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Clustered independent evaluation of the Decent Work Programme (DWP) 2023–2025, the Emergency Response Plan (ERP), and strategic projects funded by RBSA and Kuwait – Final (DWP) and Midterm (ERP)

QUICK FACTS

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Administrative Office: ILO Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS)

Technical Office: ILO Office in Jerusalem

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BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

In 2023, the ILO launched the Decent Work Programme (**DWP**) 2023–2025 for the State of Palestine, structured around three strategic pillars—**Prosperity** (employment), **People** (social protection), and **Peace** (labour rights and social dialogue). The DWP was aligned with the National Employment Strategy (NES) 2021–2025 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023–2025.

However, the outbreak of war in Gaza in October 2023 triggered a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented scale, severely disrupting the Palestinian labour market and institutional capacities. In response, the ILO launched the Emergency Response Plan (**ERP**), structured around **Relief**, **Review**, and **Recovery** pillars and pooled donor funding.

The DWP is implemented through a combination of core ILO programming and donor-funded projects, which represent the bulk of operational delivery. Among these, projects financed by **Kuwait** and the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (**RBSA**) provide greater flexibility and were clustered with the DWP and ERP in this evaluation.

Present situation of the project

The ILO Jerusalem Office is currently working on the formulation of a new **Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP)**. The recent recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer State at the ILO provides strong momentum for advancing the institution-building agenda and reinforcing tripartite dialogue. At the same time, the situation in Gaza remains critical and requires continued support and recovery efforts, particularly in employment, social protection, and institutional resilience.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The evaluation covered the period from January 2023 to September 2025 and included activities in both Gaza and the West Bank. The main objective was to assess relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of the DWP, ERP, and clustered projects, and to generate lessons and recommendations for the next DWCP. The clients of the evaluation include, the ILO (Jerusalem, Regional Office and HQ), tripartite constituents, the donors, the end beneficiaries, and all relevant stakeholders.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation applied a **mixed-methods approach**, including:

- **Document review** of over 75 strategic and operational documents.
- **Project portfolio analysis** using a standardized template to assess results, sustainability, and alignment.
- **44 key informant interviews** with ILO staff, tripartite constituents, donors, and UN agencies, ensuring gender parity.
- **4 focus group discussions** with 30 direct beneficiaries and implementing partners.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

The DWP 2023–2025 has served as a strategic framework for institution-building and policy reform in the State of Palestine. Its **relevance** stems from its foundations in key institutional partnerships aimed at advancing reforms in employment, social protection, and social dialogue. The DWP has provided a platform for tripartite engagement and technical cooperation, reinforcing national ownership and policy legitimacy. However, its implementation has been conditioned by a project-based delivery model reliant on donor-funded interventions, and its reform agenda has been significantly hampered by the crisis triggered in October 2023. Yet, the evolving context has also brought renewed momentum to the two-state solution and the institution-building agenda of the ILO in the State of Palestine.

In general, ILO maintained strong **coherence** with national and UN frameworks. The ILO's normative mandate in employment and social protection was affirmed by national institutions and social partners. ILO was recognized as a leader in the labour sector and a key technical advisor on social protection reform. Nonetheless, the ILO's integration into existing humanitarian architecture remained limited, and the prominence of the ERP created tensions with the DWP's role as the main programming tool for ILO operations at the country level. Initial ERP efforts to engage in emergency cash assistance were not sufficiently coordinated with relevant national institutions and UN actors and were eventually set aside.

While the ERP competed with the DWP to some extent, it also shed light on how future DWCPs can enhance the role of the ILO in humanitarian contexts. The ILO can contribute both normatively and operationally to cash-for-work within a broader UN humanitarian response. The ILO can also enhance national systems

and capacities by adapting tripartite collaboration in the crisis and supporting government institutions and national partners as delivery channels for crisis response and recovery. This approach is consistent with the HDP Nexus.

Effectiveness was demonstrated through the rapid deployment of emergency employment schemes, the mainstreaming of labour rights in crisis response, and the advancement of social protection reform. The ERP created over 1,200 short-term jobs and supported institutional coordination, while the DWP contributed to legal reform and cooperative development. However, implementation bottlenecks—particularly in Gaza— have been reported as limiting outreach and delivery.

On this note, several lessons learned and good practices emerge from the ILO's experience during the crisis triggered on 7 October 2023. These relate to the importance of flexible funding modalities, and the need to integrate resource mobilization into programme design.

Efficiency improved through the use of flexible funding modalities and national systems, notably the Palestinian Employment Fund. The ERP's pooled fund and Kuwait contributions enabled strategic adaptation and rapid mobilization. However, internal management constraints, siloed operations, and the absence of dedicated M&E staff hindered efficient programme management. Resource mobilization remained reactive, and the lack of a fundraising strategy aligned with the DWP limited strategic planning and donor engagement.

In terms of **impact**, the ILO's potential was visible to stakeholders in upstream policy reform and institutional strengthening. Contributions to the Cooperative Sector Strategy, labour law reform, and life-cycle-based social protection were widely recognized. The ERP's review pillar produced credible labour market intelligence that informed recovery planning and international advocacy. Yet, the long-term impact of emergency employment and capacity-building requires a different evaluation work.

Sustainability is supported by the institutional embedding of reforms and the use of national systems for delivery. The ILO's technical support to the MoSD, PCBS, and cooperative unions has laid the groundwork for future resilience. However, sustainability is

threatened by the cost of occupation on the Palestinian people and the difficult financial prospects facing the Palestinian Authority.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

Recommendation 1: Strengthen Results-Based Management (RBM) at programme level

While the previous DWP provided a narrative framing ILO's vision and facilitated tripartite agreement, the next DWCP should be operationalized as a programme tool oriented to specific, measurable, and traceable results.

Recommendation 2: Broaden ILO visibility and development partners' engagement

To reinforce ILO's comparative advantage and improve coherence within the UN system, the DWCP should expand engagement beyond tripartite constituents to include donors, UN agencies, and civil society actors. As suggested by some evaluation informants, this could be done through the institutionalization of ILO regular meetings with international partners and key stakeholders (see also Recommendation 7).

Recommendation 3: Integrate emergency response within DWCP

The next DWCP must address the continuation of recovery plans in a critical context, while making explicit the nexus of recovery efforts with longer-term goals that contribute to the set-up and enhancement of labour institutions of the State of Palestine. Beyond Palestine, ILO programming could provide guidance on how to include long-term scenarios in DWCPs based on peace assumptions and emergency scenarios that pave the way for crisis adaptation and responsiveness.

Recommendation 4: Prepare for advocacy and programme design on a shift from poverty-targeted humanitarian aid to universal, lifecycle-based social protection systems

As highlighted in the evaluation findings, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has reached such scale that **virtually the entire population is now considered vulnerable**, rendering traditional poverty-targeting mechanisms ineffective. This presents a **strategic opportunity** for the ILO and its partners to advocate for a **universal, rights-based social protection system**, aligned with ILO standards and Recommendation No. 202. The ERP's shock-responsive protocols

	and the MoSD's lifecycle-based allowances provide a strong foundation for this transition. Recommendation 5: Conduct strategic analysis of EU financing for economic recovery and position ILO as a technical leader The evaluation identifies the EU and its member states—including development banks and financial institutions—as the primary source of future ODA for economic recovery in Palestine. This includes both grant-based support (e.g., through the EU Reform Matrix and PEGASE) and loan-based instruments. Given the PA's reform agenda touching on labour and social protection, the ILO should prepare to play a leading technical role in programme design and policy dialogue. Recommendation 6: Institutionalize tripartite dialogue in crisis and recovery contexts and connect Palestinian social partners to global networks The ERP demonstrated the value of tripartite engagement in emergency response, but the evaluation notes that structured dialogue mechanisms were not sustained. The DWCP should set explicit goals for tripartite dialogue in times of crisis, including institutional arrangements for recovery planning. The recent recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer State at the ILO opens new avenues for integrating Palestinian social partners into global networks, enhancing legitimacy and learning. Recommendation 7: Upgrade research and advocacy as a strategic DWCP component under the UNSCD 'Partnerships' priority The evaluation highlights high appreciation for the ILO's analyses, which have informed donor planning and international advocacy. It is recommended that communication on ILO research outputs be enhanced, including by presenting and discussing knowledge products in institutionalized development partner meetings. 'Research and advocacy' could be a new area of the DWCP framed under the 'Partnerships' strategic priority of the UNSDCF.
Main lessons learned (LL) and good practices (GP)	LL 1: DWCPs must prepare for emergency scenarios. LL2: Strategic partnerships are key to advancing social protection reform. GP 1: ERP as a strategic resource mobilization initiative. GP 2: Kuwait funding as a flexible and strategic partnership GP 3: ILO's normative leadership in the HDP Nexus through labour standards and cash-for-work coordination