



## ILO and UNICEF Joint Midterm Independent Project Evaluation of “Towards an inclusive national social protection system and accelerating decent job opportunities for Syrians and vulnerable Jordanians” in Jordan

### QUICK FACTS

**Countries:** Jordan

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**Evaluation type:** Joint

**Evaluation timing:** Mid-term

**Administrative Office:** RO-Arab States

**Technical Office:** DWT–Beirut; NC-Amman

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*Key Words:* [Use themes as provided in i-eval Discovery](#)

*Social protection; Migration; Social security; Decent work; Employment; Women employment*

## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

### Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

For decades, Jordan's labour market has faced significant challenges related to sluggish economic growth, and unequal access to employment. Whilst recent steps have been taken, and numerous strategies and reforms have been introduced, culminating in the Economic Modernisation Vision published in June 2022, inclusion gaps remain. Jordan continues to maintain an unemployment rate of 22.8%.<sup>1</sup>

Inclusion gaps have persisted for women, youth, and refugees. Youth were particularly affected by unemployment, with youth unemployment almost double the rate of the total population.<sup>2</sup> Further impacting the situation has been the impact of the influx of refugees living in Jordan. Jordan's geographical location has led it to become the third most populous country in the region in terms of hosting Syrian refugees.

This EU-funded joint ILO-UNICEF programme was implemented in response to recent progress made towards developing a social protection system for Jordan, in light of recent developments, and the development of a National Social Protection Strategy. The programme proposed three main outcomes to address these systemic issues, in alignment with both ILO and UNICEF country documents, as well as national government strategies:

1. Enhanced coordination, integrated planning, and monitoring for government wide efforts in the social protection and employment sector. Outputs delivered serve to strengthen mechanisms for coordinated implementation of national employment and social protection interventions in the context of the NSPS.
2. Strengthened national systems/mechanisms to enhance access to labour market, decent work and employment based social protection schemes. Outputs delivered serve to provide support towards effective and cost-efficient implementation and realisation of access to employment (work permits), enhanced capacity for the implementation of mechanisms to ensure increasingly decent work (labour inspection) and access to social security expanded to workers in the informal economy.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Statistics, Q1 2022

<sup>2</sup> Ibid



	3. Vulnerable Jordanians and Syrians transition from cash assistance to sustainable jobs
<b>Present situation of the project</b>	<p>The programme, delivered jointly by ILO and UNICEF, commenced in October 2020, with an initial completion date of October 2023. It seeks to deliver the three outcomes listed above, working across Jordan at both a government and policy level, and a field level.</p> <p>Due to delays in implementation, a no-cost extension was requested in April of 2023, and approved in June 2023, which extends the duration until December 2024. The extension also revised the outcomes and deliverables, most notably proposing significant amendments to Outcome 3, and the deletion of Outcome 2.1.</p>
<b>Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation</b>	<p>This joint mid-term evaluation was commissioned by ILO and UNICEF and looked to assess the M&amp;E framework for the programme, as well as its coherence, resilience, and ability to monitor, adapt to, and measure change. It also sought to understand and contextualise the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, foreseen impact, and sustainability of the programme, in line with UN Evaluation norms, through a series of questions set out below and in the Evaluation Matrix included in the annexes of this report.</p> <p>This mid-term evaluation commenced in October 2022, and was postponed for three months due to the no-cost extension request. It considered the period from the commencement of the programme, until 31 May 2023, and reviewed all aspects of the programme, in line with both OECD/DAC criteria, and the ILO criteria set out below. It adopted a geographically and gender-balanced approach. It is expected that both ILO and UNICEF will benefit directly, and in equal measure, from this evaluation. Other users include the engaged Ministries, such as the Ministry of Social Development, and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, employers, workers associations, and implementing partners such as the National Aid Fund, and Social Security Corporation. Finally, the evaluation will also be of benefit to the donor, the European Commission; DG Neighbourhood and</p>



	Enlargement Negotiations, as well as wider stakeholders including UNHCR and the World Bank.
<b>Methodology of evaluation</b>	<p>The participatory mid-term evaluation adopted a formative approach and utilised mixed methods which included both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments, including extensive desk research of over 20 programme documents, policy analysis, 24 key informant interviews with ILO and UNICEF staff, tripartite constituents, and technical specialists, two focus group discussions with programme participants and one FGD with counsellors, and a workshop with programme staff from both ILO and UNICEF, which validated initial assumptions and provided opportunities to explore key elements of the programme in more detail.</p> <p>The evaluation had a specific focus on gender, which was incorporated into the evaluation questions, and considered in both the desk review and field elements of the evaluation.</p> <p>The evaluation had a number of limitations, including the no-cost extension which took place during the initial evaluation period, resulting in a three-month postponement, the lack of participants in Outcome 3 who had progressed to date, and the changes to that component, resulting in a lower overall number of FGD participants than had been anticipated, and the short time period for interviews, which was mitigated through the well-attended workshop.</p>
<b>MAIN FINDINGS &amp; CONCLUSIONS</b>	<p><b>Relevance findings (qns 1-7)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The programme has a very high degree of relevance, according with both ILO and UNICEF priorities and country strategies, as well as national government strategies including the NSPS and the Economic Modernisation Vision. The programme also demonstrates a strong connection to the UNSDGs.</li> <li>2. The rationale from the perspective of both ILO and UNICEF is clearly defined in inception documents, as well as annual reports.</li> <li>3. A flexible approach to programme activities in response to the Covid-19 pandemic was adopted from the outset, with the Standard Joint Programme Document allowing for revisions as required.</li> </ol>



4. The needs of participants are well understood, and the programme has delivered valuable and needed support around system strengthening and utilise important tools to advance evidence-based policy making. In light of the need for more information on beneficiary needs, UNICEF also suggested and subsequently commissioned a diagnostic study to understand their challenges with youth.
5. The aims and outcomes are clearly defined and accord well with both Agency and national strategic priorities.
6. The Results Framework is comprehensive, and includes each output, whilst providing a series of indicators, a baseline and target, and verification sources for each component of the programme.
7. Whilst significant progress has been made in delivering gender-centric outcomes, some relevance challenges persist around the mainstreaming of gender through ensuring that the graduation component is both accessible and relevant for female beneficiaries.

#### **Relevance conclusions**

1. It can be concluded that, across all three programme Outcomes, a high degree of relevance is noted, in that activities and outputs align strongly with ILO and UNICEF country strategies, programmes, and priorities.
2. A strong degree of relevance is noted at government level, with the programme aligning with major national strategies, although the introduction of new strategies, such as the Economic Modernisation Vision, necessitates the updating of the NSPS to ensure continued alignment.
3. Programme activities have the support of tripartite stakeholders, including the relevant Ministries (MoSD, MoPIC, MoL), agencies (NAF, SSC), as well as partners such as GFJTU and JCI, as evidenced through review of programme documents and interviews with relevant stakeholders.
4. The importance of gender mainstreaming was noted, however a gender-specific approach was not incorporated into the programme's Theory of Change or central to its activities. Gender relevance and outcomes beneficial to gender mainstreaming

were noted, though these were not necessarily targeted by design.

#### **Coherence findings (qns 8-10)**

8. Staff from both agencies report a close working relationship, and an understanding and acceptance of the division of responsibility. Approaches were complimentary, as ILO focused on working-age participants, whilst UNICEF worked only with youth up to the age of 25.
9. There appears to be less coherence when it comes to the interplay between the three distinct Outcomes, especially the relationship between Outcome 3 and the wider programme, and staff and stakeholders reported not being fully aware or briefed on activities outside of the Outcome on which they work.
10. There is an effective level of communication between in-country staff and technical specialists, although again, it was noted that technical staff, like staff in Jordan, were not fully aware of programme activities outside of their speciality areas.
11. Whilst clear in its scope, the coherence of Outcome One and Two is challenged by the multitude of relevant stakeholders, working with ILO, UNICEF, UNHCR, the donor, and three relevant Ministries. The multitude of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the NSPS, with over 21 institutions involved, leads to coherence and efficiency challenges, and has resulted in delays to activities. The introduction of the two programme committees has helped address this challenge.

#### **Coherence conclusions**

5. There is a strong degree of linkage, and acceptance of joint-ownership between ILO and UNICEF, with clear divisions of roles and responsibilities, and regular communication.
6. There does, however, remain a lack of coherence between Outcomes, as staff and stakeholders reported not being fully aware of activities outside of their own scope of work.
7. The introduction of the two new Steering Committees has helped to address these coherence challenges and resulted in a more

streamlined approach to programme management and implementation.

8. Communication between project staff and regional teams has been effective, but regional staff also reported not being fully aware of project activities outside of those in which they have direct involvement.

#### **Effectiveness findings (qns 11-14)**

12. The programme is not specifically relevant to social dialogue or labour standards, although contributions were noted around improved dialogue around NSPS implementation, as well as work with employers around social insurance models.
13. Outcomes One and Two have demonstrated a strong degree of effectiveness, exemplified by the implementation and institutionalisation of the ISU within the MoSD, the Transform training, and the statistical bulletin, among other successes.
14. The success of the ISU has been recognised by both staff, and Ministry stakeholders, who reported that the unit has delivered significantly improved technical capacity, and has provided advice and support to the 21 institutions involved in implementing the NSPS.
15. The programme has introduced a new package of training for Ministry staff and focal points which builds on the existing UN Transform training package.
16. It has delivered against UNICEF Social Protection and Policy priorities, and successes include the role of the ISU, the commitment to developing tools for evidence-based policy, such as the annual social protection reflection report, shock responsive social protection component, social protection public expenditure review, NSPS dashboard and wider support of the NSPS.
17. On Outcome Three, lessons were learned around the need to provide assurance around income security, to stop people losing cash assistance whilst going through training, and to break the cycle of informal work, and programme adjustments were put forward to address these concerns.
18. The removal of Outcome 2.1, related to work permits for Syrian refugees, has created a gap between outputs, and the brief of the

donor whose focus is on Syrian refugee relief. This gap must subsequently be addressed through programmatic adjustments.

1. More emphasis needs to be placed on meeting the specific needs of Jordanian women, and Syrian men and women, rather than relying only on a trickle-down effect.

#### **Effectiveness conclusions**

9. Programme activities have directly contributed to strengthened institutions and improved capacity, providing direct support for the implementation of the NSPS, as well as other useful tools such as Transform training and the shock responsive social protection component.
10. The effectiveness of Outcome Three in its revised form cannot be fully assessed for effectiveness, as the component has undergone a major redesign as part of the no-cost extension, the results of which cannot yet be seen.
11. A coherent and technically sound approach to gender mainstreaming is lacking, with interviewees from both Agencies and stakeholders commenting that the programme was not designed to be gender-centric, with a more holistic approach being adopted.
12. The continued effectiveness of the programme from the perspective of its impact on Syrian refugees, has been diminished by the deletion of Outcome 2.1, though this is partially mitigated by successes in other areas.

#### **Efficiency findings (qns 15-19)**

19. Staff working on all outcomes expressed concern that the programme was being delivered in siloes, and the introduction of the steering committees goes some way towards addressing this challenge.
20. With over 20 different institutions involved in the NSPS, actioning and embedding it remains a challenge. This has led to delays, and has resulted in the need for an extension of the duration of this phase, as expressed in the no-cost extension request.
21. Coordination between Agencies has been efficient, although stakeholder expressed concerns around delays in receiving





approval for funds, and the levels of micromanagement. External challenges such as the uncertainty of the future of the Ministry of Labour have further delayed progress.

22. The programme has encountered delays which have necessitated a no-cost extension, which has extended the duration of the programme to December 2024. Work on Outcomes 1 and 2 has progressed well, although delays were noted especially when dealing with Ministries.
23. The restructuring of the programme, including the deletion of Outcome 2.1, has resulted in a redistribution of financial resources, alongside a significant restructure of Outcome 3, which makes addressing efficiency at this point challenging.

#### **Efficiency conclusions**

13. Programme resources have been effectively utilized, and coordination between ILO and UNICEF has been efficient, however a major efficiency concern centres on the siloing of Outcomes, which as addressed under coherence, is impacting levels of collegiate working, although this has been mitigated through the establishment of the steering committees.
14. External uncertainty, staff churn and uncertainty around the no-cost extension all contributed to efficiency challenges.
15. The establishment and functionality of the Steering Committee has addressed some of these communication challenges, and will be helpful in surmounting these challenges in future, and these committees should be supported and institutionalized for the remainder of the programme.
16. The engagement of GTFU has somewhat improved efficiency by providing a needed layer of hierarchical support and direction to field staff.
17. On Outcome 3, the resource efficiency and distribution has been somewhat efficient, however it was reported by both ISU staff, and stakeholders including NAF, that levels of bureaucracy and complicated procedures for low-cost expenditures have slowed down implementation.

#### **Impact findings (qns 20-23)**



24. The Transform training package on social protection, currently in use in 40 countries, has been translated and adapted into Arabic for the first time and this resource can now be used in support of social protection programmes across the MENA region.
25. With the update of the NSPS Jordan will become the only country in the region to have developed and updated an NSPS in the last six years, and furthermore, the ISU case study has been presented to the Lebanese MoSD as an example of how an NSPS can be implemented. This is a key example of how the work done by this programme, with input from UNICEF, can create a tangible and lasting impact, both in Jordan, and in the wider region.
26. The impact of Outcome Three can be measured, through both the number of female graduates under Outcome Three, and the extent to which the intervention delivered lasting, dignified livelihood opportunities for those women, either as heads of households, or as secondary earners.

#### **Impact conclusions**

18. The programme has the potential to deliver a significant positive impact in Jordan through the effective implementation of the NSPS, which will have direct benefits at both a nationwide level, and a gender-specific level.
19. The introduction of the data dashboard and statistical bulletin has brought about a more data-driven and transparent approach to data publication, and more evidence-led decision-making. There is scope for this data-driven and transparent approach to act as a case study for the region, which would further broaden the impact of the Madad programme.
20. The UN Transform training package which has been translated into Arabic can be seen as an investment in a resource which can be rolled-out in other parts of the region and would demonstrate a long-term and sustained impact both within and outside of Jordan.
21. In Outcome 3, gender mainstreaming was more prominently defined, and the use of female outreach officers who are known and trusted in the community has been helpful in breaking down barriers. This is also extended to the work under Outcomes 2 and 3, around creating enabling environments for women to work,

engaging with employers to break down transportation, childcare, and accessibility challenges.

22. If the programme has empowered women to move away from cash assistance, supported them in developing their skillsets, and matched them with viable job opportunities which lead to sustainable and dignified employment, then the impact of the programme can be considered a success.

#### **Sustainability findings (qns 24-28)**

27. Work around the NSPS is likely to be sustainable, as Ministry support, and effective training measures, have been put in place. MoSD has already institutionalised the ISU by placing it within the Office of the Secretary General, and this, coupled with moves to update the NSPS to run until 2030, stand the programme in good stead in this regard.<sup>3</sup>
28. The training package for Ministry staff can be of considerable long-term value, but it is essential to ensure that the knowledge and learning it imparts are institutionalised effectively.
29. The statistical bulletin is already providing gender-disaggregated data on gender which is useful reference material for both policy-makers and implementing partners.
30. The exit strategy related to the graduation component remains immature, but steps are being taken, and ILO has recently formalized an Implementation Agreement with NAF, aimed at providing training and employment opportunities for NAF beneficiaries.

#### **Sustainability conclusions**

23. The programme has considered the sustainability challenge through the lens of how institutions, capacity, and training can become sustainable resources, but the extent to which this can be realized is dependent on future funding arrangements.
24. The relevance of the NSPS should be kept under consideration as new government policies and strategies have been, and will

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<sup>3</sup> Note: During the validation workshop for this evaluation, it was reported that, in the period of time since the evaluation was drafted, the ISU had been moved from the Office of the Secretary General, and is now housed under the Policy Directorate. This has led to fears that its role and impact could be diminished. Whilst this took place outside of the time period stated for this evaluation, it is important that this development, and the associated concern, is noted.

continue to be introduced, which could result in the NSPS becoming outdated.

25. The delivery of the statistical bulletins within implementing partners has set a precedent which helps ensure they are continued post-completion, but concerns remain that knowledge imparted through these tools, and the Transform training could be lost if training recipients left the Ministries.
26. Outcome Three presents a significant sustainability challenge, in so far as the graduation framework remains dependent on Madad funding, and without a commitment to future funding, this delivery framework is hard to futureproof.

#### **Conclusions on cross-cutting issues**

On **gender**, whilst the programme presents a clear gender-based objective in programme documents, this has not been fully realised in its activities. Whilst Outcomes One and Two centre on policy responses, implementing the NSPS, and providing technically sound data and training, these are assets of general benefit, as opposed to gender-specific targeted interventions. Data has been disaggregated, but the programme, especially post-restructure, centres around the theory that sound and robust practices, processes, and policies, will deliver benefit for all citizens, including women.

Alongside these activities, the delivery of a social protection public expenditure review, which is equity-based and addresses gender concerns, the MoSD M&E framework which disaggregates data to reflect the impact on women and girls, and the shock-responsive social protection component, with a specific brief on gender-responsive social protection, demonstrate more gender-focused outcomes with the potential to deliver a tangible impact.

Whilst this concept has merit, the programme still lacks sufficiently-developed, targeted, gender-specific approaches which deliver tangible impact in this area. Ongoing work with NAF around ensuring women are prioritised in assistance programmes is also meritorious, but must be followed through.



Outcome Three can in theory deliver a more substantive, gender focused, interventions by meeting its targets around participant gender ratios. Given the programme has undergone a substantial restructure, it is far too early to determine whether this can or will be achieved, but the team must ensure a continued focus on ensuring women are mainstreamed throughout the process.

On **tripartite issues**, the programme involves a multitude of stakeholders, with 21 institutions involved in delivering the NSPS, and engaged in Outcomes Two and Three, including NAF, SSC, GFJTU, employers and others. Three Ministries also play prominent roles in implementation.

Challenges were noted around engagement with stakeholders, and delays arising from both internal and external factors, however the introduction of the Higher Coordinating Committee, as well as the Madad Project Steering Committee, have helped to streamline this approach. Further work should be implemented to institutionalise these bodies for the remainder of the duration, and the focus should centre on tackling sustainability challenges and ensuring future funding for both the ISU, and the graduation component.

On **International Labour Standards**, the programme's focus on delivering structural and systemic improvements to social protection and social insurance under Outcomes One and Two, alongside with its efforts to transition people from cash assistance into decent work means that the design aligns with ILO mandates and priorities around labour standards at both an in-country and regional level.

On **environmental sustainability**, this has not been considered as a major, facet of the programme and is not the focus on activities or outputs, and therefore has not been a consideration in this evaluation.

On **capacity development**, this has been integral to the success under Outcomes One, where the introduction of the ISU, coupled with improved data publishing and reporting frameworks, has led to a significant uplift in the Ministry of Social Development's capacity to

address social protection issues. The ISU has also had a positive impact on the wider stakeholder network, and the ability of partners to implement the NSPS.

The training through the Transform programme has also delivered an uplift in awareness and skills at a Ministry level, and especially for key focal points, and this knowledge must be retained and institutionalised through the recommendations set out below.

A capacity dividend has also been reported by GFJTU who have found the data gathered through beneficiary profiling under Outcome Three to be useful from both a geographical and a sectoral perspective, helping inform their approaches to other projects. The skills developed by career counsellors who are now working under GFJTU has also been noted.

On **refugee response**, to align with donor requirements and to compensate for the deletion of Outcome 2.1 related to work permits, a more concerted and coordinated focus on refugee response is essential, starting with proving much needed reassurance that refugees who participate in the activities of Outcome 3 will not risk losing cash assistance. Closer working with UNHCR, which has now begun to take place, can help ensure that the challenges faced by this outcome to date are mitigated.

## RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

### Main findings & Conclusions

### Relevance

Recommendation 1: Ensure that the National Social Protection Strategy is updated to align with national strategic priorities. (Linked to finding 1).

- Extend the period of the NSPS until 2030,
- Ensure it aligns with the Economic Modernisation Vision
- Ensure that training and job opportunities provided under Outcome 3 accord with the key priority growth areas set out in the EMV

- Ensure that the impact on females at both a policy and implementation level accords with the gender ambitions in the EMV.

Recommendation 2: Ensure a more proactive and clarified focus on gender mainstreaming across all three outcomes, utilising the in-house capacity of ILO staff working on gender, as well as UNICEF resources, to critically assess and plan the gender impact of programme activities. (Linked to findings 7 and 8).

#### **Coherence**

Recommendation 3: Improve and enhance cooperation and collaboration between ILO, UNICEF, UNHCR, donor, and Ministries through further strengthening and empowering the Higher Coordination Committee, and the MADAD Steering Committee, by ensuring regular meetings, coordinated follow-up actions, and clear division of roles, and maintaining a focus on gender-specific outcomes. (Linked to findings 10, 11, and 12).

Recommendation 4: Work more closely with the EU Madad Fund team to ensure the donor is adequately represented in programme activities, and that visibility is increased.

#### **Effectiveness**

Recommendation 5: Provide essential clarity to potential participants in Outcome 3, to ensure that fears around loss of cash assistance are allayed, through production of written materials and amendments to the content awareness sessions, with a specific focus on clarity for female participants. (Linked to findings 13, 17, and 18).

Recommendation 6: Deliver iterative improvements to the graduation framework in light of key findings. (Linked to findings 18 and 21).

- Engage counselors on the ground more fully in the process of identifying job opportunities and matching them with potential graduates

- Conduct a geographically based study utilizing data gathered in the profiling stage to deepen understanding of educational levels and available skillsets.

Recommendation 7: Develop a clearer and more transparent process when engaging potential graduates, with higher levels of clarity, remove the home-based project option from the profiling questionnaire, and ensure steps are taken to provide female participants with reassurance and awareness of the additional support they can be afforded, such as transport and childcare. (Linked to findings 13, 17, and 18).

#### **Efficiency**

Recommendation 8: Deliver improvements to the Graduation Tracking System, and the data dashboard, to ensure further disaggregation of data by gender and refugee status, to enable more adequate monitoring. (Linked to findings 20, 21, and 22).

#### **Impact**

Recommendation 9: Institutionalise knowledge imparted through Transform training, to ensure knowledge is retained within Ministries, through standardised and consistent training of trainers, and consider how the Transform training package, now translated and adapted into Arabic, can be deployed in other countries in the region, to amplify the long-term impact of the programme. (Linked to finding 23).

#### **Sustainability**

Recommendation 10: Take appropriate action to further institutionalise and ensure sustainability of the Implementation Support Unit within the Ministry of Social Development, by agreeing future funding arrangements to secure its longevity. (Linked to findings 28, and 30).





**Main lessons learned and good practices**

**LESSONS LEARNED**

24. Programme outcomes need to be both manageable and evaluable, and from the outset, staffing and resourcing capacity should be aligned to expectations. Not to do so risks situations such as that seen in this programme, where significant revisions, and a no-cost extension are required.
25. When working on projects which target the most economically or socially vulnerable members of society, a higher level of consideration for their financial, physical, and psychological limitations is required.
26. Working with vulnerable segments of the population, often with limited education and who may suffer from stress and trauma related to poverty and conflict requires a level of communication and transparency that is nuanced and specific to their needs and abilities.
27. With a joint programme between two UN Agencies, and with 21 stakeholders, the communication challenges should not be underestimated, and strong communications procedures in the form of steering committees should be introduced and empowered from the outset.

**GOOD PRACTICES**

28. An impressive level of alignment with both ILO and UNICEF country programmes and ambitions, as well as with major national government strategies, which creates strong delivery foundations.
29. The ISU has provided valuable technical capacity support at a ministry level, and this expertise can be further institutionalised. Translating, adapting, and rolling-out UN Transform training in Arabic for the first time, creating a valuable resource which can be replicated and deployed in other countries in the region.