for self-guided tours.
- Maintenance of the building, its surroundings, and its access road could be improved.

The Museum could play a broader cultural role in the community, which would also enhance its visibility and traction:

- Some cultural activities were organised or hosted at the Museum before the pandemic but too few have taken place since the Museum has reopened.
- There is a public appetite for theatrical performances, film screenings, seminars and conference on history and heritage, and children’s workshops held at the Museum.

Box 4 – Basra during the Arabian Gulf Cup

The Arabian Gulf Cup, a biennial football competition, took place in Basra from 6 to 19 January 2023. It was the first time Iraq hosted the tournament since 1979. Several millions of Iraqis from all regions of the country and more than 50,000 Gulf visitors poured into the city over the period, as Iraq eased border restrictions and granted free visas. Coincidentally, the evaluation team was in Basra during the event providing an exceptional opportunity to probe the interest of locals and visitors for cultural attractions.

Thanks to an agreement between the BG and MoCTA, the Basrah Museum was exceptionally opened from 9 am to 9 pm with free entrance. The Museum staff was working shifts to ensure a presence, taking breaks to watch matches with visitors on a screen installed inside the Museum. The level of attendance was considerably higher than usual, with visitors including social media influencers and other people from the Gulf who also stopped by the reed guesthouses and traditional boats exhibited by the Ark for Iraq project next to the Museum. The Director of the nearby Natural History Museum reported a similar increase in visitors.

In downtown Basra, visitors flocked at all hours to the corniche running along the Shatt al-Arab river, the city’s main tourist attraction, and the streets were humming with excitement, especially during matches. The Basrah Breeze, Saddam Hussein’s luxurious presidential yacht recalled to Iraq in 2010, was opened to visitors. Now under the care of the Centre for Marine Science of the University of Basra, it was crowded late into the night. People were strolling in Ashar, the Ottoman district where SBAH and UNESCO have launched an ambitious project to rehabilitate historic buildings, including the Antiquities and Heritage Inspectorate and the headquarters of the Union of Basra Artists and Union of Basra Writers, both actively pursuing year-round cultural activities such as art exhibitions, lectures, and a theatre festival. The Hassoun Museum, an Ottoman house turned into a folk heritage museum and café by his owner, a private collector, was packed with families and groups of friends.

Across the city, overcrowded cafés, restaurants, shopping malls and fan zones had installed large screens to view the matches. The victory of the Iraqi team turned into a massive popular celebration of Iraqi and Arab unity, whereas the exceptional reception locals gave to visitors from the Gulf, particularly Kuwaitis, shifted their perception of Basra towards a safe and attractive destination.

4.5 Education Sector

When designing the display and selecting the objects, archaeologists involved had in mind two didactic objectives. One was to make the place a museum for South Iraq covering the history of Basra while, at the same time, mirroring the Iraqi national curriculum, i.e. the history of Iraq c. 3500-539 BC.

Alaa Al-Zergany, Head of the Sports and School Activities Department at the Basra Education Directorate, interviewed for the evaluation, indicated that the Iraqi History curriculum covered the Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian civilisations in the primary and intermediate levels (5th to 9th grades). The history of the city of Basra, a 7th century CE Islamic foundation, is only briefly dealt with as part of secondary level (10th to 12th grades) courses and only for the literary stream. The Hellenistic, Parthian and Sassanian periods, particularly the city of Charax Spasinou, which once connected the metropolitan areas of Babylonia with India, are not tackled. [Against this backdrop, and considering the extent of its collections, it can be argued that the Museum meets its intended dual didactic objectives.](#)

Some schoolteachers and principals leading or preparing school visits were among the respondents to the visitor survey and expressed their satisfaction with what the Museum had to offer. [Nevertheless, at present, the Museum cannot be seen as playing an effective educational role.](#) Very few schools take pupils there although the Ministry of Education calls for integrating visits to historic and heritage sites into the curriculum. According to Al-Zergany, in 2022 only 60 out of the 3,000 schools in the Governorate requested authorisations from the Education Directorate to visit the Museum. It is likely that these are mostly private schools, which make over one fourth of all schools in the Governorate. In the growing private education sector, parents are more likely to be able to cover transportation and entry fees whereas school managements promote extracurricular activities giving their establishments a competitive edge.

A focus group discussion with teachers in government schools and staff from the Education Directorate yielded some insight into the type of activities with a potential to make the Museum more relevant to pupils in the public education system: incorporating reference to the Museum into school exhibitions and competitions about Iraqi history and heritage, exhibiting works produced by pupils during art classes in the Museum's educational hall, and using the hall for activities introducing young children to Iraq's historic monuments and figures.

[Before planning for such activities, the Museum still needs to meet several prerequisites:](#) engaging with the Directorate of Education, designing a special programme and having it endorsed by the Ministry of Education and the Governorate, waiving entry fees for government schools or incorporating the Museum in programmes sponsored by international donors, dedicating Museum staff to educational programmes and building their capacities to engage with schools, facilitate activities in the educational room, and lead tours for different age groups.

[The Museum receives the visit of students from the History Department at the University of Basra who come on curriculum-related assignments.](#) The Department Head, Dr Adel Hashim, interviewed during the field trip to Basra, gave high credit to the Museum for disseminating knowledge about Basra before the Islamic period, which is largely unknown to the public. He regretted that relations between the University and the Museum did not extend beyond students' assignments due to the absence of an Archaeology Department at the University, and the fact that few of the teaching staff at the History Department have an interest in archaeology. He contrasted the situation with the strong relations existing between the Iraq Museum and the University of Baghdad where the latter has been graduating archaeology students who have staffed the former, and where academics

specialising in numismatic or cuneiform studies are in direct contact with related conservators at the Museum. He also admitted that relations were built over decades, and that there was no prospect to create an Archaeology Department in Basra for lack of job opportunities.

He proposed forging stronger links between the two institutions by:

- Organising joint academic activities, starting with a conference with local academics on the history and archaeology of Basra to take place in the Museum conference hall, for which he was willing to take the lead in coordination with Al-Hussiny;
- Supporting the creation of an academic course combining History, Archaeology and Tourism that would include a programme with the Museum;
- Making the Museum Library accessible to History students and ensuring that it contained references directly related to the objects on display;
- Incorporating more graduates from the University of Basra in the Museum staff from such departments as History, Arts, and Library and Information Science.

4.6 Museum Sector

FOBM has always envisioned its role in the Museum as a supporting one, with SBAH taking the lead. FOBM has also invested in skills development with a view to benefitting the heritage sector beyond Basra. Upon SBAH's request, curators of provincial museums in southern Iraq and the Head of the Governorates' Museum Division were included as participants in the 2018 museum management training. Furthermore, with facilitation from FOBM, a curator from the Iraq Museum was invited to the British Museum for a month's research leave to work on the tablets chosen for the Basrah Museum. Together with two other Iraq Museum curators, she spent time in Basra before the Museum's opening to work on the installation and train the Museum staff on conservation.

Throughout implementation, despite some level of collaboration, there was a feeling that ownership of the Museum project was mostly local, with Al-Abeed taking the lead and SBAH expressing limited interest. When Al-Abeed was removed from his post, FOBM requested a letter of support for the implementation of the last phase of the CPF grant from the new Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, which he provided in November 2019. However, neither this minister nor his successor (in post in 2020-2022) paid a visit to the Museum when they came to Basra.

Three years after the end of the CPF grant and as SBAH is intensifying its efforts to revitalise the museum sector, the context appears more conducive for the heritage authorities to acknowledge the positive impact of the project on the Iraqi museum sector.

The museum sector has suffered from several episodes of looting and damages in 1991 and 2003, leading to the closure of most facilities. The first rehabilitation programmes, launched between 2008 and 2012 with international support, focused on the country's largest museums: the Sumerian Galleries of the Iraq Museum (Italy), the Sulaymaniyah Museum in the Kurdistan Region (UNESCO), and, in the North of federal Iraq, the Mosul Museum (US Army), which was looted again by Daesh in 2015. At the time, the British-supported Basrah Museum project stood out for aiming at the creation of a new museum rather than at restoring and/or modernising an existing facility. It was also a novelty ambition to endow southern Iraq with a major museum.

After the war with Daesh (2014-17), SBAH restarted its rehabilitation programme with emphasis on provincial museums. The idea has been to structure projects around a combination of funding and expertise from international actors, investment from the provincial authorities, and staffing provided by SBAH, along the Basrah Museum project model. SBAH Chairman sees the model as successful with

some reservations, which he expressed while being interviewed for the evaluation, namely too little oversight from SBAH, lack of involvement of architects and museum design specialists, and lingering concerns about the safety of collections.

At present, the largest project implemented as an Iraqi-international partnership is the rehabilitation of the Mosul Museum funded by ALIPH and with expertise delivered by the Louvre, Smithsonian Institution and World Monument Fund. To ensure better synergies between local and central levels, SBAH has established an architectural and a scientific project steering committee.

In the South, some 200 km from Basra, the Nasiriyah Museum has benefitted from Italy's financial support and expertise to purchase new display cases, remodel its exhibits, and provide training to its conservators. Two smaller museums in Misan and Samawa have also been rehabilitated with Iraqi government funds. The curators of these three institutions were invited to and attended the 2018 museum management training organised by FOBM.

Box 5 – The Nasiriyah Museum of Civilisation

The Basrah Museum's management and staff tend to look at the Nasiriyah Museum for comparison, which creates some degree of competition and emulation between the two institutions enhanced by staff circulation between them. Emulation also happens at a broader level between all archaeological museums in Iraq. A quick focus on the Nasiriyah Museum is revealing in this regard.

The Museum is housed in a purpose-built 1960s building devoid of remarkable architectural features but functional. It holds a collection of about 800 Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian and Abbasid objects, about two-thirds of them casts including replicas of iconic artefacts kept in major museums (one of the lyres of Ur, the code of Hammurabi, Parthian statues, etc.). Besides covering the three 'standard' cultures of ancient Iraq (Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian), it provides a focus on cuneiform writing with numerous tablets, cylinder seals, foundations stones from regional archaeological sites, particularly Ur and Uruk. The display style is unremarkable, and little written interpretation material is provided in the showcases and halls.

Since its post-pandemic reopening in 2022, the Museum has had an active online presence – a dedicated FB page with 6.5K followers, and an Instagram account both of which maintained by the Director of Communication of the Inspectorate. One can learn from social media that the Museum has started organising art and handicraft exhibitions and youth activities in its premises again; that it has launched a public awareness campaign about cultural heritage; and that it plans to create a volunteer group.

The Museum has also announced that is in the process of introducing a mobile application that will take visitors on a virtual tour with the main objects featuring barcodes. A similar mobile phone-based experience for the Sulaymaniyah Museum is being developed by Dr. Rozhen Mohammed-Amin with research support from a team at the University of Glasgow and a BISI–NN joint visiting scholarship. According to Dr Barbara Coutureaud, Curator of Ancient Mesopotamia at the Louvre Museum, a similar mobile phone application is planned for the Mosul Museum.

A Nasiriyah Museum Library was created thanks to an initial donation of 400 books by a local citizen. It is headed by Ala' Abed, who attended the library management trainings organised by FOBM and was initially assigned as the Basrah Museum Library Manager. The facility was officially opened in March 2023 together with a Children's Hall and a Conference Room.

Following the government's 2022 decision to turn former presidential palaces across the country into public venues, SBAH announced it plans to increase the number of museums by using such palaces. In media interviews, SBAH Chairman Dr Leith Hussein gave the Basrah Museum as an example to follow. One ambitious project is the Babylon Museum to be moved to the lavish palace Saddam Hussein had built for himself atop of a hill inside the archaeological site.

The SBAH Chairman has paid two visits to the Basrah Museum since the beginning of 2023 whereas the new Minister of Culture, Tourism and Archaeology, Dr Ahmed Fakak Al-Badrani, opened the Museum Library on 23 August (see Section 5). On several occasions, the Minister has publicly expressed his interest for provincial museums (starting with the one in Mosul, his hometown) and the development of museum educational programmes.

The renewed interest of the heritage authorities in museums in general, and the one in Basra in particular, should not obscure long-lasting sector-wide challenges.

All provincial museums experience staff and skills shortage. High junior staff turnover and the ghost worker phenomenon affect all Iraqi state institutions, including antiquity and heritage inspectorates with levels of staffing higher than Basra's. In Mosul, the Museum rehabilitation team does not include a single Iraqi archaeologist. The Nasiriyah Inspectorate has about 100 staff members with 25 assigned to the Museum. Yet, from several credible accounts, only 10 effectively work at the Museum and their skill levels are low.

Museums are still viewed as heritage repositories with their main role being to conserve objects. Displaying and interpreting this heritage, making it available to the public, curating permanent or temporary exhibitions, reaching out to audiences beyond the usual stream of visitors, raising the awareness of the public and giving visibility to this heritage outside the confines of the museums are still not objectives officially established as being within the remit of these institutions.

Security of the collections is also a common issue for provincial museums. To date, none of them has a written risk preparedness and emergency plan. This deficiency has detrimental effects on on-going projects. The Mosul Museum team has come up with a list of original objects and is now facing SBAH's hesitations for their release from Baghdad on account of the Museum location in the city centre with a restricted security perimeter. ALIPH's senior management, which visited the Basrah Museum in February 2023, has subsequently reached out to Al-Abeed for advice on the matter.

This is a rather unusual move as museum rehabilitation, modernisation or creation projects have so far been working in silos for reasons ranging from the inner workings of the Iraqi public sector, mistrust between entities and regions, and competition between international operators and funding agencies. A recent initiative to improve the federal museum system – launched by Ms Luma Al-Douri, the new Iraq Museum Director and DG of Museums, and a long-time supporter of the Basrah Museum project – may provide an opportunity to improve collaboration and exchange of experience between the various undertakings, including on emergency planning and risk preparedness. The Basrah Museum would have much to contribute to this effort.

5. BISI's Reengagement

BISI was aware that the weakening of its ties with the Museum had affected progress on activities left pending in early 2020 and the sustainability of several project outputs. Its willingness to perform a project impact evaluation was in part underpinned by a desire to reengage with the Museum. The intention was to build relations with the new management and see how support could be provided to tie up loose ends on the labelling and display activities, bring forward the library project, revive the volunteer programme and possibly support with more skills upgrade for the staff.

As the evaluation proceeded, BISI's reengagement allowed for establishing a channel of communication with Al-Hussiny and was a catalyst to restart work on the library project examined below.

5.1 Completing the Library Project

BISI's reengagement on the library project has been instrumental to spark the interest of the new Museum management, the BG, and SBAH/MoCTA, and make the opening of the library possible in late August 2023.

During the field mission to Basra, the evaluation team met with the Deputy Governor and raised the issue of lack of staff and resources to catalogue the library items, put them on shelves, and operate the library. Dr Al-Ajwady offered to make the Museum Library a division of the Basra Central Library. SBAH welcomed support from the BG however under the condition that the Museum Library remained under the Inspectorate. After some negotiation, an arrangement was agreed upon.

Starting in February, a team from the Basra Central Library cleaned, stamped, and assessed the items before cataloguing them in the Basra Central Library system with indication of their location at the Basrah Museum Library. The catalogue has been made accessible from a computer in the Museum Library. Items needing conservation or restoration are being taken care of professionally.

From the evaluation perspective, this solution appears much more manageable than setting up a Museum Library from scratch as was the original envisioned solution. The adoption of the Koha LMS, which is not compatible with the system used either by the Basra Central Library or the Iraq Museum Library, was particularly questionable. Koha has many advantages but is too complex for a small-scale library with limited resources, no plans for loans and memberships, and unlikely to have to manage acquisitions and other library operations.

The collection comprises references on the history and archaeology of Iraq in English and other European languages, and a more limited number of items in Arabic. *It is the first archaeology library in southern Iraq and one of the foremost in the country after the library of the Iraq Museum*, possibly on par with the Sulaymaniyah Museum Library enriched with a donation from Dr Muayyad Damerji, a prominent Iraqi archaeologist and former SBAH Chairman. Al-Hussiny only realised the value of the collection during the cataloguing process which, from his own account, prompted his wish to complete the project.

Fortunately, two female Library and Information Science graduates from the University of Basra happened to be working at the Inspectorate. *Adyan*, with an MA awarded in 2021, was assigned as Head Librarian, whereas *Marwa*, who obtained her BA in 2022, was assigned as Assistant Librarian. The BG is also amenable to seconding additional librarians.

The effect of BISI's reengagement has been spectacular but, based on the Senior Evaluator's experience with the library, academic and heritage sectors in Iraq, there are some causes for concern about the library's sustainability.

Plans and recommendations prepared by UK consultants were based on models not transferable to the Basrah Museum Library or another government-run library in the country. Consider that, for example, no such library in Iraq – even the National Library and Archives – is able to offer remote access to its catalogue and digital resources.

The Iraq Museum Library serves SBAH staff and the Archaeology Department at the University of Baghdad. In Basra, there is no community of archaeologists or Archaeology students. As for History students, they are unlikely to have a sufficient level of English to find the available references useful.

If the library aims at keeping up to date with research publications in the fields it covers, it will need a collection development policy. In the unlikely event that SBAH allocates a budget for acquisition, there will be a need for specialised library staff knowledgeable about history and archaeology, with high level of English and basic knowledge of other languages (such as German and French).

More generally, the Museum/Inspectorate has no guaranteed funding stream to maintain moveable physical assets such as furniture and ICT equipment, purchase software updates (such as an antivirus) and consumables (printing paper, ink, etc.), or for recurring costs (continuous training for staff, annual subscriptions for e-reference resources, acquisition of physical resources, etc.).

FOBM has expectations that the library will rely on e-resources provided free of charge by UK or Iraqi university libraries. However, this will not ensure sustainability of access as long as power supply is erratic and internet bandwidth low in the Museum.

Donations, for their part, need to be managed as testified by the situation at the Iraq Museum Library where accumulated donations in boxes bloat the available space. This is not only due to lack of staff to sort out donations, but also to the fact that SBAH does not have regulations allowing libraries to remove or dispose of duplicate material, nor to donate them to other institutions or return items to donors.

Section 6 offers some suggestions to sustain what has been achieved so far with the Museum Library and set realistic objectives for its operation and development on which BISI could provide further assistance.

5.2 A Good Time to Reconnect

Coincidentally with BISI's renewed engagement, 2023 has heralded a noticeable shift in MoCTA and SBAH's attitude towards the Museum. Some degree of political stability, budget availability until 2025, and the recent high-level policy regarding former presidential palaces are all factors that have most certainly played a role.

The Minister issued a decree to authorise the opening of the Basrah Museum from 7pm to 11pm over the month of Ramadan, in March and April. This time again, Basra bustled with cultural activities. The Museum organised special visits for several parties of international tourists and volunteers aboard Logos Hope, the world's largest floating book fair, moored in Basra for two weeks.

Al-Hussiny has demonstrated assertiveness in his role as Director of Antiquities. He is leading several major projects in Basra, including new heritage museums. In early October, he was in Milan, Italy, as part of the MoCTA delegation attending an international conference organised for the 60th anniversary of CRAST, the Italian-Iraqi Cultural Centre, where he delivered a presentation on the joint SBAH, EU and UNESCO rehabilitation of the Ottoman Ashar District.

After the visit of the Minister to the Museum in August, Al-Hussiny was empowered to lead on the Museum project and proceeded to reshuffle the staff accordingly. He relieved Muhammad Ali from his task as Curator while keeping him available for support on conservation issues. Haydar, the accountant, was assigned as new Museum Curator with managerial tasks. Wisam, the IT officer also in charge of the object database, is not involved in the library anymore now that two librarians have been assigned.

The Director of Antiquities has made it clear to BISI and the Senior Evaluator that he welcomes support to consolidate achievements and bring the Museum to a new level.

6. Sustainability of Heritage and Society Outcomes

Drawing on the three levels of analysis performed in previous sections, a sustainability check at the end of the evaluation process was performed, with results presented in a table form in Annex 8.6.

Bringing together the evaluation findings, it is proposed to assess the impact of the CPF grant as follows.

6.1 Heritage Outcomes

4. Cultural heritage at risk is safeguarded for future generations (*mandatory outcome*).

About 2,500 archaeological objects previously stored at the Iraq Museum in Baghdad to protect them against risks are effectively safeguarded in the Basrah Museum where the public can enjoy them and learn about the value of this cultural heritage. A modern heritage building, previously neglected, has been preserved, restored, and adapted to house the collection. Set within the context of Iraq's heritage sector recovery, the project has endowed southern Iraq with a major museum and created a trend for the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of former presidential palaces.

5. Cultural heritage at risk is better managed and prepared for potential threats.

To date, the Basrah Museum is the only provincial museum in federal Iraq displaying a complete collection of original objects with their safety entrusted to the local Antiquities and Heritage Inspectorate that has oversight over the Museum. Adequate measures are in place to ensure the security, preservation, documentation, and display of the collection and the maintenance of the building. A competent and dedicated, albeit reduced, team allows the Museum to perform its basic functions of safeguarding the heritage under its care and making it accessible to the general public.

6. Local organisations and communities have increased capacity and/or resilience to care for and protect cultural heritage.

The Basra Antiquities and Heritage Inspectorate is empowered to care for the Museum and lead on its development, whereas the capacity of the Museum staff has been enhanced to preserve the collection and building.

6.2 Society Outcomes

5. Local people have developed skills, potentially leading to increased professional or other opportunities.

The Museum staff and volunteers, together with other members of the Iraqi heritage community, have enhanced their skills through training, coaching, an interactive approach, and international exposure. A good number of them have been able to broaden their professional opportunities in the

cultural heritage sector and their civic engagement. Iraqi companies and craftsmen contracted to restore the building have developed their skills and are able to use them in ongoing and future heritage rehabilitation projects. The Museum project has contributed to building the capacities of a new generation of cultural heritage professionals.

6. The profile of people engaging with cultural heritage is more diverse with respect to gender imbalances, age, ability, sexuality, ethnicity and social/religious background where appropriate.

Whereas the Iraqi heritage sector is male dominated, women have benefitted from skills development and have been well represented amongst Museum volunteers, although they are still few amongst Museum staff. Visitors are equally distributed between men and women, and there is a growing trend of visitors from other regions of Iraq, the Gulf, Southern Iran, and further afield. The Museum has the potential to attract more people, including less privileged youths through government school visits.

7. Local communities have a better understanding of their cultural heritage and value it more.

The Museum adequately covers the history of Basra while, at the same time, mirroring the Iraqi national curriculum. Basic interpretation material is available in Arabic and English and will be enhanced. Visitors are able to learn about and more deeply value their heritage and history through the gallery exhibitions and displays designed by Iraqis to be visually attractive and relatable to local people. Replicas of larger iconic artefacts are exhibited outside the Museum with plans to increase their number. Through engagement with volunteers, civic societies, and the private sector, the Museum has raised the awareness of cultural heritage in the wider community. Further developing the educational role of the Museum is an on-going process.

8. Local communities have played a more active role in protecting their cultural heritage or sharing it with others, potentially leading to increased social cohesion and a greater sense of well-being.

The Museum is a cultural attraction for Basra residents and visitors. It has become a cultural landmark bringing pride to the people of Basra and the Iraqi heritage community at large. Increased public awareness of cultural heritage has led to over 600 looted items being returned and now protected. The knowledge of the Museum in the community is spreading thanks to trainees, volunteers, school and university groups and other visitors who promote it through word of mouth and the social media. It is also starting to be marketed by travel agencies and tour operators.

7. Lessons Learnt & Recommendations

7.1 What Did Work

In a complex political, institutional and security setting, and with a relatively modest budget, the success of the project rested on a combination of factors:

- Its underpinning philosophy, i.e. providing support to an Iraqi led enterprise while ensuring the involvement of a broad range of local stakeholders. This guiding principle was key to delivering the CPF Heritage and Society Outcomes, spreading the benefits of the project across the Iraqi cultural heritage sector, and ensuring local ownership.
- A strong charismatic leadership in the Basra Antiquities and Heritage Inspectorate able to work around bureaucratic red tape, have his vision endorsed by SBAH, and leverage financial support from provincial authorities. Al-Abeed was also capable to draw an exceptional level of engagement from Museum staff, volunteers, and local contractors, gain support from a broad spectrum of members of the local community, and mobilise several international donors.
- The relative informality under which FOBM, a small charity, operated as UK project lead with limited project management capacity but great dedication to an initiative directly related to its stated objects. Experts, trainers, advisers, and the Project Coordinator contributed a considerable amount of pro bono work to manage the project, build the capacities of the Iraqi project leader, train and coach the Museum staff and volunteers, assist with the choice of objects and interpretation material, prepare architectural layouts and tenders, and other activities.
- Partnership with HWH & Associates, a British engineering firm with an office in Basra, providing local intelligence and project facilitation in an unstable environment. The firm enabled the transfer of funds to Iraqi contactors while complying with British Council procurement requirements by managing tenders and contracts for refurbishment work and library procurement, sourcing and hiring local craftsmen, providing engineering support and quality surveying, and settling local payments including through credits. The CEO also worked pro bono on the project.
- CPF's flexibility to adapt its financial procedures to FOBM's circumstances as a charity lacking capital funds, and to challenges encountered during implementation. This included advance grant payments, year-end flexibility on specific expenditures, approval to use underspent budget to support important work, and approval of an uplift grant to finalise the refurbishment of the galleries initially expected to be funded by the BPC.
- The timeliness and cumulative impact of the CPF-grant which significantly enhanced the achievements of the first phase of the Museum project while combining positively with other improvements happening in Basra and within the Iraqi museum sector at large.

7.2 What Didn't Work Well

The evaluation identifies as the main drawback FOBM's over reliance on the Iraqi project leader to navigate the Iraqi environment and a complex bureaucracy, leading to a misevaluation of the

Museum's capacities to sustain project outcomes on skills development, the volunteers programme, and the Museum's educational role.

- By becoming an operator delivering the CPF-funded project, FOBM went over and beyond its main object (to raise funds for the Basrah Museum project) and the commitments it had expressed in its MoU with SBAH, perhaps overstressing its capacities. As a charity with a focused object, FOBM had limited in-house capacity but relied effectively on pro bono contributions from its trustees and a network of professionals to deliver on museum management capacity-building, training, advice provision, and assistance with the interpretation material. For the library development, it called on outside expertise for the design and delivery of training and guidance. FOBM's project management arrangements were limited to a minimum, with a Project Coordinator hired on a part-time basis and contributing another part-time pro bono. For a project of that scope, a standard project management team generally includes a full time Project Coordinator supported by an Iraqi Field Coordinator.
- Reliance on Al-Abeed as the local project leader to navigate the Iraqi environment allowed to cut on project costs. It also saved FOBM the hassle of having to work through a complex bureaucracy and run the risk of delaying project implementation. But this arrangement had its drawbacks. Largely shielded from the operational reality in the field, FOBM did not fully appreciated the degree of centralisation and rivalries between governorate-level and federal entities, the limits of institutional stakeholders' capacities and commitments, their own expectations regarding British contribution to the project, i.e. the systemic constraints bearing upon the Museum's operations and future development. When Al-Abeed disengaged, these challenges came to the front.
- With little direct knowledge of the Iraqi post-conflict state institutions and local context, some of FOBM's expectations were not realistic. To be transferable to Iraq, the management and business model of a 'modern museum' – including staffing and skills levels, formal operating procedures, a stable funding stream, and an effective public programme – would require political stability, a major public sector overhaul, and country-wide economic and technological upgrade. This also applies to the ambitious Museum Library project for which UK consultants provided guidance, but which did not benefit from a field-based needs assessment and feasibility study that a Field Coordinator could have carried out with the involvement of stakeholders in the library and academic sectors.
- By seeking to relying on more than government actors to ensure the sustainability of a project benefiting a public institution in a fragile, post-conflict setting, FOBM took a commendable approach. But here again, too much reliance on one person with such a high stake in the project resulted in the demise of the volunteer programme and outreach efforts to the NGO, cultural and academic sectors.
- As a prized resource for local actors, the Museum project has fuelled tensions between local stakeholders which FOBM's more direct on-the-ground engagement could possibly have helped defuse or mitigate. Al-Abeed's high visibility as the only project leader, and his pro-active role in securing financial support from the BPC are likely to have been detrimental to a better and earlier institutional buy in from SBAH and MoCTA. Now that SBAH and MoCTA are expressing interest in the Museum, rivalries with the BG about jurisdiction are resurfacing, this time crystallising around the Museum Library.
- The greatest challenge has been to deliver on the Museum's educational role. Despite FOBM's best efforts, visitors to the Museum expect a higher standard of guided tours and interpretation

material. School visits remain limited, with what looks like an over representation of private schools, whereas only one university professor has incorporated the Museum in his History course assignments. Activities for the public, including families, are infrequent. The high-quality training outputs and physical assets delivered by the project have not been sufficient to meet wider educational objectives. Achieving them would require enhancing interpretation material, training staff on guiding and engaging visitors, including children, and coordinating with the Basra Directorate of Education, the BG, the University of Basra, the NGO and tourism sectors, and other stakeholders to assess needs and understand expectations, develop programmes, and formalise agreements. [The Museum's HR capacities do not appear to be adequate to develop this component without outside support.](#)

7.3 Recommendations

Since its creation, FOBM's intention has been to stay in existence after the full opening of the Basrah Museum as a support group (see Box 6 for other examples of Friends groups for cultural institutions in the Middle East). Now that the Basrah Museum is firmly established, the FOBM Committee under BISI's umbrella is looking to [focus its support on non-core projects generated by the Museum](#) (e.g. special exhibitions, training, publishing, public programmes), and on the [continued development of the Museum Library](#), with priority projects identified in collaboration with the Iraqi authorities.

To facilitate the Committee's future engagement and maximise its positive impact on the Museum's sustainability, the evaluation would like to summarise the [key features of the ecosystem ensuring the Museum's viability and how they combine with the systemic constraints bearing upon its operations.](#)

- The Basrah Museum is a recent but already well-established heritage institution projecting a positive image in Iraq and internationally thanks to remarkable achievements in the Iraqi post-conflict context and to the high-profile, British-supported initiative leading to its creation. With a small team of competent and dedicated long-term staff, the Museum performs effectively and above local standards its core functions of preserving, displaying, and making available to visitors the heritage under its care. Iraq's heritage authorities and the Basra local government have a vested interest in the Museum's viability.
- The network of SBAH provincial museums, with, presently, a dynamic leadership and plans to improve a system still mostly focused on the conservation role of museums, provides a professional environment for the Basrah Museum staff to enhance their conservation skills and share experiences, and a competitive drive to keep the Museum ahead of sister institutions.
- Public appetite for cultural activities and tourism attractions is growing in Basra, Iraq and regionally, presenting the Museum with an opportunity to increase the number of its domestic and international visitors. The local cultural, tourism, and media sectors are key stakeholders to help the Museum reach out to a broader public. Development of the Museum's educational role is also of interest to MoCTA and the Basra school sector.
- The Museum benefits from international attention and commitment from BISI/FOB M Committee to continue supporting, directly or through a network of leading museums and senior experts, the development of non-core projects, including training for staff, public programmes, and the Museum Library.
- Its achievements and high-profile should not obscure the fact that the Museum, like other provincial museums in Iraq, is a small governmental unit situated at the bottom end of a highly centralised and hierarchical bureaucratic structure, with its operations and planning capacities subordinated to several layers of decision-making.

- Commensurate with its official positioning, the Museum has a stable but minimal funding stream in the form of MoCTA's contribution to salaries and electricity expenditures. The Museum cannot generate its own financial resources but, contingent upon SBAH's approval, it can receive donations in kind and agree with third parties to cover its maintenance costs and purchase equipment and consumables.
- The Basra local government caters to the Museum's needs within this framework and other limits imposed by the federal government. It can extend its support in the form of staff secondment, training, and funding for activities as long as these do not overstep the boundaries of what the federal government views as MoCTA's jurisdiction.
- As a small governmental unit the Museum's HR capacities are minimal, and their enhancement is challenged by chronic staff turnover and skills depletion unlikely to be curbed anytime soon. Some new SBAH hires may be assigned to the Museum in the future, but the current staff number (9 people now that Muhammad Ali has been relieved from his post as Curator, including 3 core staff and 2 librarians) reflects the size of what is sustainable.
- The Museum and its Library are also not well served by the absence of a local archaeological community and the related difficulty to rely on Basra's academic institutions for educational programmes.
- Limited financial and HR resources impede the Museum's capacity to develop non-core activities and projects, particularly educational ones, and improve its outreach and public visibility. They also challenge the maintenance of the Museum's moveable physical assets intended to support non-core activities (currently the case with the Conference Room, the Conservation Lab, and, potentially, the Library).
- The Museum is embedded in a divided society in which cultural heritage is a symbolic and economic resource. Its existence, activities and future development are susceptible to create synergies as much as to fuel tensions between stakeholders.
- Finally, the Museum operates in an unstable political environment with recurring episodes of civil unrest and government crisis, and the pervasive presence of armed militias.

Based on the above and, more broadly, on the findings from the evaluation, two sets of recommendations can be offered to BISI and its FOBM's Committee.

1. Reconsider ways of engaging with the Museum and its environment

1.1. Ensure a regular presence of the ground

Besides its existing line of communication with the Museum management, BISI/FOB M Committee should consider visiting Basra at least on a yearly basis, possibly with a Baghdad extension, with a view to:

- Engaging more directly and efficiently with the Museum management and staff, the BG/BCP, SBAH, and other stakeholders;
- Keeping abreast of developments at the Museum, in Basra and at SBAH;
- Assessing the relevance and feasibility of requests for support submitted by the Museum management and, possibly, SBAH;
- And monitoring the use and impact of the support provided.

1.2. Build a local network

Maintaining direct relations with selected resource persons and groups on the ground would allow BISI/FOB M Committee to secure a better local footing, diversify its information sources, ensure

locally grounded support for the Museum's projects, and be less dependent on the vision and continued presence of a single person in the Museum. People and groups to rely upon could be:

- A Basra-based NGO, such as the one recently created by Tamara Alattiya to revive the volunteer programme, which could also play an advisory role and act as a conduit for BISI's support to the Museum, including the transfer and handling of funds to pay for activities, local purchases, and expertise;
- A national NGO with a focus on cultural heritage such as Liwan⁴ whose founders and members have ties with the Nahrein Network and a keen understanding of the workings of the Iraqi heritage sector at large (MoCTA, SBAH, academic sphere, international donors and operators);
- Local experts, primarily in Basra, in library management (Library and Information Science Department at the University of Basra), educational activities (Basra Education Directorate and education colleges in local universities), cultural activities (NGOs and Basra Governorate), event organisation and tourism (private sector), and communication (media sector). A good place to start is with people interviewed for the evaluation.
- The SBAH Chairman and the director of the Iraq Museum/DG and of Museums in Baghdad.

1.3. Formalise relations with the authorities

Reaching out to concerned authorities would ensure that BISI/FOBM Committee's long-term engagement in favour of the Museum is better acknowledged at official level and would facilitate the endorsement of future activities. It may also provide an opportunity to discuss concerns and ease institutional stalemates.

- In view of the changes that have taken place since the 2010 MoU with SBAH Chairman was signed – FOBM's merger with BISI, new SBAH leadership, establishment of the Museum, support for the Museum Library which was not mentioned in the MoU — it is advisable to seek a new agreement on future BISI/FOBM's support for the Museum. This could take the form of a new MoU between BISI and SBAH. Alternatively, the role of the FOBM Committee could be a component of a broader MoU between BISI and MoCTA which would ensure a higher level of institutional support. In both cases, agreements should be developed in coordination with MoCTA's legal department.
- While engaging with SBAH Chairman and/or the Minister, BISI could strategically mention key areas where BISI, selected museums and professionals, and the Nahrein Network, would be ready to contribute support and expertise such as interpretation, educational and other public programmes, staff training, and emergency planning and preparedness, and extend the offer to benefit other SBAH museums and staff.
- As a courtesy and strategic gesture, BISI may also consider addressing a letter to the Governor of Basra with CC to the Deputy Governor for Administrative Affairs or, if provincial elections are held according to schedule on 18 December 2023, reaching out to the new Governor and head of the Culture Committee of the Governorate Council to formally introduce BISI and the FOBM Committee, outline past contributions and inform about future intentions. It would seem important to keep the Governorate regularly informed about plans and activities and involved in decision-making whenever relevant.
- In all instances, it would be best to inform the Museum management beforehand about BISI's plans to reach out to authorities, and make sure no step is taken or information conveyed that could be detrimental to the person(s) in charge of the Museum.

⁴ <https://liwaniraq.org>

1.4. Adopt a conflict sensitive approach

BISI/FOBMM should tread carefully to avoid fuelling latent tensions, including rivalries and deficit of trust, and inadvertently create additional ones. This applies to relations with authorities, the Museum management and staff, Iraq's heritage community at large, and other stakeholders such as local NGOs, volunteers, and experts, and to future interventions.

- BISI should fully engage with the current Museum management and foster his leadership role on projects which he can call his own such as the Library development, a mobile application for Museum tours, or educational programmes (see below). He should however not be the only decision-maker on the Iraqi side as regards BISI's input.
- In case of management turnover, likely to happen at some point, BISI should maintain the same level of engagement with successors.
- Engagement opportunities for the core staff (including Mohammed Ali) to sustain their sense of ownership should keep being provided.
- New resources which BISI plans to make available should be delivered within an integrative approach (e.g. training opportunities should be opened to other Inspectorate staff members and SBAH employees; while supporting the development of public programmes for the Museum, staff from other museums and the Baghdad Directorate of Museums should be invited to attend some activities. This was done previously but more participants beyond the Museum and Basra Inspectorate staff should be included).
- As a rule, synergies should be fostered between the different heritage and cultural projects implemented by the Basra Inspectorate, the provincial authorities, and SBAH.
- BISI may want to consider adapting the PATH tool developed by ICCROM⁵ to assess, as well as reduce the conflict risk, at any stage of a cultural heritage project.

1.5 Factor sustainability risks and their management into BISI's engagement

See table in Annex 8.7.

2. Focus support on areas where BISI can make a difference

2.1 Provide support in a strategic way

- BISI should be clear about the scope of its engagement, what it can work out and what it cannot, and limit its support to sustainable projects and training on skills that can be used in practice.
- Activities should be designed with a view to enhancing capacities within the scope of existing possibilities, and to ensure that outcomes can be sustained within the Museum's ecosystem.
- Support should prioritise the consolidation of achievements (interpretation and the Library) and revival of the volunteer programme, and be provided incrementally with other types of activities (such as an educational programme) addressed at a later stage.

⁵ PATH - Peacebuilding Assessment Tool for Heritage Recovery and Rehabilitation: <https://www.iccrom.org/fr/publication/path-peacebuilding-assessment-tool-heritage-recovery-and-rehabilitation>

- Ideas for activities and projects should be developed through an exchange with the Museum management in which SBAH should have an input. The Governorate should also be consulted wherever relevant and within a conflict sensitive approach.
- By relying on its local network and expertise, BISI should assess the relevance and feasibility of activities and projects before approving them.
- The development of focused strategic, planning and implementation documents for the Library and educational programme development are prerequisites for engaging in any related activities.
- Some areas are best left to local stakeholders to deal with. This is the case with emergency planning, that will necessarily involve the Governorate and the armed forces and should be led by SBAH. At best, BISI can raise the issue with SBAH and offer to source and possibly sponsor expertise.
- Similarly, BISI can raise the issue of the Museum's opening schedule and staffing with the Minister but should refrain from engaging other stakeholders (particularly the Governorate) on the issue as it may fuel tensions between central and regional authorities, put the Museum management in a difficult position, and carry reputational risks for BISI.
- Support for the development of a business plan was flagged as a possible project, but the Museum does not have the necessary level of decision-making and financial autonomy to make such an exercise of value.

2.2 Prioritise interpretation

- Support the improvement of object labels and information panels: checking and fixing placement and legibility of labels in Arabic and English, development of engaging written narratives about selected objects, and creation of more information panels.
- Many visitors have expectations in terms of size and variety of objects. These could be better managed by including information panels about the history of the Museum, and by linking its displays to collections held by the Iraq Museum and other provincial museums. Some information panels could focus on the replicas displayed outside the building in what is due to become the 'Garden of Civilisation.'
- All core staff members and librarians should develop their skills to lead Museum tours. Rather than formal training on guiding (as offered by the Deputy Governor), it would be best to work with them interactively to develop tours of the Museum and narratives engaging various categories of visitors. Local education specialists/teachers could be involved to assist Al-Hussiny and Muhammed Ali, the two Inspectorate archaeologists, with developing tours for school children connected with the history curriculum.
- A mobile application for self-guided tours in Arabic and English (and possibly Persian) should be developed, with advice from the Nahrein Network and local expertise from the University of Basra (the Head of the History Department and an IT engineer) collaborating with the Inspectorate archaeologists.
- Written material for self-guided tours should be developed and made available at the Museum.

2.3 Work out a sustainable model for the Museum Library

BISI should lead the exercise with the Museum management, core staff, librarians, volunteers, and local experts and stakeholders to map out in a realistic way:

- The expected users and the use they can/may have of the available resources.
- Challenges to resource accessibility (topics, languages, opening hours, etc.).
- How to make resources more accessible (with BISI's assistance), e.g.:

- Prepare thematic selections of works relevant to the History courses taught at the University of Basra, and to the objects displayed in the Museum.
 - Reach out to archaeological communities in Nasiriyah in Diwaniya (Inspectorates and Departments of Archaeology at local universities) to organise workshops at the Museum Library around its resources.
 - Network with other archaeological libraries (Iraq Museum, Sulaymaniyah Museum, possibly Nasiriyah).
 - Selecting resources useful for the archaeological communities for digitisation and online dissemination on an existing platform.
- The relevance and feasibility of a collection development policy taking stock of existing challenges (the absence of a dedicated budget for acquisitions, non-specialised library staff with limited foreign language skills, and the expected limited number of Library users).
 - The maintenance/conservation costs of the moveable physical assets (furniture, ICT equipment, Library collection).
 - The relevance and sustainability of a high-tech component (cost and use of annual subscriptions for e-resources, cost of software updates, erratic power supply and low internet bandwidth).

The mapping should include an identification of who can help with what:

- The Museum management with engaging the Iraqi archaeological community and other archaeological libraries in Iraq.
- The Basra Central Library with cataloguing and conservation interventions.
- BISI with receiving donation lists, selecting relevant items and discarding duplicates; expertise for thematic selections; and selections of references for digitisation.
- The University of Basra with thematic selections and students' engagement with the Library.
- Volunteers with workshops and public activities.
- The Governorate (?) with maintenance of furniture and ICT equipment.
- An international library with financial support to digitisation and online dissemination of selected resources.

On the basis of the above, the Library objectives and standard operating procedures (SOP) should be developed, librarian' skills level and training needs assessed, and, only if relevant, training opportunities identified, preferably in Iraq.

Once the mapping exercise is completed, the Museum management, core staff and librarians should develop a planning and implementation document for the Library development.

2.4 Help revive the volunteer programme

- Revive the volunteer programme on a smaller, manageable scale commensurate with that of the Museum, its activities, and the capacity of the Museum management and staff to involve volunteers in activities.
- Assist the NGO running the volunteer programme and the Museum with the development of a volunteering policy.
- Focus volunteers' involvement on communication and educational activities in link with the Library and Educational Room since, under SBAH regulations, non-staff members are not allowed to lead Museum tours nor handle objects.
- Include volunteers in activities and training in areas where they will be able to assist the Museum staff.
- Keep providing selected ones with international training opportunities.

2.5 Support educational programmes for schools

Here again, the first step would be to conduct a planning exercise:

- What type of educational programmes can the Museum reasonably offer?
- What are the prerequisites and conditions to make such programmes feasible (engaging with relevant stakeholders, covering entry fees for school children, incorporating the Museum in programmes sponsored by international donors, etc.)?
- Who needs to be engaged (SBAH, Basra Directorate of Education, school directors and teachers)?
- What resources are needed in the Museum to implement the programmes (staff, volunteers, skills, equipment, didactic material, reservation system for school visits, management of space and HR)?
- What resources are available (Education Room, etc.)?
- What needs to be procured and how (skills/training, didactic material, equipment, etc.)?
- How many staff members should be engaged (including the Librarians)?
- Can volunteers support the programmes and how?

BISI can assist with:

- Facilitating the planning exercise.
- Reaching out to international organisations supporting educational programmes in Iraq.
- Supporting a workshop with school directors and teachers but only after the Museum management has engaged with the Directorate of Education.
- Assisting with the development of didactic material and sponsoring the acquisition of equipment.
- Identifying and sponsoring training opportunities for staff and volunteers.

2.6 Other public programmes and events

Provided the Museum is able to achieve interpretation, the Library, and school programme outcomes and sustain them, other public activities should flow naturally from the ones already on offer. In the longer run, the Museum might be able offer activities for families, children, and special groups. But considering the Museum's limited capacities, it would not be a good idea for BISI to provide support (including training) for such activities too early.

As regards other cultural activities the Museum may be willing to organise or host, such as exhibitions, film screenings, theatrical performances, BISI could be responsive to request from the Museum management, although this is an area where volunteers could play a key role and sponsorship is less likely to be needed.

In the event the Museum would consider marking the 10th anniversary of its opening in 2026, BISI may want to support with developing a programme, and commission a local event management company.

Perhaps one area where BISI might want to engage earlier is to follow up with the Head of the History Department at the University of Basra on his proposal to:

- Organise, in coordination with the Museum management, a conference with local academics on the history and archaeology of Basra;
- Support the creation of an academic course combining History, Archaeology and Tourism that would include a programme with the Museum.

2.7 Communication and marketing

BISI could:

- Bring to the attention of the Museum management the fact that the Museum's visibility on the social media could be improved, including the Arabic listing on Google Maps, and that visits for the Iraqi media could be organised.
- Engage with Al-Abeed to transfer admin rights of Museum's FB page to Al-Hussiny.
- Help with marketing the Museum by writing copies and practical information in English about the Museum and sending them to tour operators and travel agencies.
- Offer to develop content for the Museum planned website and perform language editing for the English pages.
- Support the use of the Museum logo to appear on the website and communication material.
- Sponsor a workshop with volunteers, the media and local travel agencies to develop communication and marketing material in Arabic and a dissemination plan (rather than a fully-fledged communication and marketing plan).

2.8 Capacity-building and training opportunities

- Keep building up the skills of the small number of Museum staff members originating from Basra and likely to stay long term in post. The 4 remaining employees from the original trained group (including Muhammed Ali), who appear genuinely dedicated to the Museum, are a good HR pool to further cultivate.
- Since the librarians' standard library management tasks are likely to be limited, they might assume a leading role in the Museum's education programme and be trained accordingly, noting that there is always a risk that young women may leave their posts after getting married.
- It would be best to train all the core staff and the librarians on leading Museum tours which would enhance their knowledge of the collections and make them available for visitors on a rotation basis.
- Keep involving selected volunteers in trainings in areas where they will be able to assist the Museum staff.
- Don't insist on English language skills for core staff as it takes a long time to make an English speaker and more language exposure than the Museum staff is likely to be able to receive.
- Provide specific opportunities to the Museum management, currently Al-Hussiny, who appears keen to improve his English, by inviting him to the UK and facilitating placements in international training and capacity buildings programmes.
- BISI may also want to consider cautiously encouraging Muhammad Ali as a young archaeologist from Basra. With only a BA, he does not qualify to succeed Al-Hussiny but could possibly be convinced to complete an MA in an Iraqi university.

Box 6 – Friends and Volunteers for Cultural Institutions in the Middle East

Several museums in the Middle East have Friends groups and volunteer programmes operating under different models, none of them exactly matching FOBM's.

Active FB pages for [government-run museums](#) in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey show that some groups are informal, whereas others are registered as non-profits in the countries where the museum they support is located. Friends organise museum tours and children's activities and disseminate information about events taking place in museums or about them, but they do not contribute financial donations to the museums they support. Some also act as volunteer groups.

Other cultural institutions operate under [governance systems different from that of Iraq's provincial museums](#) and allowing to incorporate contributions received through Friends groups into their funding streams and to directly run volunteer programmes.

This is the case with the Israel Museum, a financially independent government institution with a board of directors, that coordinated an international network of non-profits registered in 15 countries (imj.org.il/en/content/international-friends-organizations) acting as conduits for donations and sponsorships. The Museum also runs a volunteer group (imj.org.il/en/content/volunteers).

The Palestinian Museum in Ramallah, a private foundation with no ties to the government, runs an annual membership programme helping to support the Museum financially (palmuseum.org/en/membership/friends-of-the-palestinian-museum) and also a volunteering programme (palmuseum.org/en/node/3717).

Still another model is that of the Society of the Friends of the Archaeological Museum of the American University of Beirut (AUB), a [Lebanon registered charity](#) based at the AUB. It organises fund-raising events for the Museum, however its primary objective is awareness raising about archaeology about which it sponsors a full program of activities open to the public. These include lectures, temporary exhibitions and children's programs at the Museum, in addition to cultural trips in Lebanon and abroad for members, and the publication of a newsletter. aub.edu.lb/museum_archeo/Pages/society.aspx The Lebanese British Friends of the National Museum was established to support the museum and Lebanon as it emerged from its devastating civil war and it continues to support volunteer efforts for the National Museum in Beirut and academic work <http://www.ahlebanon.com/>

Besides museums, [other Middle Eastern cultural institutions have Friends groups](#), such as the Oriental Library of Saint-Joseph University in Beirut, with an *Association des amis de la Bibliothèque orientale* registered in France (bo.usj.edu.lb/files/pres-asso.html). The non-profit acts as a conduit for sponsorship, but also actively mobilises potential partners, such as the National Library of France, to bring expertise, projects, training opportunities and other support to the Library that can receive financial and in kind donations through the University. [This is possibly the closest model to FOBM's with major differences being the Library's governance system and wide decision-making power of the Director.](#)

8. Annexes

8.1 List of Main Documents Reviewed

| | |
|---|---------------|
| MoU between SBAH and FOBM | 1 Dec. 2010 |
| Basrah Museum Operating Plan | 2010 |
| Grant application by FOBM to CPF initial round | June 2016 |
| Bid documents and contract with Reier – Museum Cases | 15 March 2017 |
| Bid Bur Alaman – Museum Refurbishment | 7 July 2017 |
| Uplift grant application by FOBM to CPF | Aug. 2017 |
| Report of the FOBM Training Programme, Basrah Museum, 13 –18 January, 2018 | Jan. 2018 |
| Cultural Protection Fund - Grant increase request – Friends of Basrah Museum Grant Project CPL-014-16 | 9 Aug. 2018 |
| Basrah Museum Library, Tender Drawings - Laura MacIver | 10 July 2019 |
| Library procurement | August 2019 |
| Basrah Museum Library. Evaluation Report Notes - John Dolan and Ayub Khan | Nov. 2019 |
| The Basrah Museum Library Training schedule to AHSL, 8-12/2019, Abdul Hameed Shoman Cultural Foundation Library, Amman, Jordan | Dec. 2019 |
| 2020-21 Impact Round Application by FOBM to CPF for an additional impact grant The Basrah Museum Project – Phase 3: Development of the Learning Room & Outreach Activities, Strategic Planning & Library Enhancement. | Dec. 2019 |
| Basra Museum Feedback Report by Tamara Alattiya | Dec. 2019 |
| Curtis, J. 2019. The Genesis of the New Museum in Basra: An Iraqi-British Collaboration. Pp. 65-76 in Paul Collins, (ed.), <i>Basra. Its History, Culture and Heritage, Proceedings of the Conference Celebrating the Opening of the Basrah Museum, September 28-2019, 2016</i> . London: British Institute for the Study of Iraq | 2019 |
| Details of the project of training staff in the library of the Basra Museum - Faisal Alwan and Aumaimah Hamid | Jan. 2020 |
| Evaluation Report, The Completion of the New Basrah Museum Project, The Friends of Basrah Museum - Joan Porter MacIver | Feb. 2020 |
| FOBM Progress Report and Payment Request Form to CPF | 22 March 2020 |
| Memorandum of Understanding. Dissolution of The Friends of Basrah Museum and merger with the British Institute for the Study of Iraq | October 2020 |
| BISI letter to Iraqi Minister of Culture informing him about the merger and asking for support to move books from Baghdad to Basra | 06/10/2020 |
| The British Institute for The Study of Iraq FOBM Committee - Constitution and Terms of Reference (revised) | 29 Dec. 2020 |
| Evaluation of the Cultural Protection Fund 2016 to 2020, Final Report - British Council and ERS, Bristol (CPL-014-16 Completion of a new Museum for Basra in Iraq, pp 65-67) | March 2021 |
| The Epic Story of a New Museum for Basra: Humanity Always Wins, 30mn film, BISI, https://youtu.be/ofKPfm7Cp8k | 2021 |
| Basra Museum Negative Impressions – Anonymous architect | Feb. 2023 |
| Internal BISI Report for the BISI FOBM Committee & BISI Council on the January 2023 Field Visit of the evaluation team as part of the Basrah Museum Evaluation Project funded by the Cultural Protection Fund & miscellaneous updates - Prepared by JP MacIver & Ali Khadr | Feb. 2023 |

8.2 Schedule of Field Trip to Basra, 15-20 January 2023

| Before lunch | After lunch | Evening |
|--|---|---|
| Sunday 15 | | |
| 9:30-11:00 - Evaluation team arrives in Basra after night flight | Rest | 18:00-19:00 - KII with Mahdi Al-Musawi, CEO of Bur Alaman firm and informal discussion with Hussein Faleh, photographer |
| 11:30-14:30 - Visit to Basrah Museum and KII with Mustafa Al-Hussiny, Head of Basra Antiquities and Heritage Inspectorate | | |
| Monday 16 | | |
| 9:00-12:30 - Group meeting with Basrah Museum staff and observation at Museum | 15:30-16:30 - KII with Ali Al-Makhzoumy, General Manager of BilWeekend, tourism company | Visit to Basra Corniche and former Presidential Yacht |
| 13:30-14:40 - Visit of Natural History Museum and KII with its director Dr Adel Qasim Jassim | | |
| Tuesday 17 | | |
| 11:00-12:00 - KII with Dr Dhurgham Al-Ajwadi, Deputy Governor of Basra | 15:30-16:30 - Meeting with Dr Al-Ajwadi, M. Al-Hussiny & Miras Al-Swaidy, Head of Basra Central Library in Basra Museum Library | 19:00-20:00- KII with Rashad Salim, Founding Director of Safina Projects |
| 12:30-13:30 - KII with Dr Adel Hashim, Professor, History Department, University of Basra | 16.30-18:30 - Volunteers FGD and training on visitor survey tools at Basrah Museum | |
| Wednesday 18 | | |
| All meetings at Al-Hasoun Museum | 16:00-19:00 - FGD with Basra entrepreneurs and activists in cultural heritage sector – Masaha Center | |
| 10:00-12:00 - KIIs with Basrah Museum volunteers Ayat Fadhil & Tamara Alattiya | | |
| 12:00-13:30 - KII with Sadiq Al-Hasoun, founder and owner of Al-Hasoun Museum | | |
| 13:00-14:00 - Discussion with Qahtan Al-Abeed, former Director of Basra Antiquities and Heritage and Basrah Museum Direction & M. Al-Hussiny | | |
| Thursday 19 | | |
| 12:00-15.00 - Evaluation team meeting and wrap up | Public holiday declared for the final of the Arab Gulf Cup | 19:00-20:00 - Informal discussions with Rafi Issa, Castle Hotel owner and responsible for the delivery of the Basrah Museum Library furniture and refurbishment |
| Friday 20 | | |
| Evaluation team leaves Basra | | |

8.3 List of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

| | Name | Position / capacity | Interview date in 2023 |
|----|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 | M. Mustfaa Al-Hussiny | Current Director of Basra Antiquities and Heritage Inspectorate | 15/01, 16/01 & 30/08 |
| 2 | M. Qahtan Al-Abeed | Former Director of Basra Antiquities and Heritage Inspectorate & first Basrah Museum Director | 17/01, 13/02 & 12/09 |
| 3 | Dr Dhurgham Al-Ajwadi | Deputy Governor of Basra | 17/01 |
| 4 | M. Alaa Al-Zergany | Head of the Sports and School Activities Department, Basra Education Directorate | 07/09 |
| 5 | Dr Adel Qasim Jassim | Director of Basra Natural History Museum | 16/10 |
| 6 | M. Sadiq Al-Hasoun | Private collector and owner of Al-Hasoun Museum, Basra | 18/01 |
| 7 | Dr Adel Hashim | Professor, Department of History, College of Arts, University of Basra | 17/01 |
| 8 | M. Mahdi Al-Musawi | CEO of Bur Al-Aman Construction and Trading | 15/01 |
| 9 | M. Hussein Faleh | AFP photographer | 15/01 |
| 10 | M. Rafi Issa | Castle Hotel owner, electrical engineer in charge of installation of library procurement | 19/01 |
| 11 | Ms Tamara Alattiya | Volunteer | 17/01 & 18/01 |
| 12 | Ms Ayat Fadhil | Volunteer | 18/01 |
| 13 | Ms Maysoon Al-Damluji | Former MP and Head of Culture and Media Committee in Parliament | 23/03 |
| 14 | M. Rashad Salim | Director of Safina Projects | 17/01 |
| 15 | M. Ali Al-Makhzomy | Founder and General Manager of "Bil Weekend" tourism company | 17/01 |
| 16 | Dr Leith Hussein | Chairman of SBAH | 18/02 |
| 17 | Ms Joan Porter MacIver | BISI former Vice-Chair, CPF project coordinator | 01/03 & 31/08 |
| 18 | Dr John Curtis OBE, FBA | BISI President, former Keeper of the Middle East Department, British Museum | 15/03 |
| 19 | Dr Paul Collins | BISI, Chair of Council, Keeper of the Middle East Department, British Museum | 17/03 |
| 20 | Dr Noorah Al-Gailani | BISI Trustee, Curator of Islamic Civilisations, Glasgow Museums | 23/03/2023 |
| 21 | Sir Terence Clark, KBE, CMG, CVO | Founding FOBM Chairman | 16/03/2023 |
| 22 | Dr Aumaimah Hameed | Library consultant, Director of Central Library, University of Karbala | 22/03/2023 |
| 23 | Dr Mehiyar Kathem | Nahrein Network Coordinator, UCL | 17/09/2023 |
| 24 | Dr Barbara Coutureaud | Curator of Ancient Mesopotamian Collections, Louvre Museum | 20/09/2023 |

8.4 List of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

| Category | | Name and position/capacity | | Date in 2023 |
|----------|--|----------------------------|---|--------------|
| 1 | Key Basrah Museum staff | 1 | M. Muhammed Ali Nuhair, archaeologist, Head of Heritage Unit, Museum Curator at time of interview | 16/01 |
| | | 2 | M. Wisam Al-Abeed, IT officer | |
| | | 3 | M. Sarmad Saleem Nima, equipment and supplies | |
| | | 4 | M. Hayder Jawdaa, accountant and eventually Museum Curator | |
| 2 | Basrah Museum volunteers | 1 | Ms Tamara Alattiya | 17/01 |
| | | 2 | M. Khalid Tawfeek | |
| | | 3 | Ms Ruaa Al-Waily | |
| | | 4 | Ms Noor Al-Huda Muhamed | |
| 3 | Local entrepreneurs, professionals and activists in the cultural and media sectors | 1 | M. Mustafa Al-Dakhan, Head of Ruaa Al-Basra, cultural heritage NGO | 18/01 |
| | | 2 | Dr Wasan Fathi, Head of SAWA Academy and Sustainable Iraq NGO | |
| | | 3 | Ms Ghufran Qais, Basra Creative Spot | |
| | | 4 | Ms Danya Nameer, Safina Projects | |
| | | 5 | Ms Elham Al-Zubaidy, Lotus Women's League | |
| | | 6 | Ms Marwa Kamal, customer care in private sector | |
| | | 7 | M. Mustafa Al-Shimari, Al Naeem media channel | |
| | | 8 | M. Hamid Saed, director of Hamid Saed Gallery | |
| 4 | Teachers, Basra Governorate schools | 1 | M. Jawad Al-Mudhafar, Head of educational unit, Ministry of Education/Basra Directorate | 07/04 |
| | | 2 | Ms Hala Hameed, Media of Teachers' Union, Ministry of Education/Basra Directorate | |
| | | 3 | Ms Venus Issa Abdullah, art teacher, Al-Abbasiya Highschool | |
| | | 4 | Ms Hajer Ali Majeed, art teacher, Andalusia Highschool | |
| | | 5 | M. Mazin Abdulqader Abbas, art teacher, Al-Rasool Highschool | |
| | | 6 | Ms Areej Hameed, Arabic language teacher, Fatima Bint Assad Middle School | |
| | | 7 | Ms Heba Qusay, English language teacher, Al-Ukhaider Middle School | |

8.5 Management Succession at the Basrah Museum

| Months/ years | Directors of Basra Antiquities and Heritage | Directors of Basrah Museum under DG of Museums SBAH | Curators of Basrah Museum under Director of Basra Antiquities and Heritage |
|------------------|--|--|--|
| 2007 | | | |
| 2008 | Mohammad Khayun | | |
| 2009 | | | |
| 2010 | Qasim Al-Basri | | |
| 2011 | Azhar Hashim | Qahtan Al-Abeed | |
| 2012 | | | |
| 2013 | | | |
| 2014 | | | |
| 2015 | Qahtan Al-Abeed | Ali Obaid / Abd Al-Razzaq | |
| 2016 | | Imad Ayub | |
| 2017 | | | |
| 2018 | | | Imad Ayub |
| 12/2019 | | | |
| 01-05/2020 | Ali Obaid | | Ahmad Al-Mamoori |
| 06/2020 | Qahtan Al-Abeed | | |
| 2021 | | | Mohammad Ali Mhir |
| 06/2022 | Mustafa Al-Hussiny | | |
| 08/2023 | | | Haydar Kadhim |

8.6 Sustainability Check Table by End of Evaluation Process

| Outcomes and Related Indicators | No | Yes | Could be improved | Impacting Factors (P: positive - N: negative) |
|--|----|-----|-------------------|---|
| 1 - Management | | | | P - Outcomes of CPF project; continuous support from BISI and experts; commitment of Museum staff; maintenance costs covered by BG; willingness of new Director of Antiquities to address emergency planning. |
| • Historic artefacts are preserved, recorded and documented | | X | | |
| • Display cases and gallery spaces are maintained | | X | | |
| • Building is maintained as museum and heritage building | | | X | N – Systemic - Centralised governance of museums impairing Museum-level emergency planning; Museum unable to keep income; funding from BG subject to political dynamics at government level. |
| • Security system is in place, functioning and maintained | | X | | |
| • Emergency/risk preparedness plan is in place | X | | | |
| • Museum has a guaranteed funding stream | X | | | |
| 2 - Staffing & skills development | | | | P - Small core group of staff with strong ties to Basra likely to stay long-term, dedicated to Museum development, trained under CPF project and willing to learn more; small number of Inspectorate staff, including women, available for assignment to Museum; Previous Director of Antiquities coaching new Director; new Director open to skills development of staff; BISI and other international actors willing to support. |
| • Museum has enough staff to cover its management needs (administration, finance, fund-raising, conservation, curation, education, outreach, communication, maintenance, security) | X | | | |
| • Existing staff members have skills and capacity on heritage and museum management | | | X | |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff includes women | | X | <p>N – Systemic - Staffing policy of Inspectorate controlled by federal government and unrelated to needs on the ground; staff depletion related to unlikely long-term stay of staff not from Basra; succession taking place at personal not institutional level.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development is on-going initiative with the Museum | | X | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succession plan for Museum management and staff is in place | | X | |
| <p>3 - Visitor experience</p> | | | <p>P - Relative stability of Basra and growing interest in cultural activities; willingness of staff to work shifts to allow for longer opening hours; willingness of staff to expand Museum offer; willingness of BG to cover staff overtime for short periods and support publications and digital offer.</p> <p>N – Circumstantial - Limited number of trained staff available to conduct tours; previous unavailability of funds to develop publications and digital offer; remoteness of Museum location from city centre.</p> <p>N – Systemic - Centralised governance of museums, including ticketing and payment of staff overtime; presence of militia at entrance of Complex.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museum galleries are open to the public and are accessible | | X | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-lingual signage and display boards are in place | | X | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publications about the Museum are available | X | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actuals tours are offered | | X | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A digital offer is being developed | X | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of visitors has increased/is increasing (baseline, Covid-19 pandemic period) | | X | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors are diverse (age, gender, origin) and include school and university groups | | X | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry is free for school and university groups | X | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor experience is positive | | X | |
| <p>4 - Cultural, educational and outreach activities</p> | | | <p>P- Two female Inspectorate staff, library sciences graduates, assigned to Library; renewed engagement of BISI on library project; budget set aside by BG for Museum website; willingness of previous Director of Antiquities to transfer FB page admin rights to new Director.</p> <p>N – Systemic - Limited number of skilled staff to engage with cultural and educational activities (including library) and institutions and reach out to public, private and civil society sectors; absence of Archaeology Department at University of Basra.</p> <p>N – Circumstantial - Covid-19 pandemic, popular unrest and removal of previous Director of Antiquities bringing library project and relations with cultural and educational institutions to a halt; limited local networks of new Director of Antiquities; disengagement of NGOs and volunteer group supporting and publicising Museum activities; Museum FB page, largely inactive, administered by previous Director of Basra Antiquities; no Museum website.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and educational activities are diverse, frequent, and well attended | X | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans to establish a library and educational resource centre are implemented | | X | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong relationships are maintained with schools and universities, other cultural institutions, the private sector (tourism, oil, etc.) and civil society at large | X | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The museum and its activities are visible/well publicised in the local media | | X | |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>5 - Support from civic societies and volunteers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An active group of local volunteers supports Museum activities X • Support is organised through local civic societies X | <p>P - Small core group of volunteers willing to reengage; alternative cultural NGOs available in Basra; interest of new Director of Antiquities in reviving volunteer programme; willingness of BISI to support.</p> <p>N – Circumstantial: Removal of previous Director of Antiquities who had created volunteer programme; Covid-19 pandemic and popular unrest.</p> <p>N- Systemic: Activities of volunteers inside Museum restricted under SBAH regulations (no guiding tours nor handling objects).</p> |
| <p>6 - Support from public authorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal and local governments extend support (staffing, running costs, objects on loan) X • Plans to develop Museum area into a cultural part are implemented X | <p>P – MoCTA likely to continue covering salaries of core Museum staff; slight chance of Minister approving extension of Museum opening hours/days and paying overtime for budget years 2023-2025 but no guaranteed sustainability; subject to budget availability, BG likely to continue supporting maintenance of Museum and surroundings, purchase of equipment and consumables, and small projects (such as Museum website) not overstepping on MoCTA’s remit.</p> <p>N – Systemic: MoCTA only covering staff costs of provincial museums as a rule; staffing levels and skills likely to remain unrelated to needs; SBAH/Iraq Museum unlikely to loan more objects to Museum in the short term; funding from BG likely to remain erratic; cultural park unlikely to be implemented in the way envisioned by BISI.</p> |
| <p>7 – Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museum maintains strong relationships with national and international projects around cultural heritage in Basra and southern Iraq X • Museum is able to leverage interest from national and international partners and additional funding X | <p>P - Achievements of FOBM and CPF projects provide basis to leverage additional interest; evaluation process provided opportunity for BISI’s reengagement; BISI to rely on broader network for funding, expertise, and skills development; new dynamic around museums at SBAH and MoCTA beneficial for networking and resource pooling.</p> <p>N – Circumstantial: Initial leveraging of interest and funding from international partners closely tied to personal abilities and networks of previous Director of Antiquities; BISI to build trust with new Director.</p> <p>N- Systemic: National public sector partnerships limited to other regional museums and antiquities inspectorates; absence of Archaeology Department at University of Basra; support from national private sector (funding, donations) unlikely if Antiquities Director is not from Basra.</p> |

8.7 Reassessing Sustainability Risks and Their Management

| Risks | Likelihood (H/M/L) | Impact (H/M/L) | Risk owner | Scope for mitigation by BISI with local support |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------|--|
| Inadequate funding | H | M Inadequate maintenance; limited to no activities and projects | SBAH/MoCTA + local government | Downsize expectations about Museum's capacities Improve BISI's operating model in Iraq to ensure that its contribution can support activities and projects effectively Seek recognition of BISI's engagement at higher level and advocate for additional support |
| Management turnover | M short term H long term | M | SBAH/MoCTA | Avoid over-reliance on the Museum management Adopt a conflict sensitive approach Build a local network |
| Staff turnover and skills depletion | H | M | SBAH | Downsize expectations about staffing level and non-core Museum activities, including Library Focus training and capacity-building efforts on small number of staff members likely to stay long term Ensure that training matches needs and capacities at Museum and that skills are immediately usable Revive volunteer programme on smaller scale with focus on communication and educational activities |
| Civil unrest in Basra | M | H | SBAH/BG | Advocate with SBAH about the importance of developing an emergency plan and offer to bring in relevant expertise |
| War in Southern Iraq | M Militias or neighbouring countries | H | SBAH/BG | Same as above |

8.8 Results of the Basrah Museum Visitor Survey, March-April 2023

7.1 Demographics

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Total number of respondents | 67 |
| Males | 33 |
| Females | 34 |
| Iraqis living in Basra | 48 |
| Iraqis not living in Basra | 10 |
| Non-Iraqis | 9 |

7.2 Individual Interviews

| | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|--|
| Number of respondents | 30 | |
| Iraqis | | |
| Males | 16 | |
| Females | 11 | |
| Between 20 and 30 | 16 | |
| Between 30 and 50 | 9 | |
| Over 50 | 1 | |
| Living in Basra | 21 | |
| Living elsewhere | 6 | Males: 2 from Baghdad, 1 on business from Samawa, 1 living in Iran; females:1 from Nasiriyah, 1 from Wasit |
| Non-Iraqis | | |
| Males | 3 | Afghan, Pakistani, US citizen |
| Between 30 and 50 | 3 | |
| Reason for presence in Basra | 3 | Business |

7.3 Group Interviews

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Number of group interviews | 13 |
| Number of respondents | 37 |
| Teachers | |
| 1 | 2 male teachers from Basra |
| 2 | 2 colleagues (school principal and teacher), male and female, from Basra |
| 3 | 3 female elementary school teachers from Basra |
| 4 | 3 female high school teachers from Basra |
| University students | |
| 5 | 3 female university students from University of Basra, Department of History, College of Arts |
| 6 | 3 male university students from University of Basra, Department of History, College of Arts |
| Private visitors and tourists | |
| 7 | 3 female relatives from Basra (mixed ages) |
| 8 | 3 female friends from Basra (mixed ages) |
| 9 | 3 female friends from Basra (20 to 30) |
| 10 | 2 male friends from Basra and Kirkuk (20 to 50) |
| 11 | 2 male colleagues from Basra and Mosul (30 to 50) |
| 12 | 2 persons (a married couple) on tourist visit from Sulaymaniya (30 to 50) |
| 13 | 3 male and 3 female tourists from Thailand (30 to over 50) |

7.4 Number of Visits to the Museum & Reasons for Visiting

Q. Is this your first visit? If not, how many times have you visited before?

Q. Can you explain why you are visiting the Basrah Museum? Open-ended question

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| First visit | 50 | Including all 25 non-Iraqis and all Iraqis from outside Basra |
| Return visit | 16 | Including tour-guide, half of the teachers (one of them 10 times), and some private visitors (among which 5 had visited up to 5 times) |
| Main reasons for visiting | <p><u>Teachers</u>: Leading or preparing school trips</p> <p><u>University students</u>: Student trip</p> <p><u>Iraqis on private visit</u>:</p> <p>-Overwhelming majority: curious about history/archaeology/heritage/civilisation of Basra and/or Iraq</p> <p>-A minority: recreation or entertainment</p> <p>-Groups: several cases where one person in group had visited before</p> <p><u>Tourists</u> (Iraqis not from Basra and non-Iraqis). Equal number of mentions:</p> <p>-Interest in history or heritage</p> <p>-As tourist attraction in Basra</p> <p>-Taken to Museum by Basrawi friend/colleague</p> <p>-Visit on travel agency programme (Thai group and couple from Sulaymaniya)</p> | <p>-Female from Baghdad: I am curious about Basra sight-seeing.</p> <p>-Male from Baghdad: For entertainment and to know more about Iraq's civilisation.</p> <p>-Male from Samawa: I am curious and interested in studying history and archaeology.</p> <p>-Iraqi male living in Iran: I am interested in visiting Museums and comparing them.</p> <p>-Male from Afghanistan: I am interested to know about Basra ancient civilisations.</p> <p>-Male from Pakistan: I want to know more about Iraq's history.</p> <p>-Male from the US: I am interested as a tourist, and I want to know more about Basra history.</p> <p>-3 female friends from Basra: curious about civilization and historical sight-seeing, led by one of them who had already come twice.</p> <p>-2 male friends, one from Basra, one from Kirkuk: visiting for tourism purpose, not first visit for Basrawi who had come 5 times before.</p> <p>-2 male colleagues one from Basra, one from Mosul: we are interested in knowing about history and the origins of Iraqis, and the old way of living. Not first visit for the one living in Basra who came 3 times.</p> |
| Other reasons | <p>- 1 guide in a travel agency leading the Thai group</p> <p>- 1 on a media assignment</p> <p>-1 specifically "to see the objects exhibited"</p> <p>-1 by chance</p> | <p>-Male from Basra (20-30): I am a tour guide in a tourism company, this is not my first visit.</p> <p>-Male from Basra: We are a media agency (Mosul Eye), and we are shooting a documentary programme on Museums.</p> |

7.5 Sources of Information

Q. How did you learn about the Museum? Multiple choice question with several possible answers. Only the tour guide opted for 2.

| Individual Respondents | | | |
|------------------------|---|----|--|
| 1 | Through social connections (friends, family, colleagues, etc.) | 22 | Including Afghan and Pakistani visitors |
| 2 | Through the social media | 6 | Tour guide, male from Samawa, female from Nasiriyah, female from Basra (20-30), Iraqi male living in Iran, US visitor (Google Maps search) |
| 3 | As a participant in previous cultural activities organised in/by the Museum | 2 | Two females including one over 50 with an interest in history |
| 4 | Through information disseminated by the Museum | 1 | Tour guide |

Group Interviews

Teachers

- 1 Through colleagues having organised school trips to Museum
- 2 Through participating in activities organised in (by?) the Museum (One teacher attended a play and a cinema event at the Museum)

University students

- 1 Through university activities
- 2 Through social connections: people having heard about or already visited the Museum
- 3 On social media

Private visitors and tourists

- 1 Through social connections (in several cases, one member of the group had made previous visit, at times several, such as the male friends and colleagues, one from Basra, the others from Mosul and Kirkuk)
- 2 Social media (3 female friends from Basra of mixed ages)
- 3 A combination of 1 and 2
- 4 Programme of travel agency (couple from Sulaymaniyah and Thai tour group)

7.6 Accessibility

Q. Do you find the Museum easy to access?

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| No | 36 |
| OK, but could be improved | 12 |
| Yes | 19 |

Main obstacles identified (multiple answers possible)

- 1 Militia check point at presidential palace/Lakeside complex gate 26
 - Including most non-Iraqi visitors.
 - Male from Afghanistan: The road from the gate of the complex to the Museum is too far. I didn't like the blockage outside.
 - Male US citizen: The road leading to the Museum is not organised and the check point at the main gate of the complex took my passport and gave it back to me after I left the complex.

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| 2 | Absence of public transportation means / distance of Museum from city centre | 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mostly respondents not from Basra. -Male from Basra: There are no transportation means to the Museum. The Museum should provide transportation from a collection point in the city centre to the Museum building. -Male from Samawa: There should be transportation means, as there is a blockage across the way to the Museum. -Female from Nasiriya: It's better to have transportation means to the Museum. -Female from Wasit: It's a long road to the Museum and there is no public transportation available to get you there. |
| 3 | Poor condition of the road leading to the Museum | 5 | Mentions of "unpaved road", or "road needing improvement". Several other respondents recognised that despite road and infrastructure needing improvement, this does not prevent them from coming. |
| 4 | Poor road signs to Museum | 3 | Mentions of poor signage to Museum |
| 5 | Poor listing on Google Maps | 1 | Pakistani male: It was hard to get here, I couldn't find the Museum on Google Maps in English. |

7.7 Opening Hours

Q. Do you find opening days and hours suitable?

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| No | 62 | |
| Yes | 5 | US tourist and 4 teachers interviewed as part of groups |

Q. Can you rank your preferences?

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Fridays, Saturdays, and holidays | 1 |
| Evenings | 2 |
| Afternoons | 3 |

7.8 Ticket Prices

Non-Iraqi visitors

How do you find the price of the entry ticket?

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Expensive | Afghan and Pakistani visitors and Thai group |
| Adequate | US visitor |

Iraqi visitors

The question was not part of the questionnaire and hence opinions were not systematically collected. However, 3 teachers and a group of 2 individual visitors from Basra volunteered their views on the matter, saying that **price should not be above 2000 ID.**

7.9 Suitability of Building as a Museum

Q. Do you find the building suitable as a Museum?

| | | |
|-------------|----|---|
| No | 2 | <p>-“It’s a poor building”: Male from Basra (30-50) who also disliked everything about the collection and display.</p> <p>-“Galleries are too small” : Male from Basra living in Iran who stated as a reason for visiting “I am interested in visiting Museums and comparing them”, and who rated objects and historical/geographic coverage as medium, and display and information as poor.</p> |
| Yes | 67 | <p><u>Individual respondents:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The building is big and the galleries are suitable to exhibit the objects of the history of Iraq. -It’s a big building and has a history. -It’s big building and the galleries have the space to exhibit the objects of Iraq. -The building has a classic architectural design. -Man from Samawa: The building has a historical identity. It also has a good spot on Shatt al-Arab. -US citizen: For the history of the building and the professionalism of construction in its details. -Female from Basra: The architectural value of the building is great. <p><u>Teachers in groups:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The building has an architectural value. - The building is special in its design and location. <p><u>University students:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The building is suitable because of its history. <p><u>Group of Iraqi visitors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The building is connected to the Natural History Museum and its size is suitable. <p><u>Thai tourists:</u></p> <p>Unanimously found the building suitable as a Museum: good size, good location, beautiful building with an interesting history (note that they had a guide with them)</p> |
| Yes, but... | 18 | <p>- Several respondents thought the Museum and/or the galleries should be bigger.</p> <p>-The building is good, but the surroundings of the Museum are bad (3 female friends from Basra).</p> <p>-The building is suitable, but space could be used better (3 female high school teachers).</p> <p>-The building is suitable as a Museum, but it has so much decoration and ornamentation that they cause distraction from the objects (2 male friends from Basra and Kirkuk).</p> <p>- I would prefer a bigger building and bigger galleries suitable to exhibit Iraq’s history of civilisations (Afghan male)</p> <p>- The Museum is not clean inside (female from Basra)</p> <p>-Toilets are not located in a suitable place (female from Basra)</p> |

Yes

Main reasons for appreciation:

-History of building

-Architectural style

-Size of building and galleries

-Location

Yes, but...

Among the 67 respondents who were positive about the suitability of the building, a good number also expressed reservations

7.10 Quality of Collections and Display, and of Information about Objects

Q. What is your opinion about:

| | Good | Medium | Poor |
|---|------|--------|------|
| The quality and diversity of objects exhibited | 45 | 23 | 1 |
| The periods covered by the collections | 35 | 33 | 1 |
| The geographical areas covered by the collections | 39 | 29 | 1 |
| The quality of the display: showcases, lighting, and design of exhibition halls | 38 | 27 | 4 |
| The information given about the objects: signage, labelling, and information panels | 18 | 38 | 13 |

7.11 Activities and Communication

Q. Have you participated in event organised by the Museum?

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|---|
| Yes | 3 | -One female from Basra attended a tourist event about Basra organised by "Wain" tourist team. -Another female from Basra attended a cultural and writing event organised by the Goethe institute. -One female teacher attended a play and a cinema event. |
| No | 61 | |
| No answer | 5 | |

Q. Do you think the Museum and its activities have enough visibility online and on the social media?

| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| Yes | 3 |
| No | 60 |
| No answer | 6 |

7.12 Other Cultural Attractions Visited in Basra

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|--|
| Natural History Museum | 37 | Also situated inside Presidential/Lakeside complex and often visited as part of same outing ⁶ |
| Al-Hassoun Museum | 41 | In Al-Ashar, Basra Old City, private Ottoman house decorated with everyday 20 th objects, crafts and local arts, also serving as café and restaurant, and cultural centre, popular with younger visitors ⁷ |
| Presidential Yacht | 35 | On the Shatt Al-Arab Corniche, entrusted to Marine Science Center of Basrah University, with good visibility online in Arabic and English |
| Al-Sayab House | 19 | Family home of Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab, prominent 20 th century Iraqi poet, located in Jaikur, about 20km south of Basra City. ⁸ |

⁶ Arabic Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/people/-رئاسة-جامعة-البصرة-متحف-التاريخ-100088812605194/?paipv=0&eav=AfaYI0c-ZBh18-P7fP9dJewcw--0QxBY1OGzYfuEL63OiPqGbEP9j5lwdGiTgIJPQPs&_rdr

⁷ See: https://www.instagram.com/muthaf_alhasun/?hl=fr

⁸ In Arabic, see: https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/منزل_بدر_شاكِر_السياب

Translated with Google: https://ar-m-wikipedia-org.translate.goog/wiki/منزل_بدر_شاكِر_السياب?_x_tr_sl=ar&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=fr&_x_tr_pto=wapp

7.13 Main Suggestions for Improvement

Q. Do you have suggestion to convince more people to visit the Museum?

1. Access

- Remove the check point at the complex entrance gate.
- Coordinate with the checkpoint.
- Provide transportation from Basra city centre to the Museum.
- Complete paving of the street between the complex entrance and the Museum.
- Provide signage to the Museum from main access roads.
- Improve listing of the Museum on Google Maps.
- Open more gates to the building to facilitate visitors' circulation.
- Open on weekends (Fridays, Saturdays), holidays, and evenings.
- Keep entry tickets cheaper for Iraqis, up to 2000 ID.
- Make entry tickets cheaper for non-Iraqis.

2. Information about the Museum

- Improve the visibility of the Museum on social media.
- Ensure better media coverage of the Museum.
- Market the Museum better with travel agencies and businesses in Basra, including oil companies.
- Provide printed brochures with information and images about the collections, or a guidebook on the Museum.

3. Display and presentation of exhibitions

- Improve readability of object labelling in Arabic: stickers on showcases are too high and see through, and proper labels in Arabic next to objects would be better.
- Improve the level of information about objects: not only on dates and provenances, but also on their uses, and possibly their names in ancient languages.
- Improve lighting in the showcases and galleries.
- Improve security of showcases by adding "Do not touch" signs (Iraqi from Iran).
- Display historical maps of the sites where the exhibited objects were found (US tourist).
- Have trained guides with suitable academic background to explain about the exhibition (students, Iraqis private visitors).
- Include both prehistory (Iraqi from Iran) and modern history of Iraq (students).

4. Activities

- Hold educational events and activities about heritage and archaeology for all ages, and in collaboration with specialised organisations.
- Have more theatrical performances, educational seminars, children's workshops (teachers).
- The Museum team should reach out to activity units at schools to organise school trips to the Museum (teachers).
- Hold seminars and conferences about history and heritage in collaboration with universities (students and private visitors).
- Organise art exhibitions and bazars in coordination with university students (students and private visitors).
- Organise activities in coordination with the media (Mosul Eye media professional)

5. Other

- Have more employees (in addition to guides).
- Collaborate with individuals and organisations from outside of Iraq for their expertise to develop the Museum (female individual visitor from Basra).