



Iraq's Climate Investment Pathways (2025-2030): A Strategic Policy Agenda

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Executive Summary

Iraq has severe climate and economic threats: rising temperatures, recurring droughts, and water shortages are already threatening livelihoods and food security. Its petroleum-based economy is very vulnerable to external shocks, with little scale to cover climate-related costs. The 2025-2030 Pathways for Climate Investment Plan (CIP) provides a roadmap for a just transition; its vision is to facilitate a smooth transition to low-carbon energies while diversifying its economy stepwise in a climate-resilient society. To achieve this vision, Iraq must initiate extensive governance reforms and strategic planning, enhance institutional capacity, accelerate the transition to energy, and address regional partners. Recommendations underline the integration of climate considerations into fiscal policy, enhancing public institutions and climate units, enhancing the oil and gas sector, expanding renewable energy and water-saving agriculture, and mobilizing domestic and international financial resources phase by phase. The policy framework promotes inclusive stakeholder engagement, encompassing government, private sector, civil society, and communities to assure fair and open implementation. This paper presents the rationale, strategic priorities, and a phased implementation plan that aligns with VFSS objectives of good governance and sustainability. The conclusion emphasises the necessity for Iraqi leaders and international partners to collaborate on a green investment agenda to ensure a stable and prosperous future.

Climate Vulnerability and Economic Risks

Iraq is extremely climate-vulnerable. Its geography and changing climate combine to amplify risks: summers routinely exceed 50°C, droughts lengthen, and sand-and-dust storms intensify, "jeopardising water and food security" (World Bank, 2023). A 2024 review reports: "Iraq is extremely vulnerable to climate change, with temperature increases, recurrent droughts, water scarcity, and sand and dust storms (SDS)", which can trigger food and water insecurity, displacement, and even regional instability (IMF, 2024). International indicators concur on this urgency: Iraq ranks 88th of 187 countries in climate vulnerability, with very low preparedness for adaptation. Agriculture, water, health, and infrastructure are under pressure from reduced river flows, salinised soil, and aging infrastructure (FAO, 2018). For example, over 40% of the nation's water supply relies on flows from Turkey, Iran, and Syria, which leaves Iraq highly sensitive to upstream policy on top of climatic trends.

At the same time, economic fragility compounds Iraq's challenge. The economy is heavily reliant on oil and gas (54% of GDP) and narrowly diversified (IMF, 2024). According to the CIP, "the country's economy is highly vulnerable to external market fluctuations, while the current fiscal space is limited" (Government of Iraq, 2025). Low oil prices, debt pressures, and social demands strain public budgets. As CIP observes, financing a large energy transition will entail high upfront costs that must be matched with a stepwise diversification of the economy to avoid social harm (Government of Iraq, 2025). At the same time, non-oil sectors (such as agriculture) are under-invested and less profitable, making Iraq vulnerable to international price shocks and food insecurity (Vision Foundation for Strategic Studies, 2024). The joint effect of climate and economic shocks is worsening vulnerabilities among communities, especially low-income communities and displaced persons.

In general, Iraq's climatic hazard profile (extreme heat, flooding, water scarcity) and economic exposure (oil dependence, narrow "scale margins") reinforce each other. This complementarity points to the need for a simultaneous policy countermeasure: one that raises resilience to environmental shocks and adjusts the economy to sustainable levels.

Governance and Institutional Reform

Strong institutions and good governance are at the heart of Iraq's climate agenda. The CIP stresses the need to "strengthen its institutional framework in order to deal effectively with climate change" (Government of Iraq, 2025). This includes setting up Climate desks within main ministries (Environment, Oil, Water, etc.), coordination and establishment of clarity of role and responsibility among federal and regional governments, and mainstreaming of climate into planning institutions. On the ground, Iraq must establish climate desks for all sectoral ministries (already established by the Environment Ministry) and license a cross-ministry climate council to coordinate. Institutional capacity, from data collection to project management, must be built. As emphasized by CIP, "Capacity building is essential, with initiatives to train government representatives, stakeholders and communities on climate change mitigation and adaptation measures" (Government of Iraq, 2025). Technical training workshops, international expert knowledge transfers, and proactive efforts to bridge gaps (e.g., mobilization of meteorological sensors, completion of GHG inventories) are all suggested in this recommendation.

The post-conflict context in Iraq lends an additional degree of urgency to governance reforms. Recent news highlights how donors are funneling billions into governance and debt relief to stabilize the economy. The CIP statistics (reflecting the UN and IFI planning) show that USD 15.2 billion of recent aid was intended to go to "strengthened governance, improved public services, and greater civil society engagement. This breakdown highlights international expectations that climate investment needs to be aligned with anti-corruption drives, legal reform, and active engagement by parliament and civil society. Iraq should therefore speed up public financial management reform, including e-governance and audit systems, to ensure tracking and value delivery of green investment. Hand in hand, rule-of-law reform (on environmental regulation, land use, and resource rights) will build confidence and mobilize private capital.

Key recommendations

1. Formally establish and fund a National Climate Council or its equivalent, chaired at the senior ministerial level, to coordinate CIP implementation across ministries.
2. Create a network of climate "focal points" in each key ministry, with clear mandates and resources (mainstreamed into Vision 2030 planning processes).
3. Develop transparency measures, such as open climate budgets and project outcomes, to establish trust and accountability.
4. Work with international partners to build civil service capacity (e.g., secondments, agency twinning, and technical assistance projects).

Together, these reforms will help translate climate ambitions into action, improving governance in line with VFSS goals of stability and citizen participation.

Strategic Planning and Policy Integration

To avoid ad-hoc choices, climate investments must be embedded in Iraq's overall development policy. The CIP encourages the integration of climate into fiscal and planning frameworks. Recommendation 1.1 directly demands the integration of climate actions into fiscal policies. This means that, beginning from 2025, all budget lines and public investment projects must be climate-screened. For example, power and road projects must be tested for emissions and climate vulnerability. The government should have a Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) with climate indicators, as the 2023 Climate Public Expenditure & Institutional Review of Iraq appeals (UNDP Iraq, 2023).

Iraq is in the process of revising its National Development Plan (2024-28) and preparing an update to Vision 2030; these must incorporate CIP goals into SDG goals in a balanced package. CIP's hope is to be aligned with Iraq's overall national development agenda, the SDGs, and other national policies with inclusive and sustainable growth priorities (Government of Iraq, 2025). Action entails connecting sectoral plans (energy, water, agriculture) to CIP priorities. For instance, the future master plan for electricity needs to have a 24-hour renewable energy roadmap by 2030, in line with CIP's adaptation and mitigation emphasis. Similarly, the water management plan needs to incorporate climate scenarios of 30-50% reduced flows (as predicted) and direct the measures correspondingly.

And oversight. CIP Recommendation 1.2 requires a systematic M&E cycle: "Monitor and evaluate the CIP every five years." Iraq needs to institutionalize that process by requiring annual climate progress reports from Parliament and the public. It could establish an independent Climate Commission (or use the Parliament's Environment Committee) to take these reports into account, to hold individuals to account. Secondly, all new legislation (for example, investment, land use, or industry) must be screened for climate implications. Integrating climate into planning at all levels ensures that reforms are strategic rather than reactive, responding to the challenge of evidence-based, inclusive policymaking by VFSS.

Energy Transition and Green Investment

The energy sector is the backbone of the Iraqi economy and the forefront for a low-carbon transition. The CIP emphasizes that an "equitable and ethical energy transition" depends on modernizing current industries; oil, gas, and heavy industries must be more energy efficient and low carbon.

Specifically, Iraq has to prioritize the following:

- a) Maintain and upgrade power stations and refineries to reduce emissions and flaring.
- b) Financing renewables, and especially solar energy and wind power, to substitute diesel generators and aging turbines increasingly.
- c) Putting transport electric, with the support of regulations and incentives to wean off oil.
- d) Installation of methane capture and efficiency projects on oil and gas fields (aligned with the CIP's funding stream for methane reduction).

Transportation electrification is mapped out in the CIP project pipeline (Annex V) of specific grid reinforcements, solar parks, and gas exploitation projects during 2025-2030.

Consistent policy signals, i.e., creating feed-in tariffs or auctions for wind/solar or tax or pricing policy reform to take renewables to parity, are needed for such investments. Building and industrial energy efficiency (through codes and finance) will also decrease demand. The plan states that "renewable energy deployment can enhance energy security, create jobs, and mitigate climate risks" (Government of Iraq, 2025). Indeed, with Iraq having "rich renewable energy potential, particularly in solar and wind" (IRENA, 2019), these markets must be targeted by both private investors and public green funds.

The private sector can also play a significant role here. The CIP requests mobilization of private climate finance (via blended finance, concessional lending, and PPPs). To initiate this, the government needs to streamline permitting for clean energy projects and consider partial risk guarantees. The banking sector can be encouraged (and regulated) to establish green lending facilities. The Vision Foundation recommends establishing a national green investment bank or climate fund (as per CIP Recommendation 4.2) to finance renewable energy and efficiency initiatives with public and private finance. In order to make clean energy investments "bankable," Iraq utilizes savings among its youth and diaspora, turning climate risk into a financial opportunity.

Priority measures: Prioritize and speed up the most important clean energy projects (e.g., large solar in desert areas, pilot wind farms in Kurdistan, and grid modernization). Put in place an attractive feed-in tariff or auctioning mechanism by 2026. Reform SOEs like the Ministry of Electricity with performance-based incentives for renewables. Engage industry players (cement and steel) in modernizing factories (co-finance modernization). All these align with CIP's financing channels and VFSS's priority on energy and economic development.

Water, Agriculture, and Natural Resource Resilience

Water scarcity and land degradation pose a risk to food security and livelihood in Iraq. Adaptation in water management and agriculture, two of the most sensitive sectors in the country, is prioritized under the CIP. Short-term measures include rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure (to arrest 70% losses in canals), expansion of rainwater harvesting, and use of treated wastewater. The plan talks of investment in drought-resistant crops and modern irrigation systems to enhance yields. Land reforestation and restoration programs can check desertification and enhance the regional climate.

As Iraq's water also depends on regional cooperation, the policy agenda must stretch beyond borders. The CIP reports highlight that "water resources in Iraq are dominated by imports from upstream neighbouring countries," making Iraq "vulnerable to climate change" and "allocation policies beyond national control." Iraq must therefore immediately reopen diplomatic avenues to renegotiate transboundary water agreements (e.g., the Tigris-Euphrates protocols with Turkey, Iran, and Syria). The CIP suggests forging "international agreements on water sharing" and investing in unconventional sources like desalination or recycled water.

A desalination plant or joint Iraqi-Turkish reservoir project financed by a Gulf grant, for example, would be a game-changer. We need to have agricultural policy changes to encourage water efficiency: we need to subsidize drip irrigation, encourage high-yielding varieties, and help farmers transition from water-guzzling crops. Strengthening agricultural extension services (maybe through a climate-resilient agriculture program) will help farmers adopt new practices. Not only do these steps build resilience, but they also open up economic opportunities: CIP notes that water and agriculture sectors, made climate-resilient, can "generate revenue" while ensuring food security.

Regional Collaboration

Water is just one potential area, but broader environmental cooperation can also be rewarded. For instance, cooperative forest management or transboundary renewable energy grid projects with neighbors could be conceived at a regional climate conference. Partnering with organizations like the Arab Water Council or transboundary wetland protection (for Mesopotamian Marshes) can offer technical and funding support access. The scope of the plan and the regional perspective of the VFSS both align to facilitate such cooperation, acknowledging climate resilience as a shared interest throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

Financing and Private Sector mobilisation

The application of the CIP entails enormous new funding. Iraq has to draw on all sources: public expenditure, private finance, international climate funds, and new financial instruments. The CIP model suggests various "funding streams" (R&D, adaptation, joint projects, renewables, methane capture) to organize investment. But to make these streams work, Iraq has to reform its financial framework.

In the first instance, public budgets need to be reprioritized. With limited fiscal space, directing subsidies (e.g., electricity or gasoline) to green initiatives can utilize domestic resources. The government needs to direct the Ministry of Finance to set up a system of marking climate budgets such that all plans account for climate expenditures. A specific action (Rec 1.1) is to dedicate a percentage of the national budget to CIP priority areas.

Secondly, domestic financial institutions must be part of the solution. The CIP recommends constituting a working group with the financial sector, e.g., banks, pension funds, and insurance. This multi-stakeholder forum – co-chaired by central bank and MoEnv representatives – would identify regulatory and capacity impediments to green finance and propose responses (e.g., easing collateral requirements for renewable schemes). International partners can also help by providing lines of credit or currency hedging facilities for climate projects.

Third, international climate finance must be accessed aggressively. Iraq must accelerate accreditation to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other multilateral funding sources so that it can access funding directly for projects. It must also incentivize donors to connect with CIP goals: e.g., directing their water/sewer or energy grants to projects prioritized in the CIP pipeline. CIP data show that contrary to assurances, disbursement in Iraq lagged (53.6% climate finance uptake vs. 83% world average). Raising this uptake percentage is essential: it means strengthening project development capacity and reducing red tape.

Private sector engagement is vital

The Vision Foundation demands a straightforward orientation for business: clarify investment rules for renewables (e.g., conclude tariff contracts and rent land), and issue guarantees or co-financing for green investments. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) in infrastructure (solar parks, water treatment, public transport) can crowd in private finance. Donors and the World Bank/IFC need to develop blended finance structures that render climate initiatives bankable by sharing risk. CIP's emphasis on "public-private partnerships, climate funds, and green bonds" is aligned with these strategies.

Key financing steps

1. Leverage domestic revenues (e.g., oil revenues or savings) as seed capital.
2. Consider a National Climate Fund (potentially under MoEn or a new authority) to pool international grants/loans and channel them to approved projects.
3. Tap private finance via policy incentives and credit lines.
4. Require climate finance. Disclosure requires that all major industrial and financial firms report climate risk, which encourages the market to appropriately price these risks.

By mobilising both public and private finance, Iraq can close the gap between plans and projects, in line with CIP recommendations and VFSS's energy-economy priorities

Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement

Government and Parliament: The implementation of CIP would be jointly overseen by the environment, oil, water, agriculture, finance, and planning ministries in an interministerial council. We need to regularly brief Parliament's appropriate committees (Environment, Economy, Finance) to obtain legislative cover, e.g., approving climate budgets or new law..

Private Sector: Industry associations and SOEs must be at the table. Let us include agribusiness and large energy companies in adding the working group with banks (Rec 3.1). Their task: co-design investment roadmaps, provide progress reports, and invest in green technology. Private actors, from manufacturers to farmers, need to identify climate solutions as business opportunities (energy efficiency, new products), not just compliance.

Civil Society and NGOs: The CIP recognizes Iraq's "vibrant civil society and NGOs" as key advocates for sustainable policy. NGOs can aid in monitoring project impacts, shaping public opinion, and gaining social inclusion (women, youth, and the displaced). The plan should incorporate NGO-led community initiatives (e.g., reforestation programs, watershed committees) and civil society participation in local climate councils. VFSS's vision emphasizes the role of citizen engagement; therefore, public town halls or forums on climate-related matters will foster trust and legitimacy.

Academia and Research: Universities and think tanks (e.g., the Vision Foundation) should be kept occupied with independent analysis, building capacity, and innovation. The CIP's analytical chapters and Annex IV, the list of institutes, define this function clearly. Iraq might have a Climate Research Fund to support domestic studies, from mapping solar potential to social vulnerability. It will improve project design and ensure best practice to bring in experts early.

Local Communities: Together with social aspects, grassroots action is required. For example, village adaptation programs (by village councils) can prioritize the most urgent needs (heat shelter, water harvesting) and co-finance them. Impoverished regions such as Nineveh and Basra, and internally displaced persons who are more vulnerable to climate change, must be targeted with priority. Social-responsive priorities (such as CIP defined in Annex V) will guarantee that wide support is established.

By establishing a model of participatory governance through regular meetings with stakeholders, open book reporting, and grievance procedures, Iraq will enable multiple voices to inform and benefit from the green transformation. This is in line with VFSS's emphasis on good governance and inclusive debate.

Implementation Roadmap (2025-2030)

Based on CIP's phased process, we offer an implementation timeline with high-priority actions:

Phase I (2025-2026): institutionalisation and Early Actions

Establish governance structures: Please begin establishing the National Climate Council and climate focal points in various ministries, for instance, Energy and Water.

Fiscal integration: Incorporate CIP projects into 2025/26 budgets; make new investments, climate impact assessment-subject.

Capacity-building: Initiate training programs for officials and technicians; upgrade the climate research laboratory in the Ministry of Environment.

Policy signals: Authorize regulations to ease renewables (permit fast-tracking) and take out a small pilot "green bond" issue for a solar program.

Stakeholder outreach: Set up the government-private working group (as per Rec 3.1) and stage the first multi-stakeholder climate forum (with NGOs and youth organizations).

Phase II (2027-2028): Scaling Up Investments

Deploy large projects: launch medium-sized projects (e.g., 100 MW solar park, enhanced irrigation system, methane capture facility) from CIP pipeline.

Financial reforms: Advance climate budget tagging; consider reallocation to climate (e.g., redirect portion of energy subsidies).

Monitoring systems: Establish a national climate M&E system (as per Rec 2.2) connecting CIP to NDC targets; publish a mid-term progress report.

Strengthen institutions: expand working group to have subcommittees on finance and technology and institutionalize advisory committees of NGOs.

Regional cooperation: initiate or conclude negotiations with water sharing arrangements and accede to regional climate adaptation programs (with the UN or neighbors).

Phase III (2029-2030): Consolidation and Review

Large transition projects: Complete the first cycle of large renewables (i.e., 500 MW wind farm in Erbil) and refurbished dams.

National Climate Fund: Create a public fund or appoint a trust for climate projects (from local and foreign capital).

Policy review: Conduct a complete review of the CIP (as proposed every five years) and update the plan based on performance.

Inclusive growth: Enable communities to prosper together (e.g., green industry work-force training). Begin Phase II (2030–2050) planning with lessons learned.

Each phase has multi-stakeholder engagement and feedback loops. Significant to mention is that phases overlap; e.g., Phase I reforms (like fiscal consolidation) lay the ground for follow-on investment up-scaling. The Vision Foundation focuses on strategic, evidence-led planning means Iraq should engage in the process as an adaptive management cycle: pilot, learn, adapt, and upscale success. Government hierarchy and ministry coordination, underpinned only by transparent accountability, will realize the roadmap's success. Coordination..

Conclusion and Call to Action

Iraq is at a crossroads. Decisions made today will lead the nation to prosperity or more suffering through global warming. The 2025-2030 Pathways for Climate Investment Plan offers a path that aligns with global climate goals and national development aspirations. All the stakeholders, from the Prime Minister's office to community members, and from foreign donors to private sector investors, will have to commit themselves to this reform program outlined above.

We call on Iraqi leadership to endorse the CIP as a national priority, speeding up the reforms and investments detailed. We appeal to international partners to provide financing and technical support for the purposes, acknowledging their interest in stabilizing Iraq's climate-vulnerable economy. Civil society and youth groups need to be engaged actively in implementation, with provisions for ensuring transparency and equity. The private sector can be encouraged to leverage capital and innovation to chase clean energy, water, and resilience projects.

As the Vision Foundation demands, stability, democracy, and prosperity for Iraq will only come through sustainable policy intervention and participatory debate. The climate threat is exemplary. Through coordinated reform of the state, forward-looking planning, and regional collaboration, Iraq can turn its vulnerabilities into engines of strength, green growth, create employment, and safeguard its communities for generations ahead. It is now time to act.

Appendix A Clarification of Referenced Recommendations and Annexes

1. Reason for Thematic Organization of Appendix A

The remainder of this section explains why Iraq's policy paper Appendix A references are thematically arranged.

Appendix A outlines Iraq's Climate Investment Pathways (CIP) 2025–2030 suggestions and additions.

This practice blends necessary elements of academic and policy analysis:

1. Cognitive Accessibility: Organizing items within policy topics, like fiscal reform, private sector investment, and institutional innovation, enhances congruence with readers' cognitive maps and expectations and therefore enhances understanding (OECD, 2020).

2. Easy to read: the paper is organized by topic, and the appendix serves as a source per section, not simply a reference list.

3. Evolution: Policy principles derived from evidence facilitate the structuring of institutional reports by theme for decision-makers (Nutley et al., 2007; Cairney, 2016).

Although not thematically structured, the initial CIP recommendations are reorganized according to standard scholarly conventions for conceptual precision and analytical efficacy, without altering content or intended meaning of the originating documents.

2. Fiscal and Financial Policy

Recommendation 1.1: Requests that fiscal policies take into account climate change. Climate screening should be made universal for all budget lines and public investment proposals. A Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) with climate indicators should be used, it is also proposed.

B. Climate Investment Institutions

CIP Recommendation 4.2: Proposes the creation of a National Green Investment Bank or Climate Fund to leverage private and public finance for green energy and efficiency projects.

C. Private Sector & Innovation

Recommendation 3.1: Establish a working group among the government and private sector, such as banks and companies, to advance green investment and climate finance innovation.

D. Monitoring, Research, and Implementation Support

Recommendation 2.2: Request the establishment of a national M&E system in line with Iraq's climate target (e.g., NDCs), along with the release of regular progress reports.

Annex IV: Lists climate research and policy advisory academic institutions and think tanks like VFSS. Emphasizes project design and evidence-based implementation.

E. Project Pipeline and Resilience Initiatives

CIP Annex V: Outlines proposed investments in climate change, mainly in energy, water, and agriculture, along with community-based and resilience-building projects.

Appendix B Abbreviation Table

Abbreviation	Full Form
CIP	Climate Investment Plan
VFSS	Vision Foundation for Strategic Studies
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
IFI	International Financial Institution
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
GCF	Green Climate Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
SDS	Sand and Dust Storms

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