



Final Independent Evaluation of Formalizing Access to the Legal Labour Market for Refugees and Host Communities in Jordan – Phase III (30.09.2021- 31.02.2024)

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Jordan

Evaluation date: 15 June 2024

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: RO-Arab States

Technical Office: DWT Beirut

Evaluation manager: Antonio Rodriguez Ibarra

Evaluation consultant(s): Dareen Alqaseer (Eng.), David Gairdner (MA), Runar Tuft (MA)

DC Symbol: JOR/21/01/USA

Donor(s) & budget: USD 4,694,899

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



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

“Formalizing Access to the Legal Labour Market for Refugees and Host Communities in Jordan” (PRM III) is the third iteration of a project model supported by the United States Department of State (Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration), and implemented in Jordan by the International Labour Organization (ILO). Launched in September 2021, the project concluded on March 31, 2024, after a 30 month implementation period.

The PRM III project goal was to “Enhance the access of Jordanians and Syrian refugees to the formal labour market in Jordan.” Project design responded to a country context analysis that identified critical market failures and socio-cultural factors, including information asymmetries, skills mismatch, and socio-cultural norms related to gender equality and women’s participation in the labour force. The ILO assesses that these factors obstruct the access of Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians to the formal labour market under decent work conditions.

The project was designed with five interrelated components: i) Career Counselling and Guidance, providing information on the labour market; ii) Demand-driven Work Based Learning (WBL); iii) Quality Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL); iv) Self-Employment through entrepreneurship for women and youth; v) Work permits, providing access to decent work in the formal sector and to social security benefits. Capacity development for national stakeholders was integrated into all the three project Outcomes, as were the cross-cutting issues of gender equality and social cohesion.

Present situation of the project

The PRM III project closed on 30 March 2024. Opened on 30 September 2021, PRM III was expected to run over a 12 month period, to close on 29 September 2022. Delays with Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 required two extensions; i) a 12 month Cost Extension until 29 September 2023 and budget increase from USD 2,394,899 to USD 4,694,899; and ii) a further no-cost extension from 30 Sept 2021 to 31 March 2024, largely to ensure successful closure of Outcome 1 activities.



Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The PRM III evaluation was conducted between 21 March and 15 June 2024, with data collection in Jordan during April and early May 2024. The evaluation purpose was to “provide an objective and independent assessment of the accomplishment of project activities in terms of coherence, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.” Its scope included all activities conducted with the scope of the project’s implementation.

The evaluation clients included the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, the ILO’s internal stakeholders and ILO’s constituents: relevant social partners and tripartite stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour (MoL), national industry bodies, including chambers and business associations; the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU) and registered sectoral workers’ unions.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation methodology was designed in compliance with ILO norms, standards and guidelines, inclusive of gender equality and cross-cutting themes. It used a theory-based and mix-method approach, drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from four sources:

- i) A structured Desk Review of project documentation and relevant external literature.
- ii) Semi-structured interviews with the ILO Officials, the Project Donor, Jordanian Stakeholders and Implementing Partners.
- iii) Semi-structured interviews with a *convivence sample* of Outcome 1 beneficiaries (Recognition of Prior Learning) and in-depth interviews with a *purposive sample* of women entrepreneurs from Outcome 2.
- iv) Two surveys based on *representative samples* from Outcome 2 (Women’s Entrepreneurship) and Outcome 3 (Work Permits and Social Insurance), conducted to 95% confidence and 5% margin of error.

Data from all sources was consolidated, cleaned and triangulated during the final phase of the data gathering process. This involved comparing and cross-referencing information from the different

types of data to see if they aligned or revealed consistent patterns and explanations for divergence.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Assessment
Relevance	Satisfactory
<p>The PRM III's Relevance to ILO and national policy objectives was Satisfactory. Equally satisfactory was the project's relevance to labour market conditions as described in the ILO and independent studies. Project relevance to beneficiary needs was Satisfactory, for all three Outcomes. However, the relevance of Outcome 3 was not sustained over the duration of the project, as the result of the Government's decision to change the coverage and pricing of Social Security insurance. The final relevance of Work-based Learning and related Counselling services cannot be determined. This output was significantly delayed and will be subject to a further assessment expected six months after project closure.</p>	
Coherence (Internal and External)	Unsatisfactory
<p>Internal coherence within the PRM III project is Unsatisfactory. The PRM III project has good policy coherence with the ILO's County Programme and related regional programmes. However, there was no mechanism to promote internal coherence between the three outcome streams. While contributing to a unified project goal, each PRM III Outcome stream is unique, and there is no interaction between them that would be mutually reinforcing. This is particularly the case for Outcome 2. Weak internal coherence had implications for Effectiveness and Efficiency, with the project showing uneven performance between Outcomes.</p>	
Effectiveness	Very Satisfactory to Satisfactory
<p>PRM III Outcome 1 Effectiveness was Satisfactory, notwithstanding significant implementation delays. Outcome 1</p>	



substantively met its performance targets for Career Counselling, Work-based Learning and Recognition of Prior Learning by the end of the no-cost extension period. Recognition of Prior Learning certification was valued by most respondents, as documentary evidence of their experience and skills. There was limited evidence of a linkage between the Counselling and WBL or RPL Output streams.

PRM III Outcome 2 Effectiveness was **Very Satisfactory**. Outcome 2 achieved or exceeded its Outcome and Output targets, including for the cross-cutting themes of gender equality and social coherence. Through the beneficiary and survey and interviews, both Syrian and Jordanian women expressed a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the training and support delivered to them. These include satisfaction with WDB and DYB training, seed funding and mentoring.

PRM III Outcome 3 Effectiveness was **Satisfactory**, when assessed against the quantitative targets for output delivery set out in the ILO Quarterly Reporting. The project substantially met its year-on-year quantitative targets for the issuing of work permits to Syrian refugees. The General Federation of Trade Unions of Jordan enabled effectiveness. While effective, the Impact and Sustainability of Outcome 3 were significantly undermined by government policy changes to social security insurance.

Efficiency	Unsatisfactory
-------------------	-----------------------

Overall Efficiency achievement was **Unsatisfactory**. The ranking covers both operational efficiency and the project monitoring. The trend was for improvement moving Year 2. The ranking derived from significant delays in delivering project services to beneficiaries, which had a negative effect on project effectiveness. Circumstances and policy changes in national counterpart institutions were contributing factors, particularly affecting Outcome 1. However, as contributing factors the evaluation identified the lack of assessment and planning during the design phase, and realism in the project development phase.



<p>Impact Orientation</p>	<p>Very Satisfactory to Unsatisfactory</p>
<p>PRM III's Performance on Cross-cutting Themes was Very Satisfactory. The Cross-cutting project themes of gender equality (women's economic empowerment) and the inclusion of Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians (social cohesion) were fully integrated. The project did not integrate other ILO cross-cutting issues. The performance ranking addresses both the integration of cross-cutting issues into PRM III project design and results achieved overall.</p> <p>The Impact Orientation evaluation questions focused on crossing issues only. However, consideration was also given to the Impact Orientation of Outcome 3. The Impact Orientation is Unsatisfactory under current circumstances. The rating reflects the effect of changes to social security insurance policy and requirements enacted by the Government of Jordan. These increase the cost of insurance, placing many beneficiaries in financial distress. A majority of survey respondents said that they preferred to have work permits delinked from social security, or without social security fees. If this does not occur, many commented that costs will force them to cancel or not renew their work permits.</p>	
<p>Sustainability</p>	<p>Satisfactory to Unsatisfactory</p>
<p>Overall, the evaluation could not identify an active sustainability strategy or exit plan for the individual Outputs. Outcome 1, insufficient information to determine. Most deliverables are effectively public goods. Sustainability will depend on the institutional capacity, interest and financial resources of national counterpart institutions, who will manage these services in the future. There is evidence that PRM III capacity development and technical advisory services had a positive effect on the possibility for future sustainability. Counselling services appear to depend on project funding and, therefore, are not sustained beyond the funding unless integrated into government.</p>	

The sustainability of Outcome 2 results is **Satisfactory**. Businesses show a reasonable level of success and survival. Sustainability can be enhanced by an advance service offering to support scale up and diversification, and better linkages with national and international resource and networks. Outcome 3 is **not sustainable** nor viable in its current design, assuming no change in the Government's policy on social security protection coverage and fees.

Observations on PRM III Monitoring and Risk Assessment

The PRM III's monitoring system did not meet ILO standards and good practice, nor the standards described in the *PRM III Cost Extension Proposal*. Deficiencies in the system constrained the feedback of performance and risk information to project management, the Donor and Stakeholders. They affected the accuracy and thoroughness of performance reporting.

As specific concerns, the monitoring system tracks implementation progress against a single and quantitative performance dimension, being the number of beneficiaries completing a given Output. The narrative text is descriptive, largely unstructured and offers limited analysis or insight on performance over time. Key issues affecting the project, such as closure of the Ministry of Labour or cost increases for Social Security coverage are not reported.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

Recommendation 1: The design of future project iterations should be based on robust needs assessment, contextual analysis and implementation planning. Responding to ILO guidance and standards, the design should be theory-based, with defined assumptions and causal pathway that is a framework for design, risk and mitigation modelling and project monitoring. .

Recommendation 2 : The Women do Business model should evolve to provide a stronger focus on business growth and sustainability, with development services, scaling up women's enterprise and affiliating with or convening a women's entrepreneur network(s). To

this end, the ILO and Implementing partners should develop an advanced model of the current Women do Business model.

Recommendation 3: The ILO should avoid placing the Women do Business programmes inside of multi-activity or composite programmes, where operational and programmatic synergies (coherence) cannot be demonstrated. Preference should be given to affiliating Women do Business with other private sector development initiatives, from which it can draw resources and networks.

Recommendation 4: Building on success, the WDB model can increase its Effectiveness by addressing the practical needs that hinder women’s participation in the training. In particular, helping women navigate the challenges between participating in the Women do Business training and their family responsibilities. A request emerging from beneficiary observations is providing onsite childcare services during the training.

Recommendation 6: The Monitoring Framework and system for future project iterations of this type should align with the requirements *ILO Guidance Note 1.2: Monitoring and Reporting (June 2002)* and other ILO guidance and standards. The Monitoring Framework should be theory based, gathering data on causality within the project using qualitative and quantitative data.

Recommendation 7: The ILO Project Team and Implementing Partners need to improve their joint collection and consolidation of beneficiary and performance data, to ensure that the data is accurate and available for monitoring and evaluation purposes. ILO has the responsibility to set and oversee the standards and maintain the data in a “clean” condition. Applicable ILO guidance and standards should be followed.

Main lessons learned and good practices

Lesson Learned 1: Leveraging established programme models to develop a complementary and advanced women’s enterprise programme.

The PRM III *Women Do Business* programme was based on an established programme model. For PRM 3, the ILO leveraged previous experience and trusted partnerships. These were critical factors contributing to positive results performance, expressed as the

successful start-up of women's enterprise. A representative survey of beneficiaries of the last three PRM *Women do Business* iterations show good sustainability and positive effects in the lives of women, their families and communities.

However, the survey and related data also show that women-owned enterprises have difficulty scaling up and diversifying. They lack access to key resources, for financing and market development, among other factors. Most remain at a certain size, as family or small community enterprises oriented to providing supplementary family income. This result is not negative but does not promote women's enterprise to its full potential. The current programme model remains project-based, short term and implemented from the approach of resilience and social cohesion, responding to the Syrian Refugee Crisis. It was not designed to promote business development and the scaling up of women's business over the longer term, which requires a stronger private sector development orientation.

Looking forward, the ILO is well positioned to design a complementary women's enterprise development programme in Jordan, moving away from a resilience approach and taking a longer term perspective on business sustainability and growth. Private sector development is core to the ILO's competence. In the Jordan context, there is good support for women's economic equity and entrepreneurship, from national and international stakeholders.

Lesson Learned 2: The importance of internal coherence within projects that have a complex design

Internal coherence is critical to the performance of projects with a complex design. Coherence strengthens horizontal synergies and interactions within the project, and its: Alignment with ILO and Jordanian policy goals; Consistency of implementation approaches, results and quality; Efficiency of resource use, especially for core management and administration functions; Enhanced monitoring, risk mitigation and learning.

The PRM III showed uneven relative performance between the project's five core elements and three Outcomes. All components were aligned with the project's strategic goal of expanding access to Decent Work employment in the formal sector. However, they were



implemented as “stand alone” activities, showing limited internal coherence, contributing to uneven results and implementation performance across the five elements.

Specifically, PRM III internal coherence was negatively affected by the absence of: A project planning framework defining the management and operational mechanism for internal coherence and synergy; The absence of an operation workplan that specified how coherence and synergy would be achieved; A Logical Framework designed to capture internal coherence, accompanied by a Monitoring and Evaluation plan that tracks interactions and synergies, and documents its effects. The design of future complex programmes can be strengthened with the addition of these elements.

Emerging Good Practice

The evaluation identified one emerging good practice from the PRM III project. The ILO has consistently been able to leverage, innovate and build on established programme models and trusted partnerships, with the Donor, Government of Jordan entities and Implementing Partners. These were key factors contributing to results achievements, particularly for women’s entrepreneurship. The evaluation also noted that these benefits diminish when the project fails to conduct robust context and counterpart assessments during the design phase, and active monitoring during implementation.