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Promoting Decent Work for Syrians under Temporary Protection and Turkish Citizens – Phase III – Independent Midterm evaluation

QUICK FACTS

Country: *Türkiye*

Evaluation date: *1st December 2022-1st October 2025*

Evaluation type: *Independent*

Evaluation timing: *Midterm Evaluation-*

Administrative Office: *ILO Ankara, Türkiye*

Technical Office: *Migration*

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DC Symbol: *TUR/22/02/DEU*

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Key Words Employment, employment creation, promotion of employment, livelihoods, informal economy, refugees, capacity building, international migration, migration policy, women empowerment, inclusion:

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The “Promoting Decent Work for Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTP) and Turkish Citizens (TC)” programme, launched in 2018 and now in its third phase (Dec 2022–Dec 2025), aims to expand decent and formal employment opportunities in Türkiye, especially for vulnerable groups. Implemented by the ILO with German support via KfW, Phase III tackles persistent barriers such as limited access to decent jobs for women, youth, and persons with disabilities, low awareness of formalization among micro-enterprises, and the underrepresentation of Syrian refugee women in formal work.

To address these challenges, the project delivers three components: 1. Work-Based Learning (WBL): Training for 1,000 beneficiaries, with quotas for women and PwDs; 2. BILMERs: Support centers providing micro-enterprises and workers with guidance on formalization and compliance; 3. Transition to Formality (KIGEP): Formalizing 7,500 workers (half SuTP, half Turkish citizens), with at least 30% women. Phase III reinforces the programme’s core objective, which is promoting decent work through skills development, better services, and pathways to formality.

Present situation of the project

Launched in 2018 as part of the ILO Refugee Response Programme in Türkiye, its goal is to expand decent employment opportunities for vulnerable groups, focusing on formal work and inclusion. ILO, with funding from Germany via KfW, is implementing Phase III since Dec 2022 and now, the project has been extended until December 2026.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

This midterm evaluation serves both accountability and learning purposes. It assesses progress to date-December 2025, identifies what is working and what is not, and provides actionable recommendations for future implementation. Primary stakeholders include ILO Türkiye Office: Project team, technical and administrative staff. Donor: KfW, National Partners: MoLSS, SSI, PMM, and workers’ and employers’ organizations, Local Stakeholders: Municipalities, Organized industrial Zones (OIZ), and Chambers of Tradesmen and Craftsmen, and Direct Beneficiaries: Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTP) and host community individuals participating in project activities.

Methodology of evaluation

This evaluation adopts a predominantly qualitative approach, and data collection is conducted remotely which enhanced geographic and organizational representation. A predominantly qualitative and remote approach enabled efficient engagement across all six provinces while saving time and resources. Additionally, two recent evaluations (BILMERs and KIGEP) and a widely disseminated survey had already engaged stakeholders, so further intensive fieldwork risked fatigue. The evaluation conducted desk Review to make an analysis of ILO documentation, and national/international reports on decent work and labor market participation, secondary Data Analysis while using existing quantitative data from project documents and post-activity surveys to support qualitative findings. 30 key informant

Interviews were conducted with ILO project staff, national and local implementing partners, and donor. Remote Data Collection enabled broader reach while the evaluation covered 6 provinces, including Ankara, Adana, Bursa, Gaziantep, Istanbul, and Konya.

The evaluation faced a few limitations, including the timing of fieldwork during summer holidays that reduced stakeholder availability, a potential risk of selection bias in choosing informants, and heavy reliance on qualitative methods due to limited baseline data. Some discontinued collaborations, particularly with municipalities, posed challenges, and remote interviews raised concerns about depth of responses. However, these issues were effectively managed through rescheduling, broad stakeholder engagement, complementary surveys, re-established contacts, and trust-building in digital interviews, ensuring reliable findings overall.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

1. Relevance Phase III remains highly relevant to Türkiye's national priorities and international commitments, aligning with the 11th and 12th Development Plans on inclusive growth, formal employment, and refugee integration. Its focus on women and persons with disabilities matches national targets, and its multi-component design addresses persistent labor market challenges. While recent political shifts—such as Syria's regime change and emphasis on voluntary refugee returns—may affect future perceptions, the project continues to provide strong value and must remain adaptable to evolving migration policies.

2. Validity of Project Design The design effectively tackles Türkiye's labor market challenges through skills development, employer incentives, and MSME support, with tailored components like WBL, BILMERs, and financial incentives. It reflects inclusive problem analysis and stakeholder input. However, reliance on quantitative indicators limits measurement of qualitative outcomes such as empowerment and workplace inclusion. The Theory of Change also overlooks discrimination risks. Future iterations should integrate social risks and qualitative indicators to strengthen impact assessment and resilience.

3. Effectiveness Phase III has achieved strong results, with most targets nearly met and components like WBL and BILMERs exceeding expectations. KIGEP has proven effective through partnerships and employer appeal. Governance and communication strategies have reinforced visibility and stakeholder coordination. Nonetheless, challenges persist: political sensitivities affecting municipal engagement, limited vocational training options, low female refugee participation, staffing gaps in BILMERs, and weak engagement from institutions like ISKUR. Addressing workplace conditions, SME capacity, and labor rights protections would enhance effectiveness further.

4. Efficiency The project has used financial, human, and technical resources strategically, mitigating inflation risks and ensuring stability through cost-effective measures. Strong management and adaptive approaches have supported accountability and resilience. External shocks—earthquakes, inflation, and administrative delays—caused temporary setbacks, but proactive adjustments (e.g., incentive schemes, field monitoring, partner capacity-building) kept implementation broadly on track. Overall, resource use has been efficient, demonstrating operational resilience under complex conditions.

5. Sustainability and Impact Potential The project fosters local ownership, institutional capacity, and behavioral shifts toward formal employment, with strong retention rates and growing government interest in embedding WBL and BILMER into national systems. Continued investment in partnerships and knowledge-sharing will be key to sustaining outcomes beyond Phase III.

6. Gender Equality and Non-discrimination Progress has been made through incentives, childcare support, and outreach, engaging over

500 women and PwDs. However, low female participation in WBL, limited gender-disaggregated data, and the absence of a dedicated focal point highlight gaps. Stronger institutional mechanisms and integration of gender modules are needed to ensure equitable outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Recommendations

1. Strengthen policy coherence and adaptability in light of evolving refugee return policies via establishing structured dialogue among ILO, national institutions, and regional offices to explore transferability of formalization and social protection models.
2. Embed ILO's online training modules on workplace practices, gender equality, and decent work to enhance impact.
3. Incorporate social risks such as workplace discrimination into programme design. Via strengthening risk management frameworks with clearer referral protocols, oversight, and monitoring.
4. Improve WBL through sector-relevant vocational training, subsidized certification, and tailored approaches to accessibility.
5. Develop targeted strategies for women-owned businesses and outreach to women entrepreneurs.
6. Ensure BILMER sustainability via financial feasibility planning with national and local resources.
7. Enhance KIGEP with systematic risk mitigation, workplace monitoring, grievance mechanisms, and SME capacity-building.
8. Streamline administrative procedures, create contingency plans for staff turnover, and invest in digital reporting tools for real-time tracking.
9. Secure government buy-in to embed WBL and BILMER into national frameworks, with clear institutional transition plans.
10. Assign focal points to review activities through gender and disability lenses, ensuring inclusivity and equity.

Main lessons learned and good practices

Lessons Learned

Increasing Women's Participation in WBL Targeted financial incentives, wage-aligned payments, and employer training on gender equality significantly boosted women's participation—especially among refugees and caregivers—and informed more inclusive programme design.

Adaptive Design and Data Sensitivity Flexible implementation proved essential in a sensitive, volatile context. Adjusted data-collection procedures helped address participant hesitation, strengthened trust, and improved recruitment effectiveness.

Good Practices

Inclusive Employment Support for Persons with Disabilities Inclusive job fairs, career days, and employer trainings effectively connected persons with disabilities—particularly refugees—with job opportunities and promoted more inclusive hiring.

BILMER Information Centers BILMER centers provided accessible guidance on business formalization, labor rights, and fair recruitment, helping individuals navigate employment challenges and reduce vulnerability to exploitation.

Strategic Use of Local Implementing Agencies Engaging and strengthening local institutions—especially the Unions of Chambers of Tradesmen and Craftsmen—enhanced delivery through their strong community ties and deep labor-market knowledge.