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# “Towards an inclusive national social protection system and accelerating decent job opportunities for Syrians and vulnerable Jordanians”

## QUICK FACTS

**Countries:** Jordan

**Evaluation date:** 31 August 2025

**Evaluation type:** Joint

**Evaluation timing:** Final

**Administrative Office:** Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS)

**Technical Office:** DWT-Beirut

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**DC Symbol:** JOR/20/01/EUR

**Donor(s) & budget:** European Commission, the project budget - EUR 14,000,000

*Key Words:* [Decent work](#), [social protection-unemployment](#), [unemployment](#), [workers empowerment](#); [youth unemployment](#), [gender equality](#)



## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

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

The project "Towards an Inclusive National Social Protection System and Accelerating Decent Job Opportunities for Syrians and Vulnerable Jordanians", funded by the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (Madad Fund), was conceived as part of the EU's broader commitment to support countries hosting Syrian refugees. Specifically established to mitigate the impacts of the Syrian crisis, the Madad Fund aimed to improve access to essential services and promote socio-economic stability for displaced Syrians and their host communities. Within this framework, the project was launched in October 2020 to address critical challenges in Jordan's social protection and labour systems by targeting both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians. Its theory of change recognised that achieving sustainable self-reliance and reducing dependency on aid would require coordinated national action, strengthened institutional systems, and a structured transition from social assistance to decent work. The initiative thus sought to integrate fragmented interventions into a unified national framework that supported inclusive development, resilience, and social cohesion.

The project structure was built around three interrelated outcomes. Outcome 1 enhanced coordination, integrated planning, and monitoring of national efforts in social protection and employment, directly contributing to the development and implementation of Jordan's updated National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS 2025–2033). Outcome 2 focused on strengthening institutional capacities to improve access to formal employment and social insurance, particularly for informal and vulnerable workers. Outcome 3 introduced and operationalised a graduation mechanism combining cash assistance, skills development, and employment services to facilitate the transition to sustainable livelihoods.

The project started in October 2020 and ended in May 2025. It was implemented in a context marked by prolonged economic vulnerability, high unemployment (particularly among youth and women), and a significant refugee presence. Jordan hosted over 655,000 registered Syrian refugees, placing pressure on public services and labour markets already constrained by limited resources



	and high informality.
<b>Present situation of the project</b>	The project ended in May 2025. There will be no follow-on phase.
<b>Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation</b>	<p>The final evaluation assessed outcomes, impact, and sustainability over the 2020–2025 period using OECD-DAC criteria. It focused on systemic change in social protection and labour market dynamics, with particular attention to refugees and vulnerable Jordanians.</p> <p>Key users of this evaluation are the ILO, UNICEF, the EU, Jordanian ministries, workers’ and employers’ organisations, and UN partners.</p>
<b>Methodology of evaluation</b>	<p>The design of the evaluation was guided by the ILO Evaluation Policy and aligned with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation, UNEG Guidelines for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations, and UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. The evaluation was Theory-of-Change based, meaning that project activities, outputs, outcomes, and likely impacts were evaluated applying six key OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability. The evaluation also incorporated cross-cutting dimensions, including gender equality, disability inclusion, human rights, protection, and climate change, by examining how these were represented in activities and project governance.</p> <p>The Evaluation Team engaged with a wide and diverse group of stakeholders, cross-checking and triangulating the data and information collected.</p> <p>This was a “mixed methods” evaluation, meaning that the Evaluation Team utilised a blend of primary and secondary sources, quantitative and qualitative evidence. The evaluation team collected data through four main channels: desk review of project documents, secondary data review, key informant interviews (in-person and remote), focus group discussions and an E-survey focusing on the project’s final beneficiaries (mainly Youth).</p>



The evaluation faced several limitations that, while not derailing the process, posed constraints on the depth and breadth of analysis.

- A compressed timeline further constrained data collection and analysis, potentially limiting the depth of findings across relevance, coherence, and effectiveness.
- The absence of key ILO personnel reduced access to critical institutional knowledge, affecting assessments of efficiency and adaptive management.
- Security-related travel restrictions prevented the Team Leader from conducting fieldwork in Jordan, limiting opportunities for in-person observation and stakeholder engagement.
- Finally, varying availability and willingness of some stakeholders to participate in interviews introduced potential gaps in perspective, particularly in relation to understanding national reform alignment and coordination dynamics.

## MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

The key high-level takeaway points (linked to evaluation questions) are:

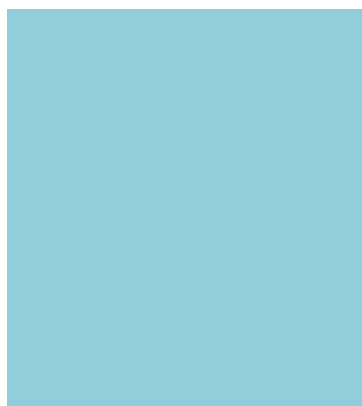
1. **Relevant but shifting focus** – The project evolved from a humanitarian response as foreseen by the donor toward a development-oriented “graduation from poverty” model, aligning well with Jordan’s national strategies, though its relevance for refugees weakened to a slight extent due to restrictive policies.
2. **Strategically aligned** – Strong coherence with ILO, UNICEF, national priorities, and SDGs, but intended joint programming fell short as agencies worked in silos, reducing synergy.
3. **Mixed effectiveness** – Solid progress in policy dialogue and coordination (Outcome 1), moderate results in employment/social protection reforms (Outcome 2), and only partial rollout of the graduation model (Outcome 3).
4. **Operational challenges** – While approximately 87% of funds were delivered, efficiency was weakened by fragmented implementation, procurement delays, staffing gaps, and weak coordination mechanisms.
5. **Fragile sustainability** – National ownership improved, but long-term results hinge on sustained domestic financing, institutional staffing, and capacity transfer from international to local actors.



6. **Potential impact through NSPS** – The project’s lasting value lies in embedding inclusive social protection within the National Social Protection Strategy, which could drive systemic poverty reduction if fully implemented.

Conclusions:

- **Relevance** – The project has remained relevant to the needs of Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians, successfully shifting from short-term humanitarian assistance to long-term structural reforms aligned with Jordan’s updated National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) and the Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV).
- **Coherence** – At the national level, the project strengthened coordination mechanisms (e.g., ISU and NSPS task forces). However, internal UN coherence was weaker, as ILO and UNICEF often worked in parallel rather than jointly, limiting synergies.
- **Efficiency** – Implementation efficiency was constrained by design weaknesses, shifting priorities, and misaligned assumptions with ground realities. Oversight challenges from both the donor (EU) and ILO, coupled with limited corrective actions, further undermined efficiency.
- **Effectiveness** –
  - Outcome 1: Significant progress through institutionalising the ISU, enhancing coordination, and strengthening cross-ministerial planning.
  - Outcome 2: Delivered contributions in labour formalisation, social protection access, and labour market systems, but assumptions about refugee employment proved unrealistic given structural labour market constraints.
  - Outcome 3: Advanced institutional learning on the graduation approach but faced delays, limited scale, and lower-than-expected refugee coverage.
  - Gender & Cross-Cutting Issues: Gender was not strategically integrated, with women’s participation addressed, but without a dedicated theory of change. Social dialogue and environmental aspects were included sporadically.
- **Ownership & Sustainability** – Strong national ownership was demonstrated, particularly by MoSD, MoPIC, and MoL. However,



the heavy reliance on UNICEF and other international actors for core technical inputs sometimes slowed full transfer of ownership. Long-term sustainability hinges on strengthening national capacities, broadening private sector and social partner involvement, and ensuring a phased handover of responsibilities.

- **Impact** – While the project did not fully realise the EU MADAD vision of strengthening refugee self-reliance, it laid important groundwork by supporting the NSPS 2025–2033, which adopts a rights-based, inclusive approach covering vulnerable groups, including refugees.

## RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

### Main recommendations

Nine recommendations developed within this evaluation are grouped around three broader strategic priorities:

#### 1. Strengthen Governance and Coordination

- Establish robust management and oversight frameworks for complex aid projects.
- Enhance joint accountability and planning between ILO and UNICEF.
- Formalising a National Coordination Charter for the NSPS
- Strengthen the operational capacity of the Institutionalising the Implementation Support Unit (ISU)
- Designing Balanced and Inclusive Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Systems

#### 2. Advance Gender Equality and Inclusion

- Adopt a gender-transformative approach with a clear theory of change and sex-disaggregated monitoring.
- Promote gender-responsive workplace practices and address structural barriers to women’s participation.

#### 3. Ensure Sustainability and National Ownership

- Strengthening National Ownership and Institutional Sustainability of Social Protection Reforms
- Ensuring Sustainable and Inclusive Implementation of the NSPS 2025–2030

### Main lessons learned and good practices

Key Lessons from the EU MADAD Project



- **Specific type of implementation for an emergency (or post-emergency) fund mechanism.** The key lesson learned is that in a fragile and rapidly evolving context, management cannot rely on standard internal procedures alone; instead, it must be adaptive, collaborative, and responsive to shifting political, institutional, and operational realities to maintain relevance and impact on the ground.
- **Missed opportunity for a joint intervention between the ILO and UNICEF on social protection.** The EU MADAD project exposed the risks of pursuing long-term development goals through an emergency funding mechanism, especially with weak inter-agency coordination. Under Outcome 1, UNICEF's lead role and limited ILO involvement led to fragmented integration of both agencies' expertise. Outcome 3 showed better alignment as both agencies adapted their models, yet overall coordination remained insufficient.
- **Limitations of quantitative indicators under Emergency (or post-emergency) interventions.** Weak M&E systems, focused narrowly on quantitative outputs, limited the project's ability to trace progress and adapt to context. UN agencies must require implementing partners to provide disaggregated data—especially by gender—to inform responsive, inclusive programming.

***Emerging Good Practices:***

- **Revision of the Graduation Model to Align with Contextual Realities in Jordan.** Under the EU MADAD project, the implementing UN agencies (UNICEF and ILO) revised the initial graduation model in response to weak relevance and limited contextual fit of the standard donor-prescribed approach. The revised model shifted focus from graduating from cash assistance to a poverty graduation framework, integrating elements of a rights-based and inclusive approach. This adaptation better aligned with Jordan's socio-economic context and improved the model's relevance and acceptability.
- **Addressing Gender-Specific Barriers to Women's Labour Market Participation.** As part of its efforts to promote inclusive economic opportunities, the project addressed key structural



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barriers that limit women’s access to the labour market—particularly among Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians. The intervention included support for safe transportation, flexible work arrangements, childcare facilities (including the establishment of a nursery inside a factory), and on-the-job training for women. These initiatives were specifically designed to enhance the employability and retention of women in sectors traditionally marked by low female participation.