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مركز المنصة للتنمية المستدامة  
Platform Center for Sustainable Development



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Policy Briefs

# Reducing Government Spending through E- Governance

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## A brief overview of the Iraq Policy Program

The Iraq Policy Program aims to bridge the gap between youth elites and decision-makers by training young elites to effect positive change through influencing the decision-making process. The program aims to empower participants to prepare policy papers and propose policy alternatives aimed at enhancing system performance and supporting its legitimacy. This program enables participants to communicate with decision-makers and understand the main difficulties and problems affecting the implementation and follow-up of public policies. Additionally, the program seeks to provide participants with a realistic understanding of the decision-making environment in Iraq, as well as an understanding of the opportunities and challenges of change.

## The program stages

**Preparation:** Assisting participants in acquiring the fundamental skills to prepare policy papers and effective advocacy campaigns. **Discovery:** Clarifying important public policies in Iraq by experts through stakeholder engagement, frameworks and institutional procedures, practical realities, and discussions surrounding each public policy, as well as reform prospects. **Engagement:** Training participants to develop promotional campaigns and coordinate meetings with government officials to initiate their campaigns. **Enrichment:** Supervising participants to prepare a policy paper in their area of interest to enrich dialogues, develop policy alternatives, which can help address current challenges.

## About the Center

The Platform for Sustainable Development is a registered center with the Non-Governmental Organizations Department at the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers under the number (1S2106012). It serves as a space for thought, dialogue, and action towards positive change.

## Vision

We seek to establish a platform for dialogue and policies that contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Iraq.

## Mission

Filling the gap between the state and society to ensure the essence of democracy by engaging citizens in the decision-making process through training, monitoring, analysis, research, awareness, and advocacy.

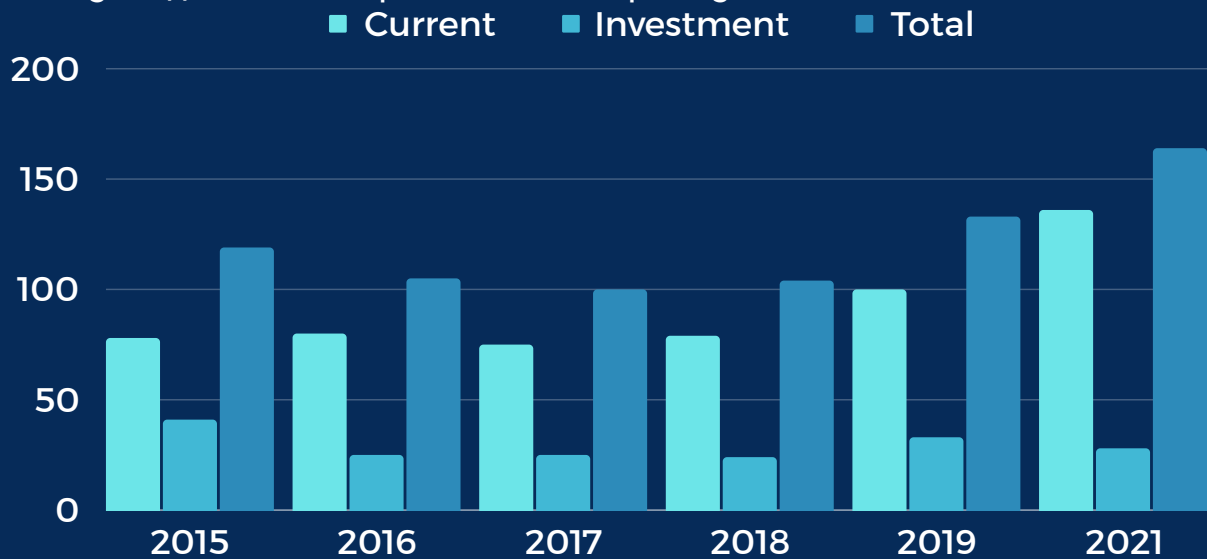
## Strategic Goals

- Preparing a youth elite that rises to its social responsibilities through studying problems, proposing policy alternatives, and working towards their implementation.
- Utilizing knowledge outputs and encouraging youth to work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
- Presenting statistics and issues that occupy the political arenas and societal circles to reflect a deeper understanding of the Iraqi reality.
- Creating a network of active, informed, and committed citizens dedicated to the project of building the Iraqi government.



Iraq is one of the countries that have yet to free themselves from the shackles of paper-based bureaucracy. Institutions in Iraq are still managed using traditional methods involving physical paperwork, handwritten signatures, and manual processes, which consume significant effort, time, and resources. The estimated expenditure on material supplies for government institutions in the 2023 budget is over 12 trillion dinars, which includes paper, ink, printing, stationery, and more. The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is essential to improve and enhance the pillars of good governance, where citizens are at the center of the vision for digital transformation.

Figure (1) Details of Expenditures in Iraqi Budgets for the Years 2015-2021



Operational spending by government institutions accounts for more than two-thirds of Iraq's budget. These funds are primarily allocated to salaries, goods, and services, reflecting a structural imbalance in the Iraqi economy due to the unequal distribution of wealth across sectors that ensure expenditure sustainability and rationality. One of the globally adopted strategies to reduce expenditure is the automation of government services, transforming them from traditional to electronic forms.



Figure (2) Details of Revenues in Iraqi Budgets for the Years 2015-2021

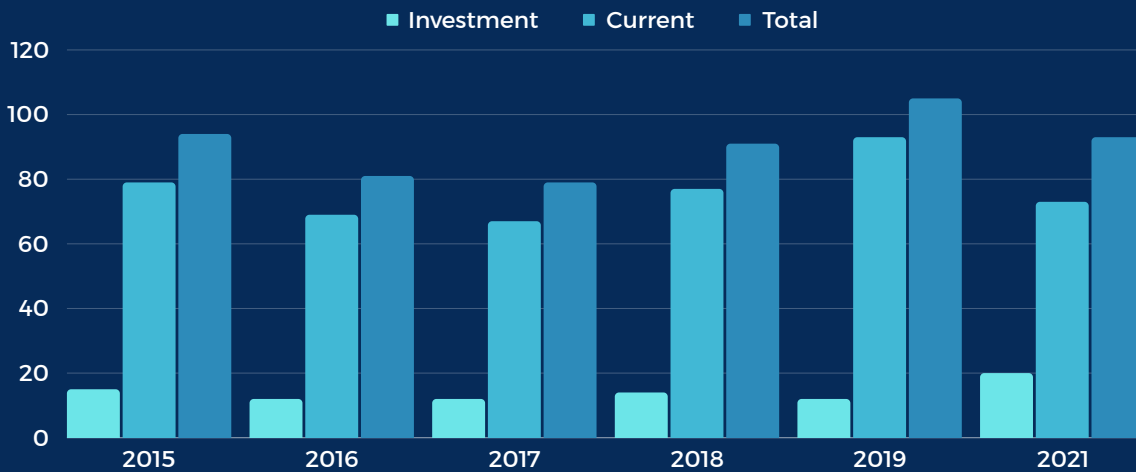
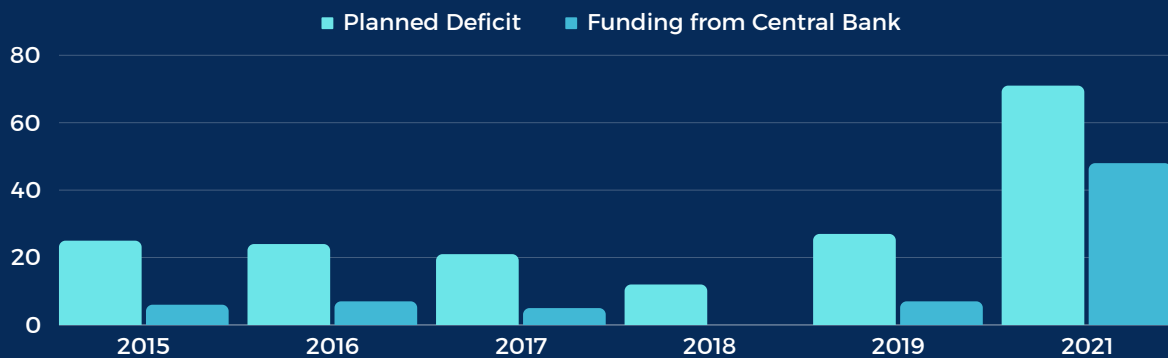


Figure (3) Details of Deficit and Financing Amount in Iraqi Budgets for the Years 2015-2021



If we examine the price cycle of global oil markets after 2003, we can observe a significant increase in public spending. Public expenditures rose from four trillion dinars in 2003 to nearly 164 trillion dinars by the end of 2021, indicating a forty-one fold increase. Due to the lack of investment and development efforts by successive governments, the contribution of non-oil revenues decreased as oil revenues increased. This left the economy and budget exposed to continuous fluctuations in oil prices. Consequently, oil price shocks exacerbated economic fractures to the extent that the government was unable to present general budgets in years of oil price collapses, such as in 2014 and 2020, due to the government's inability to mobilize the necessary financial resources to compensate for the decline in oil revenues and finance essential public expenditures.



The White Paper adopted by the government in 2021 set several objectives, including reducing the total wage bill by half over three years. However, this goal is extremely challenging due to the Iraqi people's reliance on and expectation of these salaries. The application of e-governance, whether partial or comprehensive, can address these issues. Many countries that have adopted e-governance, such as the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Jordan, have successfully improved employee productivity by electronically monitoring their daily performance, fairly distributing workloads, reducing effort, and allowing citizens to complete tasks conveniently from a single location, whether at the office or home. By adopting e-governance, the consumption of paper and other material supplies can be reduced significantly, and the services provided to citizens can be improved. It is imperative for responsible authorities to implement electronic networking within government departments, utilize official email for

all institutions, recognize electronically transmitted documents as official, and handle document transfers electronically within the same organization. This eliminates the need to physically transport mail between ministries and institutions, saving time, reducing costs, and making it easier for citizens to complete their transactions. Some might argue against the use of e-governance due to concerns about internet connectivity issues, security threats, data breaches, loss of privacy, and data manipulation. However, these challenges can be mitigated by using more secure alternative networks such as Ethernet or private networks. Established global companies specializing in these modern technologies provide high-quality applications that offer guarantees against any breaches of data security. These networks provide robust cybersecurity measures. The implementation of e-governance in its various forms will reduce the consumption of material supplies significantly



and improve the services provided to citizens. Therefore, it is essential for responsible authorities to embrace electronic networking, as it will help optimize government spending while enhancing the overall efficiency of government institutions.

## References:

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- Iraq’s Vision for Digital Transformation Programs through workshops held by the Ministry of Science and Technology and other ministries to apply the UN program in this field, where I participated as an international expert in e-governance from the UN.

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