



Independent Evaluation
of
Expansion of Employment Services to Nine Provinces in
Afghanistan

FINAL REPORT

25 October 2007

Some confidential information has been omitted (Aug. 2021)

KEY PROJECT DATA

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Managing ILO Unit	ILO Kabul
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The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not represent those of ILO, AGEF or MoLSAMD

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
AGEF	Association of Experts in the Field of Migration and Development Co-operation
ANBP	Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme
EGIP	Employment Generation Infrastructure Project
ESC	Employment Service Centre
ES	Employment Services
ESDWA	Employment Skill Development for War Affected Afghans Project
ESPNAD	Employment Services for the People of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Province
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
JICA	Japan International Cooperations Agency
LMI	Labour market information
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MoLSAMD	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs Martyrs and Disabled
MMD	Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled
MoRR	Ministry of Refugees and Returnees
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development
MoWA	Ministry of Woman Affairs
NDP	National Development Program
NEEP	National Emergency Employment Programme
NGO	Non Government Organisations
NSDP	National Skills Development and Market Linkages Program
RSPE	Reintegration Support Project for Ex-combatants
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. Abstract

As part of the initial IFP/CRISIS response in Afghanistan in 2001, the ILO supported the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) to establish a pilot Employment Service Centre (ESC) in Kabul to provide employment services to employers and Afghan job-seekers.

A larger project called “Expansion of Employment Services Centres in Kabul and nine Provinces” was subsequently funded by the Government of Germany in 2004 and was implemented by MoLSA with the ILO as executing agency and AGEF as the implementing partner. The project commenced in May 2004 running through until 28 February 2007.

The overall development objective was to contribute to the reduction of poverty and to the social and economic development of Afghanistan by providing access to improved labour market services at national and provincial level. The project aimed to provide capacity building within the MoLSA by providing training, equipment and resources to MoLSA staff in ESCs and direct assistance to a range of unemployed jobseekers.

Its immediate objectives were:

1. to establish ESCs in Kabul and nine provinces, and provide capacity building activities that would enable well-trained staff in these centres to provide specific advisory and labour market services to assist employers and targeted groups of jobseekers;
2. identify employment and training opportunities and refer jobseekers to suitable employment options, and
3. provide relevant and up-to-date advice and assistance on training and self-employment opportunities available in the local labour market to targeted groups of jobseekers.

An independent evaluation was completed in September 2007 to assess the impact and value of the Project itself and to gather information and draw conclusions that may be useful for future similar projects.

Findings and Conclusions

1. The project has been successful in establishing a network of ESCs which are now fully operational. Very good collaboration exists with MoLSAMD and the ESC network has been formally incorporated into the Ministry’s structure and appears on its organogram reporting to Manpower Department. A total of 87 staff from the Ministry are now working in ESCs in various roles around the country.
2. The task of opening new ESCs and recruiting and training staff to work in these offices has been a major challenge for the project and dominated project activities during the first two phases of the project.
3. All staff have received initial induction training, on the job supervision and regular follow up training. An ESC training manual is available and other training materials were prepared to support staff in their work activities
4. The project had to overcome a major cultural issue in having ESC services accepted. The heritage of patronage contradicts merit-based labour market services and the ESC network had to advocate the benefits of services when undertaking promotional work with employers. At the same time, many job seekers assumed that a recommendation to

an employer by the ESC was a sufficient requirement to be selected for a post, just as it was in the traditional family based system.

5. No Steering Committee was formed to oversight project implementation and, as a result, the project did not benefit from potential inputs from external representatives or other stakeholders or from the guidance and management support that a Steering Committee may have provided.
6. The absence of 'backstopping' support missions and the inability to organise inputs by international experts on employment services placed a much greater onus on the CTA and project technical staff to implement the project's training and work strategies without access to other appropriate expertise envisaged for the project. This is seen as a major deficiency which impacted on the quality of the service being implemented.
7. The ESC has successfully introduced counselling and information services as well as referral to vocational training courses and this is meeting a need that was not being met previously.
8. In many respects, the ESC network in Afghanistan has developed along similar lines to a traditional labour exchange system seen in more advanced countries. However because of limited resources the ESC has responded to the immediate vacancy demands coming from a particular sector and its coverage of other sectors remains low. On the jobseeker side rather than registering large numbers of jobseekers the ESC used a screening process and concentrated on registering jobseekers with certain levels of qualifications, skills or experience that it was most likely to be able to assist. The number of jobseekers from vulnerable groups registering with the ESC remains very low.
9. A major justification for this project on the demand side was the expectation that the reconstruction program in Afghanistan would require large numbers of workers particularly in the construction sector and that the ESC could play an important role in meeting the demands for labour from these projects. While the pace of reconstruction has not been as rapid as originally expected and many other factors have also intervened, scope exists for the ESC to selectively target this market more effectively and develop collaborative arrangements or partnerships with key clients to meet their recruitment and training requirements.
10. Outcomes achieved by the project included an average of 12,000 job seekers per year who went through a counselling, guidance or referral interview, around 1,500 job seekers per year who were successfully referred to training courses, and around 500 job seekers per year who were placed into jobs. In terms of job placements, ESC statistics show that over the life of the project only 10% of all jobseekers referred to positions were successful in obtaining the job and only 10% of all vacancies received by the ESC were filled by ESC action. The ESC needs to have a much stronger focus on measuring its results and should more actively follow up with employers and jobseekers to find out the outcomes of its referrals to jobs.
11. Although a wide range of activities were undertaken, many ESC activities focus more on the process rather than the outcomes. Jobseeker registration and data capture procedures are cumbersome and the data base software although fully operational is not user-friendly. Individual databases are not linked making some tasks more time consuming

and standard reports are not automatically generated and require considerable user intervention to prepare.

12. ESC has developed good relationships with vocational training providers and refers many jobseekers to courses that are available however it has not been so active in assisting graduates of training courses into employment. Now that the NSDP requires training providers to establish placement units to help its trainees to find work, there is an opportunity for the ESC to develop stronger collaboration with NSDP and individual training providers to offer placement assistance to course graduates.
13. The underlying assumption in the original project document that the ESC would become fully operational very quickly was overly optimistic. In fact the project has done remarkably well to achieve so much in the three years of its operation. The logistics and demands of opening a network of 10 offices and recruiting and training staff for each location should not be underestimated and in reality it was not until the third phase of the project that it could claim to be fully operational and in a position to embark on further development and improvements to its services.
14. There were many obstacles and constraints that the project faced along the way and key issues listed in various progress reports included:
 - The security situation in Afghanistan has not been stable and has varied between provinces.
 - The project experienced some initial difficulties in arranging with the Ministry for suitable staff to be seconded to work in the ESCs and there was some turnover of staff.
 - Staff working in the ESCs in such places as Kandahar and Jalalabad experienced greater restrictions in their activities, than do their colleagues in Kabul or other locations.
 - The strength of local economies differed significantly.
 - During the winter months, construction activities were often not possible.
 - In summer the oppressive heat particularly in the southern regions resulted in fewer jobseekers attending the ESCs.
 - Language was another challenge to achieving the objectives with the language of the PMU being English, while that of the direct recipients was Dari.
 - While interpretation and translation were routine components of the project, it cannot be claimed with complete certainty that the intended messages were the messages received. This had implications for the professional development of the ESC staff, as well as for relationships formed with cooperating ministries and agencies.
 - Also impacting on this project were cultural traditions and beliefs, from notions about the role of women in society, to perceptions of persons with disabilities. In assisting these two groups, the ESCs had to address long-standing prejudices and biases and become advocates for change, if Afghan women and persons with disabilities were to avail themselves of the same opportunities as non-disabled male jobseekers.

Summary of recommendations

1. ESC should implement a 'key clients' strategy to target major employers, organisations and projects likely to have major recruitment needs as part of the reconstruction effort and establish partnerships or collaboration arrangements with them.

2. A stronger 'service' culture should be developed with greater focus on achieving results. Jobseeker reception and registration procedures should be streamlined and better internal procedures introduced to obtain results of referrals to vacancies.
3. ILO should consider developing 'best practice' guidelines for jobseeker reception, interview and data capture which could be used when future projects of this type are being implemented.
4. 'Backstopping' support missions and inputs by international experts on employment services are essential to ensure that the necessary guidance, expertise and support is provided during implementation and steps should be taken in future projects to ensure that these inputs are delivered when required.
5. Further enhancements to the database software would significantly improve the usefulness and efficiency of the database. The ILO has been involved in developing ES systems and software in a number of different countries such as Sri Lanka, Timor Leste and Banda Aceh and drawing on that experience consideration should be given to developing some generic database design guidelines or even a software package that could be customised and implemented in new situations without having to design the system from 'scratch'.
6. Now that the NSDP requires training providers to establish placement units to help its trainees to find work, the ESC should develop stronger collaboration and working arrangements with NSDP and individual training providers to offer placement assistance to course graduates.
7. The ESC should expand its information and counselling services to allow a wider range of jobseekers including those from vulnerable groups to gain access to these services.

Summary of lessons learned

- Short funding cycles can cause some uncertainty as well as lack of continuity and planning at certain points during a project particularly when further funding needs to be negotiated. Where new offices have to be set up and capacity building is also required there are usually significant lead times before the project becomes fully operational and assumptions should not be made that proposed strategies or services can be implemented immediately at the outset of the project.
- Inability to organise inputs by international experts on employment services can diminish the intended impact of programs and services being implemented and reduce the effectiveness of staff training. Wherever possible, specialist inputs should be organised in advance and delivered when required at key points during project implementation.
- It is important to ensure that suitably qualified and experienced IT staff are used when system software is being developed and that the functions and system design requirements for any ESC database are specified in advance and that 'user testing' is carried out during the design stage to maximise usefulness and relevance of the application.
- Use of a Steering Committee with external representatives is an important way to ensure more inputs come from other stakeholders and better guidance and management support is provided to project implementation team. Efforts should always continue ensure that a Steering Committee is established when implementing projects of this nature.
- Without leverage, the ESC will always face difficulties in promoting the claims of vulnerable groups. Projects should include a component providing financial or other incentives to employers who recruit workers from vulnerable groups.

2. Project Background and Logic

Following two decades of war and the removal of the Taliban regime, the reconstruction and rehabilitation program in Afghanistan was expected to require a large workforce of both skilled and unskilled workers as well as technical and professional personnel. In spite of the high level of unemployment, preliminary assessments indicated that there could be a significant shortage of skilled and semi-skilled workers and many organisations were offering a range of training courses to equip workers with basic skills. Refugees from neighbouring countries returned to Afghanistan in large numbers, some to their villages but many also to the major cities, where they looked for employment, adding to the existing numbers of unemployed.

As part of the initial IFP/CRISIS response, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) supported the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) to establish a pilot Employment Service Centre (ESC) in Kabul to provide employment services to employers and Afghan job-seekers. It was anticipated that the need for employment services would continue to grow as refugees returned from abroad, soldiers re-entered the labour force and the demographics of a young population continued to produce more job seekers. At that time the Association of Experts in the Fields of Migration and Development Co-operation¹ (AGEF) was implementing the “Return to Employment in Afghanistan (REA)” program - an employment promotion initiative funded by the Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ), through the ZAV-Zentralstelle fuer Arbeitsvermittlung, Germany. REA targeted Afghan refugees (including internally displaced persons (IDPs), Cross Border Migrants, as well as locally displaced) aiming to return permanently to Afghanistan. AGEF agreed to provide technical support to the pilot Employment Service Centre in Kabul and the ILO and AGEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding with MoLSA to provide assistance to the pilot ESC.

A more detailed project proposal was subsequently developed called “Expansion of Employment Services Centres in Kabul and nine Provinces” in 2003. The project was funded by the Government of Germany in 2004 and was implemented by MoLSA with the International Labour Organization (ILO) as executing agency and AGEF as the implementing partner. A description of the technical services to be provided by AGEF as implementing partner is shown in Attachment 1. Phase 1 of the project commenced in May 2004 running until January 2005, with two further 2 phases subsequently being approved, taking the project through until 28 February 2007.

This project’s overall development objective was to contribute to the reduction of poverty and to the social and economic development of Afghanistan by providing access to improved labour market services at national and provincial level. The project aimed to provide capacity building within the MoLSA by providing training, equipment and resources to MoLSA staff in ESCs and direct assistance to a range of unemployed jobseekers. The initial task was to establish the ESC network to provide labour market services to jobseekers, training providers and employers and in the process to help reduce the level of unemployment, promote the acquisition of skills in demand and, more broadly, combat poverty.

Its immediate objectives were:

¹ AGEF, the “Association of Experts in the Fields of Migration and Development Co-operation” is a non-profit making organization formed in 1992 and has been active in Afghanistan since April 2002.

1. to establish ESCs in Kabul and nine provinces, and provide capacity building activities that would enable well-trained staff in these centres to provide specific advisory and labour market services to assist employers and targeted groups of jobseekers;
2. identify employment and training opportunities and refer jobseekers to suitable employment options; and
3. provide relevant and up-to-date advice and assistance on training and self-employment opportunities available in the local labour market to targeted groups of jobseekers.

3. Purpose, Scope and Clients of the Evaluation

3.1 Purpose

Phase 3 of the ESC Project was completed at the end of February 2007. This independent evaluation has been undertaken to assess the impact and value of the Project itself and to gather information and draw conclusions that may be useful for future similar projects or other related purposes.

The ESC Project (Phases 1-3) was composed of three major components:

- establishment of the physical infrastructure for the employment services in Kabul and nine provinces, e.g., refurbishment/reconstruction of offices, provision of computers and equipment;
- training and capacity building activities for staff seconded from participating Ministries; and
- delivery of labour market services to job-seekers with regard to employment, training and self-employment opportunities.

3.2 Scope and Clients

The scope of the evaluation was to focus on these three components: provision of physical infrastructure, capacity building activities, and the quantity and quality of services delivered.

The principal clients for this evaluation are the project donor and the ILO Kabul, SRO Delhi, and ILO Head Quarters. A copy of the Terms of Reference for the review is shown in Attachment 2.

4. Methodology

The evaluation was undertaken during September 2007 and included interviews and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders including representatives from Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD)², ILO senior officers and specialists in Kabul, project technical staff and a number of ESC managers and staff. The views of external clients were also obtained and interviews were conducted with a range of employers, Employer and Union organisations, training providers, international agencies, jobseekers using ESC and representatives of other major projects being implemented in related fields. Visits were also made to the ESC in Kabul, the ESC in the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MORR) and the Manpower Department in the Ministry as well as a field visit to Mazar I Sharif to review ESC activities in that location. A full list of contacts made during the evaluation is shown in Attachment 3 and documents and reports examined as part of the evaluation are shown in Attachment 4.

² MoLSA was recently renamed MoLSAMD after a ministerial reshuffle and will be referred to by this acronym in the remainder of the report

Time constraints and security restrictions did not allow for travel by road to visit other ESC sites but the evaluator was able to attend the monthly meeting of ESC Site Managers and obtained useful views and insights from that group.

Two key personnel involved in the project over the last two years had recently left Kabul and a new CTA had only just arrived in the week prior to the evaluation. However, it was possible to receive inputs and comments from the previous CTA by telephone and email.

The evaluation also included a desk review of available project documents, reports, implementation plans and training materials related to the project. Statistical tables and analyses presented in this report have been generated from printed statistical reports provided to the evaluator. At the end of the mission, the evaluator provided individual briefings to Deputy Minister Bashiri MoLSAMD, Ms Ingrid Christensen Officer in Charge, ILO Kabul and Mr Paul-Pieter Oosterbeek, Region Director Middle East and Central Asia, AGEF, on the preliminary findings and draft recommendations of the evaluation.

A particular emphasis during this evaluation has been to examine the project performance from an external stakeholders' perspectives to assess the performance and impact of the project more generally including its sustainability in the longer term.

5. Review of Implementation

Project implementation began in May 2004 with Phase 1 of the project. A four day Joint Planning Workshop was held in July 2004 to prepare an overall strategy for the implementation of the project and the setting up of Employment Service Centres in various locations throughout Afghanistan. 63 participants attended the workshop including Department Heads, Directors and other staff from federal and provincial Ministries and Departments of MoLSAMD, together with AGEF and ILO officials.

The objectives of the workshop were to familiarise all partners and stakeholders with the aims of project, to develop a logical framework for phase 1 and 2 and to establish a detailed work plan for Phase 1 of the project. The workshop also provided the opportunity to focus on changes that had occurred between the time the project had been designed and its implementation.

The workshop adopted a participatory approach with extensive discussion and contributions from the smaller group sessions. It was conducted in English and Dari with simultaneous translation being provided. Sessions included situational analyses on issues, problems and constraints facing job seekers, employers and employment service providers with solutions and measures being proposed to address these needs. A stakeholder analysis was also carried out resulting in further clarification of the expectations, roles and obligations of the respective project partners and other collaborating organisations.

This workshop resulted in a detailed work plan being developed and confirmed for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the project and it provided major momentum to project implementation.

The project document provided for a Steering Committee to be established but this did not eventuate. The CTA advised that the Ministry resisted the concept of the Steering Committee and it was never established largely due to the Ministry's hesitance to involve too many parties. As a result, the project proceeded without the benefit of advice and inputs from external stakeholders and monitoring of progress was left to ILO and AGEF project staff working in consultation with the Ministry. In terms of ongoing management, the technical staff from ILO and AGEF were co-

located in the same Project Management Office, were working closely together and provided regular qualitative reporting on progress with project implementation.

In 2004, ESCs were opened in Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad, Kunduz and Mazar. An additional four ESCs were opened in 2005 at Gardez, Kandahar, Pul-e Khumri and Jowzjan. The remaining ESC was opened in Ghazni in 2006

The inputs, as specified in the project documents for each phase, have largely been provided. However it is significant to note that proposed inputs of international expertise using short missions by a labour market research specialist, an employment services specialist and a labour market information specialist, did not take place. A total of five ILO backstopping missions were listed amongst the inputs but the evaluator was advised that these missions had not taken place. Two associate experts proposed for recruitment during phase two of the Project did not eventuate and a consultant was contracted for six weeks in place of the Junior Technical Advisor listed for phase three of the Project.

The ILO Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) worked on the project from its inception until February 2007 and AGEF used three different specialists at various times to work in their Technical Advisor position although the position was unstaffed for approximately 6 months during 2004-05.

All national personnel were recruited as specified in the Project Document. In addition, an English language teacher, a translator, a job application training officer and an IT and finance assistant were also recruited.

This evaluation did not include a financial audit of project expenditure, however based on a review of monthly financial reports provided by the implementation partner and other internal mid-term and final project reports available together with observations made at the ESC offices that were visited, it was clear that the financial inputs had been provided as planned to construct, furnish and maintain the main and provincial ESCs along with their operating and maintenance costs. There was evidence that IT and communication equipment and systems had been put in place and the necessary purchase or hire of the vehicles, materials, equipment supplies, as well as costs associated with staff training had been completed.

Although the project covered almost three years, funding was provided in three discrete phases and this process caused some uncertainty particularly in relation to whether Phase 3 funding would be approved. The short cycle nature of the funding process was seen as a constraint in terms of longer-term planning and implementation strategies covering the final phase of the project. When funding was approved for the third phase of the project, it enabled further consolidation and expansion of the training and programs which had been initiated earlier.

In January 2005 the project opened a special ESC for returning refugees and IDPs to provide labour market services for these clients to assist them to achieve sustainable livelihoods. This ESC is operated by Ministry staff and is based in the Ministry of Refugees and Returnees (MoRR) in Kabul. It caters specifically for refugees and IDPs and helps them to gain access to vocational training programs, employment and self-employment opportunities.

A pilot ESC was also established at the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) to assist women looking for work and its operations were subsequently combined with the main ESC office in Kabul.

6. Presentation of Findings

6.1 Relevance

The project has been successful in establishing a network of ESCs which are now fully operational. There has been very good collaboration with MoLSAMD at the national level and also in each Province where ESC were set up. Good working arrangements have been in place throughout the implementation process and the ESC network has been formally incorporated into the Ministry's structure listed on its organogram as reporting to the Manpower Department. A total of 87 staff from the Ministry is now working in ESCs in various roles around the country.

An extensive staff training program has been delivered with all staff receiving initial induction training followed by on-the-job supervision and regular follow up training. Staff training materials have been developed including the ESC training manual, which is used both for initial training and as a guide to office procedures, an on-the-job training manual for use by the outreach team, a training manual to provide guidance to the staff working in the disability support unit and a 'Job Search Solution' package – which was developed for use in two-day job preparation courses for unemployed jobseekers. ESC staff regularly conduct these training sessions for groups of jobseekers and topics covered include guidelines for preparing a CV, how to write a 'cover' letter and how to prepare for job interviews.

The project experienced some initial difficulties in arranging with the Ministry for suitable staff to be seconded to work in the ESCs and there was some turnover of staff. All of the ESC Site Supervisors were recruited specifically to work on the project and only one Supervisor is a member of staff from the Ministry. All other staff working in the ESCs are seconded from the Ministry and each receives a monthly training allowance which is an important incentive in consolidating their learning and helping to maintain continuity.

The task of opening new ESCs and recruiting and training staff to work in these offices has been a major challenge for the project and dominated activities during the first two phases of the project. The project also had to overcome a major cultural issue in having ESC services accepted. The CTA highlighted this issue in the 2005 Progress Report³ 'Afghan society is predominantly organised along tribal lines. The heritage of patronage contradicts the merit based labour market services. Because of this practice, the ESC network had to put high emphasis on advocacy work for the labour market services offered.....On the other hand, as many of the potential employers are still NGOs who are usually employing new staff based on experience and qualifications it was also necessary to train job seekers on how to present their skills and experiences in a written application. Many job seekers assumed that the recommendation by the ESC is a sufficient requirement to be selected for a post, just as it is in the traditional more or less family based system.'

Another major constraint facing the CTA and project staff was that none of inputs by international experts on employment services nor proposed 'backstopping' support missions took place, meaning that many of the project's training and work strategies were not fully developed or adequately supported with appropriate expertise. This is seen as a major deficiency which impacted on the quality of the service being implemented.

³ Page 8, Expansion of Employment Services, Progress Report 2005, Kabul February 2006.

Views of Stakeholders and Beneficiaries

During the evaluation, interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders and beneficiaries and the following is a summary of views expressed:

AGEF – Paul Peter Oosterbeek, Regional Director Middle East and Central Asia.

- From AGEF's point of view the project had achieved its aims. Some things could have been done better or differently but overall a good foundation has been laid for further capacity building.
- The early phase of the project concentrated on establishing the network of offices and training of newly recruited staff to enable them to become operational as quickly as possible. It was an expensive structure and capacity was limited. Many of the objectives are long term in nature and it is too early for their full impact to be assessed. AGEF lost focus and involvement at some stages because of the difficulty in filling its Senior Technical Advisor for a period of approximately 6 months early in the project.
- Some things are not possible in the short term, but a key role for the ESC was to establish links with other existing programs and projects and collaborate or develop partnerships where appropriate and ESC needs to do more in this area. He mentioned that the National Skills Development and Market Linkages Program (NSDP) which is now asking training providers to use their own placement officers to help course graduates to find jobs.
- The ESC could do more to link unskilled workers into skills training and into start your own business training but new solutions needed to be found for micro financing which is not easy to introduce because of the inability to charge interest on loans.
- It is still too early to assess the real impact of the project and longer term studies are needed on the effectiveness of training and employment placements to determine whether people who were placed were still in employment.
- On Labour Market Information (LMI) there was a need for better targeting of companies by size and industry group. AGEF have surveyed over 20,000 employers that employ 5 or more staff and use this to canvass job opportunities for trainees and to glean local labour market information on skill shortages or expansion plans. Scope exists for partnership with ESC to share this information and develop greater collaboration.
- A major constraint not originally envisaged in the project design was the difficulty in identifying and providing suitable international experts with experience in PES operations to provide inputs and training to the project.
- There was very limited local expertise and although basic training was good, there was a lack of capacity to develop and modify strategies and approaches and make them relevant to local requirements. For example - identifying local needs and gaps and tailoring responses to suit.
- There are institutional barriers, the slow pace of reform within the Ministry, slow development of the economy and reluctance to change the traditional ways of doing things.

MoLSAMD - Mr Bashiri Deputy Minister

- Mr Bashiri stated that the ESC project had been implemented smoothly with good collaboration with the Ministry and no day to day problems involved;
- There had been strong interest from unemployed people wanting to register but serious difficulties in reducing unemployment because of the economy and the failure of jobs growth in the private sector;
- Employers were not very aware of what services ESC could provide and ESC had not provided enough publicity about its services;

- The Ministry lacked good LMIS and the proposed labour market survey had not been implemented;
- The Ministry had benefited from staff being trained and the network of ESC offices had been established with good links to training providers;
- The Ministry continues to face problems with lack of funding to expand the network of offices further or to pay ongoing running costs for existing ESC offices and he appreciated the interim funding and the new Reintegration Support Project for Ex-combatants (RSPE) which will continue to support the operations of the ESC. He expected that staff will be well trained after a further two years when the project ends;
- Mr Bashiri has taken a direct interest in the project and personally been involved in the expanding network liaising with region Directors to provide staff;
- He stated that the main target groups needing assistance were persons with disabilities, youth and widows and that more effort was needed to help jobseekers to start their own business and helping them to get access to micro finance;
- He expressed the hope that there would be more policy development and LMI capacity building in Ministry.

Director MoLSAMD Mazar I Sharif - Ms Fawzia Hamidi

- The Director said there was a very good working relationship between the ESC and the Ministry with regular meetings and the centre operating smoothly under the MoLSAMD organogram;
- The job application training courses conducted by ESC staff are highly regarded;
- The Governor has given strong support and it was hoped that ESC services would be expanded with further training and capacity building within the Ministry;
- Initiatives for women included 100 internees introduced to training in tailoring and then helped to start their own business; 200 women completed training in computer skills and fashion courses and 80 women referred to training at JICA tailoring courses;
- The Director is keen to improve access to ESC but reluctant to advertise too widely as the staff could not handle an inundation of jobseekers;
- All Government agencies in Mazar lodge their vacancies with the ESC;
- A register of ex combatants has already been started but the main target group are out in the villages and ESC will need to go to them as they cannot afford transport to the city.

Acting Governor Mazar I Sharif

- The Governor actively supports the ESC project;
- He stated the main reasons for unemployment in the area were:
 - The two year drought causing many rural folk to migrate to the cities;
 - Many Afghan refugees in other countries returning to the northern part of Afghanistan;
 - Some state owned businesses downsizing and being privatized especially the cotton, coke and construction companies;
 - A large government transportation company closing down with many losing their jobs;
- There was a need for construction skills and he asked that ESC concentrate on providing training and work opportunities and that local workers should have priority over outside workers.

Employers

A small sample of employers who have been using the service were contacted and they generally expressed their satisfaction with the services provided.

- A construction company uses ESC for professional, technical and office jobs and is very pleased with the service provided. It made the point that it does not need ESC help for unskilled or semiskilled labour or day wage labour as this is directly obtained from the market square. The company also uses the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) to circulate vacancies as well as University noticeboards
- The Human Resources Officer from an NGO who had previously been a jobseeker who found her job through the ESC 2 years ago was very happy with service provided. She uses the website to lodge vacancies and said that women do not generally know about ESC services and these should be advertised more.
- A cooking oil merchant company has used the ESC to recruit staff for office vacancies but does not need the ESC to recruit unskilled workers.

Employers Association – Afghanistan International Chamber of Commerce

- The Chamber has 7,000 members but believes that they do not have a good awareness of ESC services;
- Many employers use foreign labour because locals are demanding higher wages but are not keen to work;
- The Chamber is keen to strengthen links with ESC and offered to provide space in their premises for ESC to make contact with employers;
- It hopes to strengthen the working relationship with the ESC and is willing to participate in surveys.

Trade Unions – All Afghanistan Federation of Trade Unions; All Afghan Women Union; The National Union Journalists of Afghanistan

- Representatives expressed concern at the high level of unemployment in the country;
- One representative had received no information about the ESC project and had not been consulted;
- There were concerns that the Administrative Reform Commission will retrench many more workers from the public sector;
- Unemployment was seen as the biggest problem in many provinces and highlighted the need for job creation projects to be established;
- There was a need to educate workers about their rights;
- Trade Union assistance was offered to collaborate with ESC to identify particular groups of unemployed;
- Stressed the need for vocational training and self employment opportunities to be made available to jobseekers.

Training providers

- Japan International Cooperations Agency (JICA) Kabul uses ESC website to search for jobs, although jobs listed are only shown in English. They are keen to work with ESC in locations where they are running training courses for unemployed workers and would like to use ESC for job preparation classes before the end of training courses;
- Young Nak Training Centre obtains referrals for training courses from ESC. It is happy with the service but would like better screening against the criteria and checking to see availability and timing of courses before referring people.
- JICA Masar uses ESC for client referrals to classes. There is a well organized screening process and MoLSAMD staff work with JICA to find employment for trainees. They try to include vulnerable groups on training courses but with limited success so far.

6.2 Effectiveness

The following analysis of ESC workload and performance statistics (2004-2007) was carried out to obtain a clearer understanding of which categories of jobseekers and employers had been assisted and what results had been achieved.

Jobseeker registrations

Over the life of the project, ESC offices registered almost 33,000 jobseekers⁴. Female jobseekers comprised 10% of total registrations over the life of the project but increasing from 8% in 2004 to a high of 23% of new registrations during the first 5 months of 2007. Persons with disabilities represented 3% of total registrations, ex-combatants 3%; internally displaced persons 2% and refugees 11%. Table 1 shows registrations by category of jobseeker over the life of the Project.

Table 1: Jobseeker Registrations by Category

Category of jobseeker	2004 5mths	2005	2006	2007 5 mths	Total	% total Regist'ns
Total registered	1435	16095	11917	3808	32755	
Female	117	1196	1292	763	3368	10%
Male	1318	14678	10624	3045	29665	90%
Persons with Disabilities	n/a	516	356	69	941	3%
Ex-combatants	n/a	607	335	105	1047	3%
Internally displaced persons	n/a	247	278	81	606	2%
Refugees	n/a	961	2054	504	3519	11%

Source: Statistical Reports generated by Project staff September 2007.

Although the statistics for new registrations might suggest that usage of ESC was low, the CTA pointed out that this was not the case. He stated that “candidates were only registered after a first screening process in view of the high numbers of people coming to the ESCs. Instead of registering everybody who came to the ESCs only those were registered who had a certain level of qualification, a result of the approach towards selecting market segments. We wanted to avoid the mistake many ES do, drowning in the registration of large numbers of job seekers without being able to further help them. Those registered were only registered upon an extensive counselling process. Clearly this resulted in a relatively low number of registered job seekers. However, these job seekers enjoyed a fairly good coaching process. It is admittedly a drastic change of strategy as compared to the original and initial project document.”

Job Seekers by Occupational Group

It is also useful to review the occupational categories of jobseekers that were using ESC services.

- New registrations peaked in 2005 with 16,006 persons registering, dropping to 11,104 jobseekers in 2006 and only 3,257 for the first 5 months of 2007.
- 40% of all jobseekers were in the professional/technical/ clerical fields;
- Trades and semi-skilled workers represented 35% of registrations;
- Office workers represented 12%;
- Unskilled workers were 15% of total registrations.

Table 2 shows registrations by occupational group over the life of the project.

⁴ The evaluator did not have direct access to the database and was provided with printed Statistical Reports for each year of the project. Statistical data provided for 2007 covered the period from January to May 2007.

Table 2: Jobseekers by Occupational Groups⁵

	Category	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total	%
1	Legislators, senior officials and managers	0	3	5	3	11	0%
2	Professionals	248	953	987	454	2642	8%
3	Technicians	409	2987	2564	547	6507	20%
4	Clerks	257	1345	1734	415	3751	12%
5	Service workers, shop/market sales workers	28	800	550	135	1513	5%
6	Fishery and agricultural workers	21	466	333	92	912	3%
7	Craft and related trades	91	4540	2245	312	7188	23%
8	Plant and machine operators, assemblers	111	2605	1040	179	3935	12%
9	Elementary occupations	223	2307	1646	574	4750	15%
10	Others				546	546	2%
	Total	1388	16006	11104	3257	31755	

Source: Statistical Reports generated by Project staff September 2007.

Job Vacancies received by ESC

The number of job vacancies received by the ESC grew rapidly totalling 7,610 in 2006 compared with 4,021 vacancies in 2005. This trend continued during the first five months of 2007 with 3,666 job vacancies received.

However the number of job vacancies filled by the ESC (as recorded in the statistics) was disappointingly low. Of the 15,834 vacancies received over the life of the project, only 1,609 positions were confirmed as filled by the ESC. Although a total of 15,615 jobseekers had been referred to vacancies the ESC was able to confirm that only 1,609 persons had been successful in obtaining the job (or around 530 placements per year) and a further 1,500 had been assessed as unsuitable by the employer. The status of the remaining 12,506 persons referred to vacancies was unknown and a better system is needed to monitor progress in filling vacancies and in measuring the results of its efforts. Similarly of the 15,834 vacancies received by the ESC, only 1,609 were confirmed as filled leaving 14,225 jobs unfilled or of unknown status. Table 3 shows vacancies received, jobseekers referred and number of placements achieved over the life of the project.

Table 3: Vacancies received and filled

	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
No of vacancies received	537	4021	7610	3666	15834
No of jobseekers referred	1134	4909	6678	2894	15615
Number of placements	60	551	679	319	1609
Number NSE	139	570	526	265	1500
% of vacancies filled	11%	14%	9%	9%	10%

Source: Statistical Reports generated by Project staff September 2007.

Vacancies received by occupational and industry group

Another factor to be considered when reviewing ESC performance is the type of vacancies being received by occupational group and by industry sector. Tables 4 and 5 show vacancies received by these characteristics. Main features are:

By occupational group

- 53% of all vacancies received were for professional/technical positions;
- 16% were for clerical/office positions;

⁵ Some small discrepancies was noted in the total number of jobseeker registrations recorded in the summary tables compared with total number of registrations recorded by occupational group.

- Vacancies for trades and semi-skilled workers represented 11% of the total;
- Vacancies for shop assistants and service workers were 3% of the total;
- Vacancies for unskilled jobs were 13% of total vacancies received.

By industry sector:

- Vacancies lodged by NGOs accounted for 54% of all vacancies received;
- Vacancies for Government policy administration represented 11% of all vacancies;
- Finance, education and health sectors represented 13% of vacancies received;
- 10% of vacancies were from the building and construction sector;
- 3% of vacancies were from the manufacturing sector.

Table 4: Vacancies received by occupational group

	Category	2005	2006	2007	Total	%
1	Legislators, senior officials and managers	21	62	23	106	1%
2	Professionals	1460	2060	1115	4635	30%
3	Technicians	816	1958	539	3313	22%
4	Clerks	468	1202	832	2502	16%
5	Service workers and shop and market sales workers	69	324	45	438	3%
6	Fishery and agriculture	44	94	23	161	1%
7	Craft and related trades	471	579	227	1277	8%
8	Plant and machine operators and assemblers	149	224	43	416	3%
9	Elementary occupations	369	800	803	1972	13%
10	Others	154	307	16	477	3%
		4021	7610	3666	15297	

Source: Statistical Reports generated by Project staff September 2007.

Table 5: Vacancies received by industry sector

		2005	2006	2007	Total	%
A	Construction, building , grounds maintenance	70	698	837	1605	10%
B	Customer service restaurant food services	17	114	22	153	1%
C	Education, sciences	45	550	287	882	6%
D	Finance, banking economics	66	308	245	619	4%
E	government policy administration	638	935	196	1769	11%
F	Health care	75	344	101	520	3%
G	IT, communications	15	217	198	430	3%
H	Manufacturing and production	190	229	88	507	3%
I	Media	45	57	38	140	1%
J	Non-profit	2656	3871	1766	8293	54%
K	Sales, distribution	2	101	114	217	1%
L	Supply chain logistics	137	186	25	348	2%
		3956	7610	3917	15483	

Source: Statistical Reports generated by Project staff September 2007. (Figures for 2004 not available).

It was not possible to undertake a detailed analysis of individual vacancies received but the indications are that a very significant proportion of these vacancies were for positions requiring qualifications and experience of a professional or technical nature. Similarly there was a trend for international agencies and non government organisations to lodge their vacancies with the ESC as

an additional method of advertising and circulating vacancy information. This in turn meant that the ESC, in responding to the vacancy demands from these formal sector employers, concentrated on registering those jobseekers more likely to be competitive for these vacancies. While this may be regarded as a legitimate area of activity for the ESC it represents only a small proportion of the total labour market. More significantly this focus tended to exclude jobseekers who did not have the necessary education levels or experience (which often included a knowledge of English) to compete for these vacancies in the private sector.

On this issue, the CTA pointed out that “vacancies with the requirement for higher levels of specialization were lodged with the ESCs because there was a demand and very few qualified candidates in the market. It is exactly for this reason that the ESCs specialised on this market segment as employers needed help in this segment. In spite of the fact that the mismatch was so bad the ESCs were able to successfully serve the market in a considerable number of cases. Vacancies with the requirement for lower skills or for helpers were usually filled on the spot, e.g. construction sites.”

Outcomes achieved by the project included an average of 12,000 job seekers per year who went through a counselling guidance and referral interview, around 1,500 job seekers per year who were successfully referred to training courses, and around 500 job seekers per year who were placed into jobs⁶. The counselling interviews and referrals to training courses are important intermediate outcomes on the path to employment but more direct ESC assistance could also be offered to this group when they have completed their training courses. Regarding placements into employment, it is possible and even likely that the ESC may have been more successful than the figures indicate in placing jobseekers in the vacancies it received but it does not have effective measures in place to quickly establish the results of its vacancy referral efforts. The ESC needs to have a greater emphasis on the results it has achieved from all these efforts and one of the most effective measures of its success is number of people placed in employment.

The ESC has recently introduced more intensive efforts to follow up on vacancy referrals and staff are telephoning jobseekers who have been referred to find out the results of their interviews with employers. Nevertheless, given its limited resources and the high workload in servicing its current vacancy market for very low return when measured by jobs filled, a major dilemma for the ESC in the longer term is whether it should continue trying to service whatever vacancies are being lodged regardless of their degree of specialisation or the qualifications needed or the sector they came from (a high proportion of vacancies received called for specialised qualifications, skills or experience with 69% of vacancies received being for professional/technical/office positions) or whether it should redefine the target groups of employers and jobseekers it aims to assist. A further question relates to whether it should expand its efforts to provide more employment related advice and information services to a wider range of jobseekers.

Employer Visits

As the economy in Afghanistan began to recover, it was expected that there would be an increasing demand for workers on major reconstruction and rehabilitation projects and where skill shortages existed, there would be opportunities to train workers through training courses as well as on the job. A key role for ESC staff was to establish links with other existing programs and projects and collaborate or develop partnerships with major employers and projects being implemented.

⁶ Page 7, Table 2.2, TERMINAL REPORT Expansion of Employment Services AFG/06/01M/GTZ
Jacqueline Paul, Kabul, May 2007.

In 2005, the ESC implemented an ‘outreach’ program with specifically trained ESC staff undertaking regular field visits to employers and training institutions in their area. The objective was to advise employers of the services available, encourage them to use ESC services and to gather local labour market information. Over the last three years more than 4,416 employers were visited and 605 training institutions contacted. However, apart from a major successful recruitment exercise with a construction company in Jalalabad, the ESC does not appear to have succeeded in establishing key partnerships with employers especially in relation to major construction and rehabilitation projects.

Considerable scope exists for better targeting of companies by size and industry group and stronger links could also be developed at national level with Government and donor coordinating organisations to identify new projects as they are approved to enable swift follow up with implementing contractors or employers regarding their recruitment and requirements. In this context, the ILO experience in supporting the implementation of employment service arrangements in other countries is relevant. In Banda Aceh for instance, the ILO-supported Employment Services for the People of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Province (ESPNAD) introduced a ‘key client’ approach to improve its links and services to major employers in the construction sector and such an approach could also prove beneficial in Afghanistan.

ILO’s Key Client Approach – Banda Aceh

With the construction boom in Aceh gathering pace, ILO revised its operational approach to providing employment services and vocational training in order to maximize its effectiveness in the changing environment. A new ‘key client’ approach was developed that involves a reduction in the generic provision of ILO assistance to ‘all comers,’ and a more concentrated, tailored provision of ILO assistance to fewer organizations. The objective is to secure greater impact from existing resources by providing a better service to those large organizations that are critical to the success of the reconstruction effort.

Who are key clients, and how are they identified?

‘Key clients’ in this context referred to selected large organizations in the construction sector (housing and infrastructure) with significant operations in ILO’s focus districts of Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar. Potential clients were identified by ILO’s technical team. Discussions were then held with these organizations to ascertain their interest in pursuing a closer relationship with the ILO, and if this was positive, individually structured agreements were reached. It was expected that ILO’s key clients would change over time as construction schedules and recruiting requirements changed.

What services are offered to key clients?

The following outlines a broad framework for ILO’s integrated service:

1. Provide a more intensive, tailored service to source and place labour for key clients - ES resource allocation will shift *towards* key clients and *away* from the generic provision of employment services to all organisations
2. Provide specific, targeted short-course vocational training to workers or employees of key clients (including those sourced by ILO’s employment services component) as appropriate and feasible, with a view to contributing to greater quality and efficiency of construction.
3. Increasingly over time, deploy the expertise of other ILO components such as Enterprise Development and Local Economic Development in support of key clients to help rebuild the local economy.

Assistance to Vulnerable Groups

In order to assist specific target groups of jobseekers, the original project document proposal had included funding for an employment promotion package. It was envisaged that employers may receive subsidies where they provide on the job training for up to two months and a further wage subsidy up to four months when they employ eligible jobseekers. A bonus may also be paid to an employer where additional new equipment has been purchased for new staff. 'An employment promotion fund of US\$100,000 will be available to provide incentives to employers to assist eligible job seekers with training and work placement'⁷.

This component of the project did not eventuate and without the leverage which comes with the incentives or subsidies that would have been available under such an active labour market program (ALMP), the ESC had an extremely difficult task to intervene in an advocacy role with employers to encourage them to employ jobseekers from vulnerable groups, particularly those who lacked skills or were illiterate.

For jobseekers who were not qualified or competitive for vacancies received by the ESC, staff offered counselling and employment-related advice and information as well as referral to training courses where appropriate. However the statistics indicate that very few clients from vulnerable groups came to register at the ESC with persons with disabilities representing 3% of total registrations, ex-combatants 3%; internally displaced persons 2% and refugees 11% (Table 1).

Ex-Combatants

The original project document included ex-combatants as specific target group to be assisted with ESC to provide group information sessions on job search skills and employment options and direct employment assistance to this group. It was envisaged that the ESC would work on the reintegration phase with UNDP's Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) which involved the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of approximately 55,000 ex-combatants; however the project did not develop formal arrangements with the program which meant that it did not have direct access to ex-combatants during their reintegration phase.

There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly ANBP was initiated in 2003 and was well underway by the time the ESC project began its implementation some 18 months later. The reintegration process itself focussed primarily on the agricultural sector, with most ex-combatants trained through the ANBP receiving informal training in small workshops and many starting their own business with the toolkit provided at the end of the training. More than 70% of the ex-combatants returned to their villages or farms to support their families and they had no easy access to the limited number of ESC offices in the country.

Under a new phase of operations, the ESC will be supported under the Reintegration Support Project for Ex-combatants and their families (RSPE) which aims to provide this group with specific assistance. However, new strategies will need to be developed and registration procedures should also be streamlined to ensure that ESC services reach this group. Mobile ESC services may also need to be developed to ensure that these jobseekers living in villages and rural areas are able to access these services.

Advice and Information

The ESC with its limited resources and sparse coverage of Afghanistan has made significant progress in establishing a presence in the marketplace. An important aspect of its services has

⁷ Page 14, Project Document: Expansion of Labour Market Services to nine Provinces in Afghanistan, January 2005.

been to provide advice and information to jobseekers and this access to good labour market information is an important first step in their search for work. As improved access to labour market information becomes available from a variety of sources including the Labour Market Information and Analysis Unit in MoLSAMD, the ESC should expand the range and availability of the advice and information it can offer to jobseekers.

Vocational Training Courses

One of the original objectives of the project was to provide employment assistance to graduates of training courses and the ESC has not developed specific strategies to do this. Nevertheless, staff have established good working arrangements with local vocational training providers and ESC have referred almost 8,000 jobseekers to vocational training courses during the 3 years of the project with a total of 4,561 persons being accepted on these courses. While these are not 'placements' as such, they are successful intermediate outcomes on the path to employment with the expectation is that these jobseekers will acquire improved skills to make them more competitive in the workforce.

Although it had developed good links with training providers in referring potential trainees to their courses, the ESC did not have well-developed arrangements to provide employment assistance to course participants after they had completed their training. One reason given was that "Unfortunately, the majority of training opportunities available so far in Afghanistan were of a short term nature (three to six months) and is therefore of limited use with regard to placement into jobs after successful completion of the training."⁸ Lack of ESC resources was also a factor.

It was noted during the evaluation that the NSDP, which is being implemented by MoLSAMD, is now contracting vocational training providers to train Afghans for wage and self-employment. To ensure that this skills training is labour market driven, it requires all participating training providers to place at least 75% of their graduates in either waged or self-employment on the completion of their training. It is also helping training providers to set up their own placement units to give employment assistance to these trainees when they complete their courses. This is an obvious area for potential collaboration between NSDP, the ESC and individual training providers and the ESC should explore improved working arrangements with these organisations to achieve greater placements into work.

In a recent study conducted by the Labour Market Information and Analysis Unit of MoLSAMD which is being developed as part of NSDP, their assessment of ESC performance stated:

*"The ESC system is not well utilized by its various clients, including enterprise managers, the Chambers or the unemployed. Its services do not, and probably never will, reach the people who are in most need of advice and assistance. The general consensus is that more must be done by MOLSA if it intends to be a major force in what is acknowledged as a key component of the economic development of the country and the region."*⁹

This report only came to the evaluator's attention on the last day of the mission and there was no opportunity to discuss the basis for this assessment with the LMI Unit in MoLSAMD. However, steps should be taken to clarify the expected role of the ESC in assisting its clients, including scope for collaboration with individual training providers where appropriate.

⁸ Page 4, Expansion of Employment Services Centre in 9 Provinces and Kabul. FINAL REPORT 30 April 2006.

⁹ Page 54, 'A Study of Human Resource Supply and Labour Market Demand' conducted by: The Labour Market Information and Analysis Unit of MoLSAMD and supported by The National Skills Development Programme. July 2007.

On this issue, the CTA advised that “it should be noted here that the NSDP only became fully operational in 2006. The first graduates left courses towards the end of 2006. Of course the ESC network is expected to respond to these opportunities.” The CTA also advised that it was expected that the ESC network would have a clear role within the NSDP, evolving later during the project implementation, to assist VET providers in orienting their training more towards market needs. This role was identified by all the stakeholders in view of the fact that most of the VET carried out during 2004 - 2006 did not really take into account the market requirements, which was one major justification for the creation of the NSDP.

6.3 Efficiency

Jobseeker Registration

Jobseekers visiting the ESC office in Kabul must first make an inquiry and be ‘screened’ at an external gridded window to determine their needs. There may be good reasons for this step, including security considerations, but it does not make for good service or easy access for jobseekers. Each potential client is asked to complete a four page Jobseeker Registration Form before being scheduled for an appointment with the Placement Unit which will then offer either general counselling or an interview for a specific vacancy as part of the pre-selection process. Completed registration forms are then given to the Registration Division where the data on the jobseeker is entered into the database. These procedures involve double handling and may be manageable when the number of registrations is low but would not be able to cope if there was a surge in jobseekers wanting to visit the ESC.

Scope exists to review the reception procedures and place greater emphasis on service to the clients rather than processes to be followed. The registration form and the related registration procedures could be streamlined and some multi-skilling of staff introduced to avoid double-handling of forms, e.g. the person conducting the placement interview has a computer on their desks and could enter the required data during or at the end of each interview. ESCs would benefit from introducing some ‘best practice’ guidelines relating to jobseeker reception, interviews and data capture to provide a more efficient service to jobseekers.

ESC Database

The Access database being used in the ESC is operational in its basic functionalities but is limited in its present form. The CTA advised that the design of software and the provision of hardware used by the ESC were done locally to ensure that they would be sustainable and well maintained.

Each ESC has its own database using an Access software application which includes data sets covering Jobseeker registrations, employers, training providers and micro-finance institutions. The database is rudimentary in design and retrieval or cross-referencing of records is not easily achieved. A demonstration of the software showing how job seekers are found to match against particular vacancies also appeared difficult to operate and non user-friendly. There was no easy way to ‘archive’ records of jobseekers that were no longer looking for work and, as the database continues to expand, capacity limitations may begin to affect its performance.

Statistical reports are prepared by individual ESCs each month and sent to the project office by email or disc where monthly reports are aggregated by one of the project staff to present the overall report. These ESC reports require user intervention to compile using a simplified ‘click and drag’ query function but some simple enhancements would enable the reporting process to be streamlined and more efficient with reports being automatically generated using the capability of

the software. A copy of the database for each ESC is maintained in the project office and updated monthly but there is no single aggregated database which would enable wider job search and matching options. The complete ESC database is available on only one computer in the project office and is updated monthly.

It is considered that some further enhancements would significantly improve the usefulness and efficiency of the database. The ILO has been involved in developing ES systems and software in a number of different countries such as Sri Lanka, Timor Leste and Banda Aceh and drawing on that experience it would be very useful to have some generic database design guidelines or even a software package that could be customised and implemented in new situations without having to design the system from 'scratch'.

6.4 Impact

In many respects, the ESC network in Afghanistan is operating in a manner similar to a traditional labour exchange systems in more advanced countries and this may explain its appeal to NGOs and other private sector employers needing to recruit well qualified technical and professional staff and other 'white collar' workers. However, given the very high levels of unemployment and very large informal economy, it has not been as responsive to the needs of these other groups. Nevertheless, the ESC has successfully introduced counselling and information services as well as referral to vocational training courses and this is meeting a need that was not previously being met.

A major justification for this project on the demand side was the expectation that the reconstruction program in Afghanistan would require large numbers of workers particularly in the construction sector and that the ESC could play an important role in meeting the demands for labour from these projects. While the pace of reconstruction has not been as rapid as originally expected and many other factors have also intervened, scope exists for the ESC to selectively target this market more effectively.

The following assessment was noted in a recent study released by The Labour Market Information and Analysis Unit of MOLSAMD.

*"The efforts of the Employment Service Centres (ESCs) of the MOLSAMD to balance supply with demand, is also recorded. However it is felt that the large numbers of semi-skilled and rural people in need of income earning opportunities are somewhat overlooked by the existing network. Alternatives to the ESCs that recognize the informal coping mechanisms that have traditionally found employment should be investigated as a means of gathering real time labour market data. Privatization of some segments of the employment service should also be assessed, especially for foreign worker placement, and as a means of tracing expatriate worker numbers internally."*¹⁰

Gender

Women constituted one of the target groups of jobseekers under the project and in order to encourage women to seek assistance from the ESCs waiting rooms were made available and female vocational counsellors provided. ESC staff when visiting training providers, employers and other agencies advocated for the education and employment of women. Women are also employed in the ESCs themselves, ensuring that the "capacity building" in MoLSA includes female staff. The training delivered to all ESC staff, male and female, included a section on gender and ESC staff were made aware of the situation and interests of Afghan women and the

¹⁰ Page 8, 'A Study of Human Resource Supply and Labour Market Demand' conducted by: The Labour Market Information and Analysis Unit of MOLSAMD and supported by The National Skills Development Programme. July 2007.

assistance they need. All data collected on jobseekers, training providers and employers can be disaggregated by gender.

In 2005, an ESC was established in the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Kabul and staff from that Ministry were trained to provide services to female jobseekers. The office operated separately for a period of 8 months before being incorporated into the functions of the main ESC in Kabul. Following a meeting with the Deputy Minister MoWA during the evaluation, the Ministry is keen to initiate ways of working more closely with ESC in helping female jobseekers to find work.

6.5 Sustainability

A key feature throughout the life of the project has been the active involvement of the MoLSAMD and its staff during implementation. The Deputy Minister has personally supported the project from its inception and the operations of the ESC have been incorporated into the organogram of the Ministry. In Kabul, 32 staff from the Ministry work on the ESC project and a further 55 staff work in ESC in the other ESC locations. Nevertheless, capacity building will be achieved only over the long term and although significant and successful foundations have been laid for the ESC network, the capacity of the Ministry itself also needs to improve. Staff from the Ministry who work in the ESCs receive a monthly training allowance which is an attractive incentive to help consolidate their learning and experience and to maintain continuity. Whilst this is beneficial in the short term, long term sustainability remains questionable both in terms of capacity and funding. Considerable progress has been made over the last four years to improve the Ministry's human resources and technical capacity but much work still needs to be done.

ILO is providing MoLSAMD with technical assistance to restructure the Ministry and to introduce a strategic planning approach to its operations and this together with the Government's wider Civil Service reforms may better equip the Ministry to take over the running of the ESC network when the current project is completed. The other determining factor will be its ability to continue funding the operations of the ESC from its budget.

A number of specific issues will need to be addressed over the next phase of the project:

- It will be important for the Ministry to develop a strategic approach to integrating ESC activities into its overall Manpower operations;
- Clarification of the ongoing role of the Ministry's public sector recruitment activities. MoLSAMD still maintains its public sector recruitment offices but the bulk of this work simply involves the process of certifying the academic credentials of applicants who have already obtained a position with another Government agency. There is no longer any compulsory requirement for Agencies to lodge their vacancies with the Manpower Department and most agencies recruit their own staff directly and send them to the Manpower Department simply for the certification process (according to the Director, 80% of all applicants coming to the Kabul Manpower Department have already obtained a job with a Government Agency);
- The need for continuity in the management of ESC offices. At present, all of the ESC Managers have been recruited externally by the project, are not members of staff from MoLSAMD and are relatively well paid compared to Ministry staff (although Kabul office was previously managed by a Ministry staff).
- The need to clarify the long-term role of the ESC and the sectors and target groups it will serve. As ESC operations move into a new phase under RSPE, there will be a stronger focus on providing employment services to ex-combatants and their families and this will divert resources from other activities.

7. Conclusions

1. The project has been successful in establishing a network of ESCs which are now fully operational. There has been very good collaboration with MoLSAMD at the national level and also in each Province where ESC were set up. Good working arrangements have been in place throughout the implementation process and the ESC network has been formally incorporated into the Ministry's structure and appears on its organogram reporting to Manpower Department. A total of 87 staff from the Ministry are now working in ESCs in various roles around the country.
2. The task of opening new ESCs and recruiting and training staff to work in these offices has been a major challenge for the project and dominated project activities during the first two phases of the project.
3. An extensive staff training program has been delivered with all staff receiving initial induction training followed up with on the job supervision and regular follow up training. Staff training materials have been developed including the ESC training manual, which is used both for initial training and as a guide to office procedures, an on-the-job training manual for use by the outreach team, a training manual to provide guidance to the staff working in the disability support unit and 'Job Search Solution' – which was developed for use in two-day job preparation courses for unemployed jobseekers.
4. The project had to overcome a major cultural issue in having ESC services accepted. The heritage of patronage contradicts merit-based labour market services and the ESC network had to advocate the benefits of services when undertaking promotional work with employers. At the same time, many job seekers assumed that a recommendation to an employer by the ESC was a sufficient requirement to be selected for a post, just as it was in the traditional family based system.
5. No Steering Committee was formed to oversight project implementation and, as a result, the project did not benefit from potential inputs from external representatives or other stakeholders or from the guidance and management support that a Steering Committee may have provided.
6. The absence of 'backstopping' support missions and the inability to organise inputs by international experts on employment services placed a much greater onus on the CTA and project technical staff to implement the project's training and work strategies without access to other appropriate expertise envisaged for the project. This is seen as a major deficiency which impacted on the quality of the service being implemented.
7. The ESC has successfully introduced counselling and information services as well as referral to vocational training courses and this is meeting a need that was not being met previously.
8. In many respects, the ESC network in Afghanistan has developed along similar lines to a traditional labour exchange system seen in more advanced countries. However because of limited resources the ESC has responded to the immediate vacancy demands coming from a particular sector and its coverage of other sectors remains low. On the jobseeker side rather than registering large numbers of jobseekers the ESC used a screening process and concentrated on registering jobseekers with certain levels of qualifications, skills or

experience that it was most likely to be able to assist, The number of jobseekers from vulnerable groups registering with the ESC remains very low.

9. A major justification for this project on the demand side was the expectation that the reconstruction program in Afghanistan would require large numbers of workers particularly in the construction sector and that the ESC could play an important role in meeting the demands for labour from these projects. While the pace of reconstruction has not been as rapid as originally expected and many other factors have also intervened, scope exists for the ESC to selectively target this market more effectively and develop collaborative arrangements or partnerships with key clients to meet their recruitment and training requirements.
10. Outcomes achieved by the project included an average of 12,000 job seekers per year who went through a counselling, guidance or referral interview, around 1,500 job seekers per year who were successfully referred to training courses, and around 500 job seekers per year who were placed into jobs. In terms of job placements, ESC statistics show that over the life of the project only 10% of all jobseekers referred to positions were successful in obtaining the job and only 10% of all vacancies received by the ESC were filled by ESC action. The reality may be much better than these figures suggest but the ESC needs to have a much stronger focus on measuring its results and should more actively follow up with employers and jobseekers to find out the outcomes of its referrals to jobs.
11. Although a wide range of activities were undertaken, many ESC activities focus more on the process rather than the outcomes. Jobseeker registration and data capture procedures are cumbersome and the data base software although fully operational is not user-friendly. Individual databases are not linked making some tasks more time consuming and standard reports are not automatically generated and require considerable user intervention to prepare.
12. ESC has developed good relationships with vocational training providers and refers many jobseekers to courses that are available however it has not been so active in assisting graduates of training courses into employment. Now that the NSDP requires training providers to establish placement units to help its trainees to find work, there is an opportunity for the ESC to develop stronger collaboration with NSDP and individual training providers to offer placement assistance to course graduates.
13. The underlying assumption in the original project document that the ESC would become fully operational very quickly was overly optimistic. In fact the project has done remarkably well to achieve so much in the three years of its operation. The logistics and demands of opening a network of 10 offices and recruiting and training staff for each location should not be underestimated and in reality it was not until the third phase of the project that it could claim to be fully operational and in a position to embark on further development and improvements to its services.
14. There were many obstacles and constraints that the project faced along the way and key issues listed in various progress reports included:
 - The security situation in Afghanistan has not been stable and has varied between provinces.

- The project experienced some initial difficulties in arranging with the Ministry for suitable staff to be seconded to work in the ESCs and there was some turnover of staff.
- Staff working in the ESCs in such places as Kandahar and Jalalabad experienced greater restrictions in their activities, than do their colleagues in Kabul or other locations.
- The strength of local economies differed significantly.
- During the winter months, construction activities were often not possible.
- In summer the oppressive heat particularly in the southern regions resulted in fewer jobseekers attending the ESCs.
- Language was another challenge to achieving the objectives with the language of the PMU being English, while that of the direct recipients was Dari.
- While interpretation and translation were routine components of the project, it cannot be claimed with complete certainty that the intended messages were the messages received. This had implications for the professional development of the ESC staff, as well as for relationships formed with cooperating ministries and agencies.
- Also impacting on this project were cultural traditions and beliefs, from notions about the role of women in society, to perceptions of persons with disabilities. In assisting these two groups, the ESCs had to address long-standing prejudices and biases and become advocates for change, if Afghan women and persons with disabilities were to avail themselves of the same opportunities as non-disabled male jobseekers.

8. Recommendations

1. A good basic foundation has been established for ESC operations but a more strategic and well targeted approach should be developed. On the demand side, ESC should implement a 'key clients' strategy to target major employers, organisations and projects likely to have major recruitment needs as part of the reconstruction effort and establish partnerships or collaboration arrangements – The ILO 'key clients' strategy developed in Banda Aceh could be used as a guide.
2. A stronger 'service' culture should be developed with greater focus on achieving results. Jobseeker reception and registration procedures should be streamlined and better internal procedures introduced to obtain results of referrals to vacancies.
3. ILO should consider developing 'best practice' guidelines for jobseeker reception, interview and data capture which could be used when future projects of this type are being implemented.
4. The absence of 'backstopping' support missions and the difficulty in identifying suitable international experts to make appropriate inputs on employment services were major deficiencies which impacted on the quality of the service being implemented. It is recommended that specialist inputs should be organised in advance and appropriate 'backstopping' missions scheduled to ensure that the necessary guidance, expertise and support is provided during implementation.
5. Further enhancements to the database software would significantly improve the usefulness and efficiency of the database. The ILO has been involved in developing ES systems and software in a number of different countries such as Sri Lanka, Timor Leste and Banda Aceh and drawing on that experience consideration should be given to developing some generic

database design guidelines or even a software package that could be customised and implemented in new situations without having to design the system from ‘scratch’.

6. ESC has developed good relationships with vocational training providers and refers many jobseekers to courses that are available however it has not been so active in assisting graduates of training courses into employment. Now that the NSDP requires training providers to establish placement units to help its trainees to find work, the ESC should develop stronger collaboration and working arrangements with NSDP and individual training providers to offer placement assistance to course graduates.
7. The ESC is already providing some information and counselling services to jobseekers but this should be expanded further to allow a wider range of jobseekers including those from vulnerable groups to gain access to these services.

9. Lessons Learned

- Short funding cycles can cause some uncertainty as well as lack of continuity and planning at certain points during a project particularly when further funding needs to be negotiated. Where new offices have to be set up and capacity building is also required there are usually significant lead times before the project becomes fully operational and assumptions should not be made that proposed strategies or services can be implemented immediately at the outset of the project.
- Inability to organise inputs by international experts on employment services can diminish the intended impact of programs and services being implemented and reduce the effectiveness of staff training. Wherever possible, specialist inputs should be organised in advance and delivered when required at key points during project implementation.
- It is important to ensure that suitably qualified and experienced IT staff are used when system software is being developed and that the functions and system design requirements for any ESC database are specified in advance and that ‘user testing’ is carried out during the design stage to maximise usefulness and relevance of the application.
- Use of a Steering Committee with external representatives is an important way to ensure more inputs come from other stakeholders and better guidance and management support is provided to project implementation team. Efforts should always continue ensure that a Steering Committee is established when implementing projects of this nature.
- Without leverage, the ESC will always face difficulties in promoting the claims of vulnerable groups. This becomes even more difficult when the labour market itself is not growing rapidly and new job opportunities are not being generated. Projects should include a component providing financial or other incentives to employers who recruit workers from vulnerable groups.

10. Annexes

Attachment 1: Description of Technical Services provided by Implementing Partner

Description of the technical services by the implementing partner including the activities not completed as per the service contract dated 29 April 2004 including the addendum dated 26 March 2005 “Association of Experts in the field of Migration and Development Co-operation (AGEF)”

Project Title: Expansion of Employment Service Centres to nine Provinces in Afghanistan

Duration: **Phase 2 - 11 months to 31 March 2006**

Starting date: **May 2005**

1. Implementing partner

The implementing partner AGEF, the “Association of Experts in the Fields of Migration and Development Co-operation” is a non-profit making organization formed in 1992 and has been active in Afghanistan since April 2002. AGEF Afghanistan is registered since 10th August 2002 under number 953-638 at the Ministry of Planning of the Islamic Transitional Government of Afghanistan.

At present, AGEF implements the program “Return to Employment in Afghanistan (REA)” an employment promotion initiative funded by the Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ), through the ZAV-Zentralstelle fuer Arbeitsvermittlung, Germany. REA targets Afghan refugees (incl. IDPs, Cross Border Migrants, as well as locally displaced) aiming to return permanently to Afghanistan. Program activities are carried out in the major Afghan cities (Kabul, Jalalabad, Herat, Mazar, Kunduz, Paktia, Bamyan and Kandahar) and consist of job placement, salary support, business start-up support and a large number of short-term training-on-the-job (mainly aimed at construction trades) and qualification courses. These qualification courses include i.e.: basic & advanced English skills, English correspondence, office management, Project Cycle Management, secretarial assistance, bookkeeping, basic & advanced Computer Skills, network administration, methods and didactics for trainers, etc.

2. Objectives

This project will contribute to the reduction of poverty and to the social and economic development of Afghanistan by providing access to improved labour market services at national and provincial level.

It intends to achieve this by implementing the following three immediate objectives:

1. Establishing Employment Service Centres (ESCs) in nine provinces and ensuring that there are well-trained staffs in these centres able to provide specific advisory and labour market services to assist employers and targeted groups of jobseekers.
2. Identifying employment and training opportunities and referring jobseekers to employment with major projects, private sector employers and other employment options.
3. Providing targeted jobseekers with relevant and up-to-date advice and assistance on training and self-employment opportunities available in their local labour market.

This project deals specifically with phase 2 covering activities up to the end of March 2006 and has been prepared on the assumption that the project will have funding after the completion of the on-going project.

3. Duration of the services

The duration of the services is for a period of 11 months. The presumable project start is 1 May 2005 and will build on the activities started under phase 1.

4. Operational support

The implementing partner will deliver following operational support regarding local staff, vehicles, equipment and maintenance.

Local staff

The implementing partner's personnel are AGEF officials and subject to the AGEF staff regulations; the staff will be responsible exclusively for the existing project. Accordingly the implementing partner will be responsible for all expenditures in connection with the assignment of personnel, including allowances and local transport. The recruitment of the staff will be done by AGEF.

Vehicles

- The two vehicles purchased under phase 1 for AGEF staff at the Project Management Unit will be maintained by AGEF.
- Two vehicles will be hired by AGEF for 11 months and used by the ESC team Kabul.
- Nine vehicles will be hired by AGEF for up to 11 months and used by the ESC teams of the nine provinces.

Equipment and Maintenance

Project Management Office

The implementing partner will continue with the arrangements for the Project Management Unit as under phase 1. This service done by AGEF includes the maintenance of purchased equipment, furniture, generator etc. and replacement of equipment wherever required.

ESC offices

- a) The implementing partner will continue with the arrangements for the ESC offices in Kabul and in the nine nominated provinces. This service done by AGEF includes the purchase and maintenance of equipment for the Kabul ESC and ESCs in up to nine provinces with office furniture, photocopiers, computer/printers, air-conditioning and generators. Where ever the government is unable to provide office space free of charge, AGEF will, in consultation with the ILO, either rent, reconstruct or newly construct office buildings at government premises and will pay water, electricity and fuel. AGEF will make available a communication structure including internet access and stationery.

All equipment and vehicles purchased under the project will remain property of the ILO and will be, upon conclusion of the project, disposed off according to ILO rules and regulations.

5. Reports

The implementing partner will provide within the first week of each month a financial report on the previous month expenditure and on a quarterly basis a narrative report on the previous activities against work plan.

6. Inputs of the implementing partner

In order to reach the three immediate objectives following inputs must be fulfilled by the technical activities of the implementing partner:

1. Maintenance of the operational project implementation capacity
2. Maintenance of operational ESC offices in Kabul and in the already established 4 provinces
3. Establishment of ESC offices in a further 5 provinces
4. Strengthening of the staff capacities around labour market services
5. Strengthening of the ESC capacity to undertake promotional visits to employers and training institutions
6. Establishment of links to training institutions and local support network
7. Collection, analysis and distribution of relevant local labour market information
8. Identification and assistance of jobseekers about to complete skills training courses
9. Implementation of programs to assist specific target groups
10. Establishment of group information sessions for different target groups of jobseekers

7. Activities of the technical services by the implementing partner AGEF to fulfil the immediate objectives

Immediate Objective 1

ESCs established in Kabul and nine provinces with the capacity to provide a range of labour market services.

Input Establishment of an operational project implementation capacity:

Activities:

1. Purchase and install office furniture, equipment, computers, printers and other requisites for the office of the Project Advisory Committee;
2. Maintain project management unit;
3. Develop Project Work Plan;
4. Develop a plan to monitor progress;
5. Evaluate the project.

Input Establishment of operational ESC offices in Kabul and in 9 nominated provinces:

Activities:

1. Confirm the locations of each ESC;
2. Select premises and complete renovations for the ESC site in each location;
3. Purchase and install office furniture, equipment, computers, printers and other requisites;
4. Select ESC staff and conduct induction training;
5. Establish management, administrative and financial reporting arrangements;
6. Install registration and referral services for targeted unemployed jobseekers;
7. Identify and agree on communications and exchange of information requirements between the ESC and the ministry;

Completion of outstanding deliverables of 1st Phase contract:

1. Construction of ESC Centres in Herat, Kunduz and Mazar
2. Expansion of ESC Centres in Gardez, Jaujan, Pullhi Khumri and Kandahar

Input Strengthening of the staff capacities around labour market services:

Activities:

1. Design and prepare introductory workshop for all staff on overall objectives and functions of the ESC;
2. Conduct workshop for nominated staff;
3. Design and develop a training program on interviewing skills and vocational guidance methods;
4. Select staff to undertake training courses;
5. Organize and conduct the training courses for nominated staff;
6. Develop ESC operations manual to assist staff in their work;
7. Implement methods to assist job seekers to make realistic job choices in line with their experience and skills.

Immediate Objective 2

To identify employment and training opportunities and refer jobseekers to major projects, private sector employers and other employment options.

Input Strengthening of the ESC capacity to undertake promotional visits to employers and training:

Activities:

1. Design and prepare training workshop on operations of the labour market, marketing and promotional skills and establishing links with other players;
2. Conduct training workshops for staff in marketing and advocacy skills in preparation for employer visits;
3. Conduct follow-up training for staff including field visits and role play exercises;
4. Establish links with local area based development initiatives and organizations;

5. Maintain regular contact with relevant international agencies, employers and NGOs to identify vacancies and skill shortages;
6. Actively promote the skills of trainees who are completing training courses;
7. Establish and maintain contact with other local agencies and organizations providing support to job-seekers;
8. Develop networks with relevant local Ministries and organizations to encourage collaborative responses to meeting identified needs.

Input Establishment of links to training institutions and local support network:

Activities:

1. Provide specific advice to local training providers to customise courses for jobseekers in areas of demand;
2. Establish regular communication and coordination meetings with local agencies and partners to promote ESC and share information;
3. Develop and maintain a register of local service providers in the areas of small business development and vocational skills training;
4. Assess micro-credit possibilities and identify potential partners to support small business development initiatives;
5. Provide information on employment related options including skills training and self-employment.

Input Collection, analysis and distribution of relevant local labour market information:

Activities:

1. Establish a labour market database for jobseeker records, vacancies and other labour market data;
2. Design and develop a training course for staff on labour market information collection, analysis and dissemination;
3. Select staff and conduct training course on LMI;
4. Using local labour market surveys and other sources of information, prepare local regional profiles, employment and training options and entrepreneurship and small business development opportunities;
5. Develop brochures on specific labour market information topics;
6. Arrange printing and publication of pamphlets and brochures.

Immediate Objective 3

To provide relevant and up-to-date advice, information and assistance to jobseekers on training and self-employment opportunities available in the local labour market.

Input Identification and assistance of jobseekers about to complete skills training courses:

Activities:

1. Obtain details of trainees attending training courses being provided by MOLSA, NGOs and other Ministries;
2. Arrange group information sessions for trainees about to complete their training courses on job search techniques and employment options;
3. Match trainees from local training courses to potential job vacancies and arrange interviews with employers;
4. Liaise with major projects to secure employment opportunities for graduating trainees;

5. Provide advice and assistance to trainees on employment prospects, self-employment opportunities and other issues.

Input Implementation of programs to assist specific target groups

Activities:

1. Collaborate with ANBP to provide labour market services and information to ex-soldiers under the new beginnings program;
2. Provide assistance to ex-soldiers under timetable agreed with ANBP;
3. Develop, in collaboration with MMD, programs to provide training and employment assistance to persons with disabilities;
4. Implement assistance to specific groups in line with agreement with MMD;
5. In collaboration with MWA and Afghan Ministry of Commerce, provide targeted assistance to meet the special needs of women seeking employment or small business opportunities;
6. Implement employment assistance programs for women as agreed with MoWA.

Input Establishment of group information sessions for different target groups of jobseekers:

Activities:

1. Prepare a training workshop on skills and techniques to deliver group information sessions for jobseekers;
2. Conduct training workshop for nominated staff from each ESC;
3. Arrange information campaigns to attract specific jobseekers from nominated target groups to the ESC;
4. Identify local employers, NGOs and training institutions to provide input and participate in group information sessions;
5. Conduct group information sessions for selected jobseekers in each ESC;
6. Develop material on specific topics relevant to the target groups;
7. Arrange printing and publication of material and brochures.



TERMS OF REFERENCE
FOR
Final Independent Evaluation
of
Expansion of Employment Services to Nine Provinces in
Afghanistan
(AFG/03/03M/FRG & AFG/06/01/GTZ)

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE:	Afghanistan (Gardez, Ghazni, Herat, Jalalabad, Jowzjan, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Mazar, Pul-e Khumri)
WORK PERIOD FOR EVALUATION:	5 to 20 September 2007
EXECUTING AGENCY:	International Labour Organization (ILO)
SOURCE OF FUNDS/DONORS:	Government of Germany
DONOR CONTRIBUTIONS:	USD 3,455,686
TOR PREPARATION DATE:	July 2007

Introduction and rational for evaluation

Following the removal of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan was confronted with the devastation rendered by two decades of war and conflict. Poverty, illiteracy, destruction of infrastructure, unemployment and underemployment were, and are, pervasive.

It was in this context that the project “Expansion of Employment Services in Kabul and Nine Provinces” was initiated in 2003. With the ILO as the Executing Agency and AGEF as the Implementing Partner, with funding from the German Government, implementation began in May 2004, with an envisaged timeframe of three years. The Project was conceived as a contribution to the collective national and international effort to eradicate poverty and promote socio-economic development. The total project budget is USD 3,455,686.

The independent final evaluation have not been conducted before the project phase 3 ended in March 2007 due to some changes and certain limitations faced by the project i.e. new funding arrangements, changes in senior project personnel and difficulty in identifying an independent evaluator willing to travel to Afghanistan. The proposed evaluation has been postponed to be undertaken in September 2007 and the project is currently in its fourth phase.

The evaluation shall be complied with the UN evaluation norms and standards and OECD/DAC Evaluation quality Standards¹¹.

Background on project and context

The project location is in Afghanistan¹². The implementing partner was AGEF. The project rational was that jobseekers, training providers and employers could be linked through the provision of labour market services by Employment Services Centres (ESCs). Such linkages could help reduce the level of unemployment, promote the acquisition of needed skills and, more broadly, combat poverty.

In its conception the Project defined three objectives. These were the:

- a) establishment of Employment Service Centres (ESCs) in Kabul and nine provinces, accompanied by capacity building activities at the participating Ministries such that there would be well-trained staff in these centres able to provide specific advisory and labour market services to assist employers and targeted groups of jobseekers;
- b) identification of employment and training opportunities and referral of jobseekers to employment with major projects, private sector employers and other employment options, and
- c) provision of relevant and up-to-date advice and assistance on training and self-employment opportunities available in the local labour market to targeted groups of jobseekers.

¹¹ See <http://www.ilo.org/eval/policy>

¹² The Project Main Office is located in Kabul, with Employment Services Centres (ESCs) in Gardez, Ghazni, Herat, Jalalabad, Jowzjan, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Mazar and Pul-e Khumri.

The Project sought to realise these three objectives during three years for which funding was provided, with Phase 3 concluding at the end of March 2007.

Management of the Project lies with the Project Management Unit (PMU), which comprises the Chief Technical Advisor, Finance and Administration Officer, and Trainer as the international personnel. The national staff include an IT Officer, an Interpreter/Translator and English Language Teacher, Field Officers, a Job Application Training Trainer and a Finance and Administration Assistant. The Project Site Officers (PSOs), of which there are eight, manage the ESCs in the provinces. Project management and implementation involved close consultation and cooperation with the MoLSAMD.

From its commencement in 2004, the Project proceeded from the physical establishment of ESCs and their being supplied with necessary furniture, equipment and materials, to the selection and training of staff who progressively acquired the skills, knowledge and abilities required of vocational counsellors, along with administration and management duties. In 2004 ESCs were opened in Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad, Kunduz and Mazar. 2005 saw the opening of an additional four ESCs, in Gardez, Kandahar, Pul-e Khumri and Jowzjan. The tenth ESC was opened in Ghazni in 2006.

For specific groups of people to receive focussed attention, basic structures and operations must first be in place. Accordingly, the Project concentrated on building the physical infrastructure, equipping the offices and providing basic training to the staff. After the acquisition of generic skills, the specialisation of services was then able to proceed.

Thus, jobseekers, in the provinces where the ESCs are operating, have access to free information and guidance on training, employment and self-employment, with referral to training and wage employment vacancies.

In its implementation, the Project combined technical assistance with concrete activities that build capacity, provide physical infrastructure, and educate and train individuals in employment, administration and management functions. This holistic approach to aiding the development of the labour market was pursued as a means of empowering the local actors and promoting sustainability.

The Project has entered a Fourth Phase. This fourth phase, is however, limited to the provision of a CTA. Due to the new funding arrangements, with UNDP as the executing agency and the ILO as the implementing agency, the ESC Project has become the Reintegration Support Project for Ex-combatants (RSPE).

1. Purpose of the Evaluation

Given the recent completion of the three phases of the Project, an independent evaluation is required to (a) assess the impact and value of the Project itself and (b) to gather information and draw conclusions that may be of utility for similar projects in the future or other related purposes.

2. Scope of the Evaluation

The ESC Project (Phases 1-3) was composed of three major components:

- a) establishment of the physical infrastructure for the employment services in Kabul and nine provinces, e.g., refurbishment/reconstruction of offices, provision of computers and equipment;
- b) training and capacity building activities for staff seconded from participating Ministries; and
- c) delivery of labour market services to job-seekers with regard to employment, training and self-employment opportunities.

Thus, it will be the scope of the evaluation to focus its attention on these three components: provision of physical infrastructure, capacity building activities, and the quantity and quality of services delivered.

Clients

The principal clients for this evaluation are the project donor and the ILO Kabul, SRO Delhi, and ILO HQ.

3. Aspects to be Addressed by the Evaluation

The evaluation shall adhere to the OECD/DAC quality standards for evaluation guidelines.

The following aspects to be addressed by the evaluation are presented as a series of questions and instructions to aid inquiry and assessment.

4.1 Project design

- Is the original justification for the project confirmed by its project design?
- Were the project objectives, as stated in the project document, clearly formulated, describing the solutions to identified needs?
- Were the indicators of achievement clearly defined, describing the changes to be brought about?
- Has the project document provided the general framework and strategy for managing project implementation?
- Has the project design built on lessons learned from previous activities that are relevant to project objectives?
- Were the project assumptions correct? What, if any, divergence is there between project assumptions and reality?

4.2 Implementation (delivery process)

- Have the inputs (human, financial and material) to the Project been provided as planned?
- Have the planned activities been carried out, and the outputs produced, with the expected quality, quantity and timeliness?

- Has the overall execution of the project focused on the attainment of the objectives?
- What activities have taken place, outputs produced and impacts realised over and above what is stated in the project documents?
- How does this Project relate to other ILO projects in Afghanistan?

4.3 Performance

4.3.1 Relevance:

- Describe the needs addressed by the Project as stated in the project document, and determine whether these needs still exist
- Indicate the views of the intended beneficiaries and/or direct recipients on the usefulness of the outputs of the project and whether the progress made towards the achievement of the objectives has contributed to meeting their needs
- Describe alternative ways to meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries and/or direct recipients, if any.

4.3.2 Effectiveness:

- Were the objectives of the project clear, realistic and likely to be achieved within the established time schedule and with the allocated resources?
- Describe the progress made towards the achievement of the objectives and specify major accomplishments and/or drawbacks.
- Describe the intended beneficiaries and/or direct recipients. Terms such as policy makers, workers and rural poor are not specific enough. Information regarding their characteristics, such as geographical location, economic sector, income level, gender, age and decision-making level should be provided, as appropriate.
- Describe whether the number and/or type of intended beneficiaries and/or direct recipients have been reached according to plan. Explain the reasons for and the nature of changes, if any.
- Describe the effects of the project on the situation of the intended beneficiaries and/or direct recipients.
- Describe any internal and/or external factors that have (positively or negatively) influenced the achievement of the objectives.
- Describe the ways that the effectiveness of the Project could have been improved, if any.
- How was knowledge shared within and between employment creation projects?
- Has the Project contributed to improved knowledge sharing and management in the ILO in general and if so, how?
- To what extent has the Project contributed to promoting gender awareness and gender mainstreaming? Are women participating in the planning, implementation and monitoring of project activities? (For details of the evaluation of the gender dimension of the project, please see guiding questions listed in 3.3.5).

4.3.3 Efficiency:

- Explain whether the Project's results have justified the costs incurred.
- Describe alternative ways in which the efficiency of the Project could have been increased, if any.
- Was the project an appropriate means to achieving the stated objectives?

4.3.4 Sustainability:

- Were institutional arrangements made to ensure the continuation and/or further development of activities initiated under the Project? Describe the ways in which project clients were equipped to assume responsibilities after the completion of the Project.
- Were the required personnel and other resources provided to ensure the continuation and further development of relevant activities initiated under the Project?

4.3.5 Gender Dimension:

- What activities were undertaken to mainstream gender by the Project?
- Were specific studies and analyses of gender issues, of relevance to the Project, used?
- Did the project obtained technical advice on gender equality issues (e.g. from local gender experts, ILO gender specialists, ILO Bureau for Gender Equality or other)?
- Were women-specific or men-specific activities designed and implemented to enable women and men to participate in, and benefit equally from, the Project?
- How did the Project's monitoring and evaluation system explicitly measure any differential effects on women and men, girls and boys?
- Did the Project collected relevant gender disaggregated data?

5. Main outputs of the evaluation

The outputs of this evaluation will constitute a draft report, a final report and an evaluation summary according to ILO templates (see annex 2). The quality of the report will be determined by conformance with the ILO quality checklist for evaluation reports.

When preparing the evaluation report, the independent evaluator should follow the ILO Evaluation Unit's recommended structure¹³, being:

- Cover page, with key project and evaluation data
- 1. Abstract
- 2. Brief background on the project and its logic
- 3. Purpose, Scope and Clients of the Evaluation
- 4. Methodology
- 5. Review of Implementation
- 6. Presentation of Findings, Regarding Project Performance
- 7. Conclusions
- 8. Recommendations
- 9. Lessons Learned
- 10. Annexes

In addition, a summary evaluation is to be produced adhering to the ILO template, a copy of which is provided at the end of this document. Example summary evaluations for other ILO Projects can be found at

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/edmas/eval/reports/project.htm>

¹³ Guidance information as to the content of each section in the evaluation report is provided in Annex 1.

6. Evaluation methodology

6.1 Information Sources

The independent evaluation will have access to the following sources of information, which will be made available by the RSPE Programme Officer and the ILO Liaison Office:

- project documents
- progress reports
- Initial Assessment of Phases 1-3 of the ESC Project
- ESC resource materials

Field visits and consultation will be organised for the evaluator to interview and collect information from relevant stakeholders.

6.2 Consultations

The following consultations are advised and will be arranged by the ILO Liaison Office:

- Liaison Officer, ILO Kabul
- CTA, ESC Project (currently based in Geneva)
- other project personnel
- Deputy Minister Bashiri, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD)
- other staff from the MoLSAMD, at the central and provincial levels
- MoLSAMD staff seconded to the ESCs
- individual job seekers, employers and vocational training providers

Data should be sex-disaggregated and different needs of women and men be considered in evaluation process.

The first draft of the evaluation report is to be submitted to the ILO evaluation manager appointed to this evaluation, who will circulate, collect comments and forward all the comments to the evaluator. It is expected that both the final evaluation report (in soft and hard copy) and the summary report be available for dissemination within one month of the independent evaluator's departure from Kabul.

7. Management arrangement and time frame

It is expected that the independent evaluator will work 7 days a week. The ILO Liaison Office in Kabul will assist with accommodation and domestic travel arrangements. The ESC/RSPE Programme Officer, together with the RSPE/ESC CTA, will assist with the scheduling of field visits and consultations, as well as provide logistical support, such as with provision of transportation and office space.

The independent evaluator will report to the appointed ILO evaluation manager. While in Afghanistan, the independent evaluator will also report to the ILO Officer-in-Charge.

Timetable and Itinerary

Ideally, the independent evaluation should be undertaken in September 2007, with a timetable approximate to the following:

14 to 15	September: travel to Kabul
16 to 18	September: orientation and consultations in Kabul, including a visit to the Kabul ESC
19 to 23	September: travel to selected ESCs outside of Kabul
24 to 26	September: final discussions and consultations in Kabul
27	September: travel from Kabul

Depending on the availability of the independent evaluator, this timetable of two weeks may be extended. There is also flexibility with respect to time spent in Kabul, relative to the other provinces.

8. Evaluator – Qualifications and Experience

The independent evaluator is expected to have the following qualifications and experience:

- A post-graduate degree in a relevant field, such as the social sciences;
- At least 7 years professional experience the field of monitoring and evaluation, including demonstrated success in conducting independent evaluations;
- Effective written and verbal communication skills, including proven ability to produce written, results-focused reports in English;
- Sound analytical and organisational skills;
- Excellent inter-personal skills and ability to work in a multi-cultural/multi-national/multi-stakeholder setting;
- Excellent command of English, with knowledge of Dari and/or Pashto being desirable.

Appendix 1

Structure of the Evaluation Report

Cover Page, with Key Project and Evaluation Data

Key Project Data: Project title, project number(s), donor(s), project start and completion dates, budget, technical area, managing ILO unit, geographic coverage.

Key Evaluation Data: Type of evaluation (e.g., independent or internal, interim or final), managing ILO unit, start and completion dates of the evaluation mission, name(s) of evaluator(s), date of submission of evaluation report.

1. Abstract

- Maximum 3-5 pages
- Focuses on key findings and recommendations, and should be understandable as a stand-alone document.
- When preparing the abstract, it should be kept in mind that the abstract will appear in the evaluation database, which is accessible on the ILO's intranet and public website.

2. Brief Background on the Project and its Logic

- Brief description of the project's objectives and rationale.
- Project logic and strategy at approval and during implementation, including agreed revisions.
- State of implementation and delivery of the project.

3. Purpose, Scope and Clients of the Evaluation

- Type of evaluation.
- Brief description of purpose and scope of the evaluation.
- Clients of the evaluation.
- Analytical focus of the evaluation.

4. Methodology

- Brief description of the methodology used.
- Information sources, including remarks on the gaps and limitations.
- Remarks on the limitations of the methodology and problems encountered in data gathering and analysis, if any.

5. Review of Implementation

- Brief review of the main stages in implementation of the project, highlighting main milestones and challenges.

6. Presentation of Findings

- Based on key evaluation questions in the analytical framework.
- Covering all key evaluation criteria, but concentrating on key issues:
 - relevance and strategic fit of the project;
 - validity of the project design;
 - project progress and effectiveness;
 - efficiency of resource use;
 - effectiveness of management arrangements;
 - impact orientation and sustainability; and
 - special concerns (if applicable).
- It can be useful to order findings by these categories, but it is not mandatory.

7. Conclusions

- Concluding assessment(s) derived from findings.
- Main message(s) to remember.

8. Recommendations

- Worded in a constructive manner and aimed at improving the project, future projects, the programme, and general ILO strategies.
- Presented in a clear, concise, concrete and actionable manner, making concrete suggestions for improvements. (i.e. "Who should do what to improve what?")
- Specify who is called upon to act; it can be useful to group recommendations by addressee.

9. Lessons Learned

- Observations, insights, and practices extracted from the evaluation that are of general interest beyond the project sphere and contribute to wider organisational learning.
- Highlight good practices, i.e. experience about what has been tried with a good result. Good practices are a way to make lessons learned more concrete. It must be possible to generalise or replicate them in other projects or work contexts, otherwise they are not interesting. ("What has worked particularly well and why?" "How can it be generalised or replicated?")

10. Annexes

- Should include the ToR and list of persons contacted.
- Can include any other relevant information, e.g. tables with supplementary data, survey questionnaires etc.

Attachment 3: List of Persons Contacted

For a list of persons contacted, email eval@ilo.org

Attachment 4: List of Reference Documents and Papers

1. DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance OECD
2. DAC Network on Development Evaluation DAC Evaluation Quality Standards
3. Project Document Phase: 1 Expansion of Employment Services Centres to 6 Provinces in Afghanistan September 2004
4. Project Document Phase: 2 Expansion of Employment Services Centres to nine Provinces in Afghanistan, January 2005
5. Project Document Phase: 3 Expansion of Employment Services Centres to nine Provinces in Afghanistan. September 2005
6. Progress Report – January to December 2005 Gregor Schulz February 2006
7. Semi Annual Progress Report – January to June 2006 Gregor Schulz July 2006
8. Consultancy Report Jacqueline Paul August 2006
9. TERMINAL REPORT. Expansion of Employment Services AFG/06/01M/GTZ Period Covered: 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007 Jacqueline Paul Kabul, May 2007
10. FINAL REPORT. Expansion of Employment Services Centre in 9 Provinces and Kabul. AFG/03/03M/FRG, Gregor Schulz, May 2006
11. Internal Evaluation Report Expansion of Employment Services Centres to 9 Provinces in Afghanistan Gregor Schulz, Jacqueline Paul, September 2006
12. Project Document: Reintegration Support Project for EX-Combatants /Employment Services Centre Project
13. Project Document: The National Skills Development and Market Linkages Program (NSDP)
14. Minutes of the Presentation on the Findings of the external evaluation on DDR and Commanders Incentive Programme UNDP August 2007
15. ‘A Study of Human Resource Supply and Labour Market Demand’ conducted by: The Labour Market Information and Analysis Unit of MOLSAMD and supported by The National Skills Development Programme. July 2007.