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## A Road to Decent Jobs for All Afghans (R2DJ4All) Project

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## GLOSSARY

Decent work	ILO defines 'decent work' as “opportunities for work that [are] productive and deliver a fair income, security in the workplace, and social protection for all, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men”. <sup>1</sup>
Market Systems Development	"Market systems development (MSD) is an approach to address issues linked to income, employment rates, or working conditions by changing the way a market functions. It does so by working with market actors to fill market gaps through existing incentives and networks." <sup>2</sup>
Resilience	Resilience refers to “the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including h the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management”. <sup>3</sup>
Social protection	“Set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their life-course, with a particular emphasis towards vulnerable groups”. <sup>4</sup>
Tripartite	Tripartite-based sector selection refers to the interaction of government, employers, and workers <sup>5</sup>
Value chain	"A value chain is the full range of activities that are required to bring a product or service from its conception to the final consumers. This includes activities such as design, production, marketing, distribution, and support services to the final consumer." <sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ILO, 2023, 'Decent Work', available at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>2</sup> ILO, 2021, How market systems development strengthens productivity ecosystems

<sup>3</sup> UNDRR, 2023, 'Resilience'. Available at: <https://www.undrr.org/terminology/resilience>

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, 2019, UNICEF's Global Social Protection Programme Framework

<sup>5</sup> ILO, 2023, 'Tripartite Constituents'. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/who-we-are/tripartite-constituents/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>6</sup> ILO, 2006, ILO Guide for Value Chain Analysis and Upgrading

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

DFAs	De Facto Authorities
EQM	Evaluation Question Matrix
EVAL	Evaluation Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
MRM	Monitoring and Results Measurement
MSD	Market Systems Development
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development- Development Assistance Committee
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PS	Phone Survey
R2DJ4ALL	Road to Decent Jobs for All Afghans
R2J	Road to Jobs
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
SURE	Sustainable and Resilient Enterprise
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
USDoS	US Department of State

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Project background

The International Labor Organization (ILO) implemented the Road to Decent Jobs for All (R2DJ4ALL) project between September 2020 to April 2023 with the aim of providing access to livelihood opportunities and to low-income communities, harnessing the potential of decent employment opportunities through the engagement of a range of governmental and local stakeholders in the Balkh province.

R2DJ4ALL targets mainly women internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees using a market systems development approach in creating synergies between markets, available employment opportunities and skilled workers. The project addresses crucial underlying constraints inhibiting growth and employment outcomes, and contributes through its interventions to improve livelihoods and to contribute to poverty reduction. The selected value chains included carpet making, handicrafts, food processing, poultry, technology and TVET.

The project focused on two main objectives:

Objective 1: More Afghan refugee returnees have accessed income-earning opportunities in high-potential economic sectors

Objective 2: Afghans, especially women, refugee returnees and IDPs are in safe and dignifying employment in competitive and resilient value chains.

### Present situation of the project

R2DJ4ALL leverages the networks and knowledge of the previous Road to Jobs (R2J) project, through the engagement of a range of governmental and local stakeholders. Indeed, the project engaged stakeholders at different levels, including the Department of Labour and Social Affairs (DoLSA), the Department of Women's Affairs (DOWA), Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI), Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Investment (BCCI), the National Union of Afghanistan Workers and Employees (NUAWE), as well as the Department of Commerce and Industry (DoCI) during one year prior to the de facto authorities' (DFAs) takeover in August 2021. Their representatives formed the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), and played an important role in the shortlisting and selection of enterprises that would be supported by R2DJ4ALL. The PAC was presented with several business proposals from the private sector, to be considered for support. Using a set of criteria, they reviewed and selected twenty-one (21) micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The final value chains included carpet making, handicrafts, food processing, poultry, technology and TVET. These sectors were selected because they do not require land, thus IDPs and returnees can use the skills they obtained, they are labour intensive and have more potential for growth, creation of decent jobs and income earning opportunities that would ensure good economic reintegration of IDPs and returnees. The selected sectors offer viable and better opportunities for women to effectively participate in higher value chain roles. Each of the MSMEs in these six value chain sectors identified constraints relating to their enterprises and sectors. Based on the gaps identified, a needs assessment of employees was carried out, and R2DJ4ALL's participants were offered skills development in accordance with their enterprise's specific needs and the overall sector requirements. Following on from this, some MSMEs decided to hire all of the people they had trained,

whereas other MSMEs hired only some of their trainees.

### Evaluation background

Samuel Hall was commissioned by ILO to conduct the final independent evaluation of R2DJ4ALL and assess the project's objectives, outcomes and impacts implementing the OECD-DAC criteria. Within this framework, the evaluation assesses, through market systems analysis, the extent of the creation of more decent work for all Afghans and particularly for women IDPs, returnees and refugees. The evaluation took place between December 2022 and April 2023 and has covered planned results of the project starting from September 2020 until the time of the evaluation, taking into account project activities planned until the end of the implementation period. The final independent evaluation was conducted in the northern region of Afghanistan, Balkh province, where the project was implemented.

### Methodology

The evaluation was guided by the OECD-DAC criteria examining R2DJ4ALL's relevance-validity, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, combining qualitative and quantitative data and desk review documentation. The evaluators conducted 15 key informant interviews, 6 focus group discussions, 1 case-study, and 428 phone surveys directed at participants and non-participants<sup>7</sup> of the project – including the 21 MSMEs supported by R2DJ4ALL. These samples were chosen based on the technical proposal, the availability of resources and the feasibility in terms of the evaluation's conduction in a timely responsive manner. The design of the questionnaires involved a threefold approach in order to capture the perspectives of involved stakeholders, namely the project's main participants (MSMEs employers and employees) as well as non-participants, in order draw comparative conclusions. A limitation to acknowledge when considering the survey findings is that the sample only covered approximately 10-20% of the project's involved participants.<sup>8</sup> However, the findings of the surveys were triangulated against the MSMEs reports and ILO's baseline indicators in order to draw conclusions with the least possible deviations. In any case, the evaluation's aim is to present findings which were processed in a systematic and scientific approach based on all available data that the evaluators could access. Of course, deviations may have occurred during this process due to the relatively large amount of data to be collected during limited time and within the given cultural context and current circumstances in Afghanistan.

### Main findings

#### RELEVANCE-VALIDITY

- Contribution to Afghanistan's National Development Agenda and ONE UN Model
- Bipartite instead of tripartite constituents
- Systemic change needs national and local initiative

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<sup>7</sup> The evaluation will use the term participants and non-participants instead of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in order to avoid certain biases.

<sup>8</sup> 214 survey participants evaluated out of 2.112 total employed: 10,1%,  
214 survey participants evaluated out of 1138 new skilled employees: 18,8%.

## **COHERENCE**

- Creation of linkages has worked relatively well, but can be further enhanced
- Market systems development approach in Afghanistan's conflict context worked relatively well

## **EFFECTIVENESS**

- Decent employment particularly for women IDPs successfully implemented
- Child labor combatted, but needs systemic change

## **EFFICIENCY**

- Funds allocation need enhanced monitoring through internal safeguarding processes
- MSMEs monitoring needs to strengthen
- PAC's role key for success to linkages with local communities

## **IMPACT**

- Decent jobs successfully created
- Women are still underpaid compared to men
- Skills development successfully implemented

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

- Need for introduction of innovative aspects for MSMEs
- Securing businesses sustainability is challenging
- Women's security needs particular attention

## **Conclusions**

The Road to Decent Jobs for All (R2DJ4ALL) project has been successful in creating decent employment opportunities particularly for women, IDPs and returnees in the Balkh region of Afghanistan. Continuing its previous experience of the Road to Jobs (R2J) project, R2DJ4ALL has achieved to enhance people's skills development in the 21 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that were supported by the project across the value chains of carpet making, handicrafts, food processing, poultry, technology and TVET.

The project's market system development (MSD) approach in Afghanistan's fragile and conflict-driven context has worked relatively well considering the de facto authorities' (DFAs) takeover following the completion of the project's first year of implementation. The integration of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) into the project's processes appears to have been a highly appropriate strategy, allowing for the identification of the needs of local communities and ensuring the alignment of the project's objectives with the communities' aspirations.

In this regard, collaborating agencies such as UN Women, UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM have contributed to the project's success, however, more involvement in the future is suggested in order to streamline the project's outcomes with the partners' outreach capabilities. Within this framework, there is a need to introduce more innovative and technological aspects to the existing MSMEs, but also to train interested participants in developing their



enterprises through possibilities of placing their products on the open markets. This perspective is particularly crucial for the sustainability of the MSMEs, which should be able to sustain themselves without the provision of ILO's support in the future. Participants of R2DJ4ALL have developed their skills extensively, which will enable them to make progress in terms of sustainability of their MSMEs. Taking this into consideration, the adoption of a monitoring and results measurement (MRM) system is important both for the project's success and for the MSMEs sustainability.

Another conclusion relates to the importance of supporting women in feeling more safe and secure, and contributing to a reduction in their fear of being persecuted for their involvement in the value chain activities. Notably, the recent ban on women by the DFAs is causing particular concern for the future of women in Afghanistan and their mental and physical health, and while R2DJ4ALL has contributed to alleviate women's barriers through elevating their entrepreneurial skills and emancipating them financially, further efforts are nonetheless needed to strengthen the support for women in Afghanistan. To this end, the inclusion of men in the dialogue should be encouraged to the extent possible, in order to strive for a gradual systemic change, which can come from bottom to top and top to bottom. ILO's stance in this approach should be distant in terms of ensuring the non-interference with the sovereignty of Afghanistan's politics, but should nonetheless take a supportive and facilitatory nature in terms of R2DJ4ALL's achievements - focusing on creating further decent potential employment opportunities.

Undoubtedly, systemic change needs national and local initiative, which should come from the people of Afghanistan, its communities and political authorities. Despite the difficulties and the lack of the tripartite constituents – the DFAs did not cooperate with the project - R2DJ4ALL managed to proceed with its objectives and outcomes in line with Afghanistan's Decent Work Country Programme, Afghanistan's National and Peace Development Framework (ANPDF), ILO's Programme and Budget (P&B 2019-21 and P&B 2022-23) and UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) having focused on the local perspective and action initiation of Afghanistan's local actors.

## Lessons learned

### Programmatic level

- MSMEs face challenges in ensuring their (financial) sustainability without ILO's support
- Integration of technological and innovative approaches should be strengthened
- Support of non-traditional innovative employment opportunities can diversify economic opportunities
- Further market facilitation interventions are recommended to support systemic change
- More effective and efficient allocation of funds is recommended
- Ensure more transparency in the selection of participants
- Implement further compliance (safety, security, accountability) measures

### Community level

- Further support to women considering the restrictions/bans imposed by the DFAs is needed
- Deliver training and skills development for larger numbers

## External environment

- Support of DFAs to the project in order to fulfill its tripartite constituent requirements is needed
- Involvement of men in the issue of women’s ban is deemed necessary
- Environmental/Ecological sustainability awareness is requested by MSMEs

## Emerging good practices

- Skills development in Balkh’s traditional labor market sectors
- PAC’s role is a key for success, in creating linkages to local communities

## Recommendations

Table 1: Recommendations

Recommendations	Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
1. <b>Strong monitoring mechanisms</b> i) for the funding allocations and their alignment with ILO’s budget, ii) for the progress of the MSMEs based on the indicators and iii) for the project’s overall progress. Such mechanisms have the potential of strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of the MSMEs	ILO HQ Administration , ILO country office	High	High	Immediate
2. More support to <b>traditional and non-traditional businesses with innovative and technological approaches</b> may potentially increase the competitiveness of the supported MSMEs	ILO HQ	High	High	Immediate
3. <b>Deeper collaboration</b> with representatives of different Chambers may potentially enhance systemic change and the sustainability of the MSMEs	Project staff	Medium	Medium	Medium
4. Differentiation in strategic approach of <b>ban on women</b> by the DFAs including men in the dialogue	ILO HQ, Project staff	High	High	Immediate
5. Deepening and streamlining the <b>institutional cooperation</b> with international and local actors may prove beneficial for <b>some systemic change</b> in market development approaches	Project staff, business partners	High	Medium	Long
6. Prolonging the <b>training period</b> for the MSMEs and <b>provision of a mentor as focal point</b> may enhance their	Project staff	Medium	Medium	Long

understanding of the inputs and potentially increase their productivity and efficiency				
7. Implementation and monitoring of <b>compliance measures</b> may professionalize and advance the level of the MSMEs	Project staff	Medium	Low	Medium
8. Further <b>inclusion of people with disabilities</b> may potentially have an impact on prejudiced context against them by the community	ILO HQ, Project staff	Medium	Medium	Long
9. <b>Environmental/ecological sustainability awareness</b> through capacity-building of participants may provide channels of innovative employability opportunities	ILO HQ, Project staff	Medium	Medium	Long

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Afghanistan's context

Historically, Afghanistan has played a significant economic role in the South Asia region due to the country's geostrategic location. Connecting through its trade routes the markets of the Middle-East and East Asia, Afghanistan is a key country for international trade.<sup>9</sup> While women have been key drivers of Afghanistan's labour force, the country's regional trade is also crucial for women's economic activity and the country's economic development. The manufacturing sector continues to be dominated by women, whose workforce constitutes about 79% in the textiles and clothing sub-sectors.<sup>10</sup> In public administration and social services, women make up 20% of the workforce.<sup>11</sup>

However, the De Facto Authorities' (DFAs) takeover in 2021 has deepened political and economic inequalities in the country. More than half of Afghanistan's population, 24.4 million people, including 12.9 million children, are in need of humanitarian aid<sup>12</sup>. Essential services have been on the verge of collapse, aggravating the demands of a fragile population. Even before the country's recent political upheaval, Afghanistan was already in a dire situation, ranking 103 out of 116 nations on the Global Hunger Index 2021 suffering from widespread acute hunger<sup>13</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated

<sup>9</sup> Ashrafi, S.A.R. (2020) "International Trade and Economic Growth in Afghanistan," *Xi'an Jianshu Keji Daxue Xuebao/Journal of Xi'an University of Architecture & Technology* 12: 1799–1808, <http://doi.org/10.37896/JXAT12.06/2082>

<sup>10</sup> ILO (2022) *Employment prospects in Afghanistan: A rapid impact assessment*, [http://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/issue-briefs/WCMS\\_834525/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/issue-briefs/WCMS_834525/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>11</sup> ILO (2022) *Employment prospects in Afghanistan: A rapid impact assessment*, [http://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/issue-briefs/WCMS\\_834525/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/issue-briefs/WCMS_834525/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF, Afghanistan Humanitarian Situation Report 4, 1-28 March 2022

<sup>13</sup> Mona, Shoba Suri, 2021. The Crisis of Food Insecurity in Afghanistan. ORF, December 2021. Available: <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-crisis-of-food-insecurity-in-afghanistan/>

Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis, leaving 15 million people across 2 million households particularly vulnerable<sup>14</sup>.

Evidently, the political and economic crisis has severely affected women and girls.<sup>15</sup> As a result of the DFAs takeover, women's mobility has been restricted across the country. Further, women's employment has been significantly reduced, with an estimated 16% decline in the third quarter of 2021.<sup>16</sup> ILO estimated a 21% rise in women's jobs loss by mid-2022 assuming no policy reforms.<sup>5</sup> Other studies suggest that the ban on women's employment could cost Afghanistan's economy up to 5% of its GDP.<sup>17</sup>

Generalized international economic isolation in form of sanctions, bilateral assistance suspension and central bank isolation led to a further deterioration of Afghanistan's already struggling economy, where enterprises are hardly sustainable. Following the DFAs' takeover, international development assistance has also been vastly reduced. Taking these factors into consideration, the circumstances facing Afghanistan's population are likely to be further exacerbated unless more employment opportunities are created in order to keep people out of dismal poverty.

## **Balkh**

Balkh province located in North western Afghanistan is considered to be a relatively secure region compared to other regions in the rest of the country. Balkh's geographical location is at the receiving end of water canals from the Hindu Kush mountains, with agriculture being one of the key driving sectors of its economy.<sup>18</sup> Mazar-e-Sharif is the capital city of Balkh and is considered to be the hub of driving economic activities within the province. Studies suggest that women in Balkh are involved in a variety of income generating activities such as tailoring and embroidery under contractual agreements with shopkeepers in Mazar city.<sup>19</sup> Women's participation in sectors such as tailoring, carpet weaving and schools is therefore considered a norm. However, women's mobility has been affected after the DFA's take over in camps and other peripheral areas of the region. Further, Balkh has been a key site for implementation of donor-driven development projects. Development assistance has been used as a tool to counter insurgency activities as part of the international community's strategic efforts.<sup>20</sup> International programming has therefore focused on skills-based employment opportunities, which are considered to be main economic development drivers in Balkh province.

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<sup>14</sup> World Bank Blog (2020, August). Mitigating the poverty implications of COVID-19 in Afghanistan. Available: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/mitigating-poverty-implications-covid-19-afghanistan>

<sup>15</sup> CARE. (2022). *Food and economic crisis in Afghanistan taking a toll on women and girls – CARE report* (2022), <https://www.care-international.org/news/food-and-economic-crisis-afghanistan-taking-toll-women-and-girls-according-preliminary>

<sup>16</sup> ILO. (2022). Employment prospects in Afghanistan: A rapid impact assessment, [http://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/issue-briefs/WCMS\\_834525/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/issue-briefs/WCMS_834525/lang--en/index.htm)

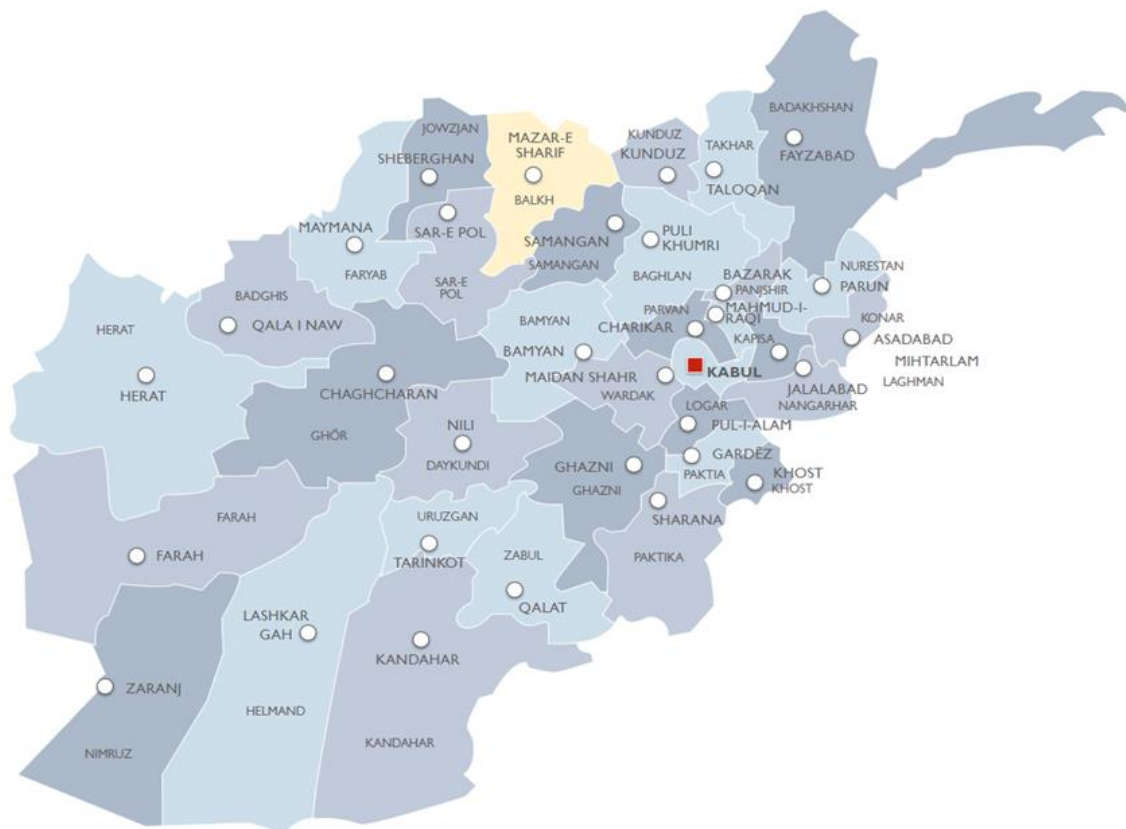
<sup>17</sup> Aljazeera. (2021). "A Taliban ban on women in the workforce can cost economy \$1bn", <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/12/1/talibans-ban-on-women-in-the-workforce-can-cost-economy-1bn>

<sup>18</sup> Walters, A.; Groninger, J. and Myers, O. (2012). "Rebuilding Afghanistan's Agricultural Economy: Vegetable Production in Balkh Province," *Outlook on Agriculture* 41: 7–13. Available: <http://doi.org/10.5367/oa.2012.0073>

<sup>19</sup> Chona R. Echavez; with Sogol Zand and Jennefer Lyn L. Bagaporo and Zand, S. (2012) "The Impact of Microfinance Programmes on Women's Lives: A Case Study in Balkh Province"

<sup>20</sup> Paul Fishstein (2010). "Winning Hearts and Minds?: Examining the Relationship between Aid and Security in Afghanistan's Balkh Province - Tufts - Feinstein International Center" Tufts – Feinstein International Center. Available: <https://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/winning-hearts-and-minds-3/>

## Map of Afghanistan – Balkh Province



### B. Project background

In this context of rapid political and economic transitions, ILO has been a key international actor in uplifting the socio-economic condition of Afghans. In line with its Decent Country Work Programme<sup>21</sup>, ILO implemented the Road to Jobs (R2J) project from 2015 to 2020 in two poverty-stricken regions, Balkh and Samangan to address unemployment and lack of decent working conditions.

<sup>21</sup> ILO. (2012). [Decent work in Afghanistan](#).

### **Box 1: Road to Jobs (R2J) project**

ILO conducted the Road to Jobs (R2J) Project from 2015-2020 in Samangan and Balkh, two provinces of Northern Afghanistan in an effort to address rampant unemployment and lack of decent working conditions. These regions were selected because economic activity is largely centered around the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. The R2J project was therefore designed to target 'poor and vulnerable rural households and income earners who work either in rural communities, or in urban centers and other major centers of employment'. It adopted a market systems development (MSD) approach and worked to 'identify, address and remove constraints that inhibit the growth of more inclusive markets.' The ultimate goal of such a programmatic approach was to produce impacts that are both **sustained** and **scalable**, by engaging the government, workers, businesses, and not-for-profit sectors to create adequate buy-in and sustained change.

*Box 1: Road to Jobs (R2J) Project*

Following the successful implementation of R2J, ILO implemented another project, the Road to Decent Jobs for All (R2DJ4ALL) in the Balkh region providing access to livelihood opportunities and to low-income communities harnessing the potential of decent employment opportunities and entrepreneurship. A particular focus of R2DJ4ALL was on women, IDPs, returnees and refugees. The project followed a market systems development (MSD) approach, which is used to address important underlying constraints stimulating growth and employment outcomes contributing to the improvement of livelihoods and poverty reduction. The project supported local MSMEs, considering them as business partners, run by and/or employing IDPs, returnees and refugees.

The project spanned from September 2020 to April 2023 and has been implemented with funding from the US Department of States (USDoS). The first year of implementation was from 1 October 2020 to 31 September 2021 and extended further to December 2021 with the funding amounting to \$967.817. The second implementation year spanned from 1 January 2022 to 31 January 2023 (until its evaluation in April 2023) with the funding amounting to \$1.128.233,11. Thus, R2DJ4ALL's total funding for 2 years and 3 months amounted to \$2.096.050,11.

R2DJ4ALL continues to leverage the networks and knowledge following the achievements of Road to Jobs (R2J) through the engagement of a range of governmental and local stakeholders. The project engaged several stakeholders at different levels, including the Department of Labour and Social Affairs (DoLSA), the Department of Women's Affairs (DOWA), Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI), Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Investment (BCCI), the National Union of Afghanistan Workers and Employees (NUAWE), as well as the Department of Commerce and Industry (DoCI) in the first year prior to the DFAs' takeover in August 2021. Their representatives formed the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), and played an important role in the shortlisting and selection of enterprises to be supported by R2DJ4ALL. The PAC was presented with several business proposals from the private sector, to be considered for support, and selected twenty-one (21) MSMEs using a set of criteria. The MSMEs were selected from critical value

chains following a rapid market appraisal (RMA) conducted in the project's first three months of inception phase. The final value chains included carpet making, handicrafts, food processing, poultry, technology and TVET.

Each of the MSMEs in these six value chain sectors identified constraints relating to their enterprises and sectors, followed by a needs assessment of employees and R2DJ4ALL participants and subsequent skills development. Business constraints included aspects such as the need to scale up operations for the increase of sales, the need to hire more skilled and/semi-skilled workforce, the need for products standardization in order to attract buyers from international markets. Following the identification of constraints, MSMEs employees were trained, both in accordance with their enterprise's needs as well as wider sector requirements. Some MSMEs ended up hiring all of the people they had trained, whereas other MSMEs only hired some of their trainees.

Thus, a series of trainings was conducted with experienced trainers who trained MSMEs in the areas of business resilience, occupational health and safety and child labour. These trainings were conducted during R2DJ4ALL's second year in August 2022.

#### Sustainable and resilient enterprise (SURE) training

The Sustainable and resilient enterprise (SURE) training programme was the outcome of a joint collaboration between ILO and GIZ. The objective of SURE was the capacity building of the MSMEs in preparing as well as adapting and responding to risks and uncertainties such as disasters, conflicts and pandemics. In order to train MSMEs, ILO hired 20 individuals from experienced backgrounds in business administration who were trained using the SURE methodology. This methodology offered a unique blend of business adaptation, digital transformation and staff development so that MSMEs could develop capacities to become agile and to tackle vulnerabilities while being resilient. SURE included a participatory training module focusing on 16 components taking into consideration businesses resilience in conflict driven contexts and disasters. Trainers tailored the training according to the needs of the MSMEs and trained their employees developing a business strategy along with the MSMEs employees.

#### Trainings on Occupational Safety and Health (OHS) and child labour

R2DJ4ALL developed training for the MSMEs and their employees in occupational safety and health (OHS) as well as child labour practices, key themes of decent employment, engaging the Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Investment in Balkh province. OSH trainings involved 29 participants including individuals from MSMEs, UN agencies, the Chamber of Commerce, business development services and workers in Balkh. The objective of these training sessions was to train potential trainers.

### C. Theory of change

R2DJ4All's Theory of Change aims to provide a broad comprehensive framework within which processes are explained and understood. These processes include the people of Afghanistan and particularly R2DJ4All participants, all locally and internationally involved actors and the project's overall objectives along with international frameworks and Afghanistan's national



policies. A significant part of this process includes methodological approaches such as the Monitoring and Results Measurement (MRM), which provides a structure for collecting regular data through the Evaluation Question Matrix (EQM). The impact of this project, which may potentially be considered as one of the project's most crucial aspects - concerning its evaluation along with its sustainability - needs to be carefully examined under the MSD approach<sup>22</sup> in fragile and conflict-driven contexts such as that of Afghanistan, and not as a regular MSD project.

Taking the above into consideration, R2DJ4All's objective is in line with Priority 1 of the Afghanistan Decent Work Country Programme, for decent work for peace and resilience, in particular for young women and men, rural and urban groups, persons with disabilities, internally displaced, migrants and returnees. More specifically, it is aligned with Outcome 1.1 and Country Programme Outcomes (CPO) AFG105 for the support of entrepreneurship development policies, strategies and programmes, which can increase access to decent jobs and incomes for women and men, especially through MSMEs. Secondly, R2DJ4All is aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), One UN for Afghanistan 2018-2021 and particularly Outcome 5, which notes that people have improved private sector-led opportunities for income, employment, and trade, including through value-added activities and value chains. Further, R2DJ4All is in alignment with the UN Transitional Engagement Framework 2022 and particularly Outcome 2, which notes that by the end of 2022, essential services are sustained that address basic human needs for the people in Afghanistan. Moreover, R2DJ4All is in line with Afghanistan's National and Peace Development Framework (ANPDF), ILO's Programme and Budget (P&B 2019-21 and P&B 2022-23), and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focusing on the local perspective and action initiation of Afghanistan's local actors.

Within this framework, the project's tangible outcomes on the ground are to be found in: the diversity of the value chains included, namely carpet making, handicrafts, food processing, poultry, technology, TVET; in the number of people, particularly women, who have been trained and have improved their skills; as well as in the increase of participants' incomes and the MSME's increase of revenues. These indicators reflect the project's MRM and MSD approach and are taken into consideration within the current conflict-driven and fragile context in Afghanistan.

## **II. Evaluation background**

### **A. Purpose and scope**

The purpose of this final independent evaluation is to promote accountability and learning within ILO's teams which undertake programmatic interventions. The evaluation also aims to understand why and to what extent intended and unintended results were achieved and to analyze the implications of the results. Within this framework, the evaluation assesses, through market systems analysis, the extent of the creation of more decent employment opportunities for all Afghans and particularly for women, IDPs, returnees and refugees. The results will be used by project stakeholders for learning in the pursuit of a decent work agenda.

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<sup>22</sup> The market systems development (MSD) approach combines the market core functions, namely supply and demand, as well as 'supporting functions' and 'rules and regulations' that shape the way markets function for the poor.



## B. Objectives

The project was guided by two objectives:

Objective 1
More Afghan refugee returnees have accessed income-earning opportunities in high-potential economic sectors
Strategies
1. Tripartite-based sector selection (interaction of government, employers and workers) 2. Facilitating access to entrepreneurship services 3. The promotion of collective entrepreneurship and social cohesion between refugee returnees and host communities 4. Technical skills development for returnees and host communities to respond to industry needs

Objective 2
Afghans, especially women, refugee returnees and IDPs are in safe and dignifying employment in competitive and resilient value chains
Strategies
1. Participatory local economic development analyses to improve the competitiveness of local firms, and attract inward investment 2. Market facilitation to ensure better opportunities of the target group in prioritized sectors and value chains.

### Timeline

The evaluation covers planned results from the start of the project start in September 2020 to the time of the evaluation, April 2023, while taking into account the activities planned until the end of the implementation period.

### Geographical focus

The evaluation focused on the northern region of Afghanistan, particularly Balkh province, which is R2DJ4All's implementation region.

### Stakeholders

- National Union of Afghanistan Workers and Employees (NUAWE)
- Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI)
- Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI)
- Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Investment (BCCI)
- Afghanistan Chamber of Industries and Mines (ACIM)
- Micro, small and medium Enterprises (MSMEs)
- IDPs, returnees and refugees, particularly women
- UN Women, UNICEF, IOM, GIZ

### Cross-cutting themes and international frameworks

The evaluation integrates gender equality and non-discrimination, international labour standards, social dialogue and environmental sustainability as part of the ILO cross-cutting themes. It also includes ILO’s programme and policy frameworks at national and global levels, UNDAF/UNSDCF and other relevant development frameworks.

The evaluation applies a gender analysis by (i) involving both men and women in consultation and evaluation analysis, (ii) by analyzing data disaggregated by gender; (iii) by formulating and/or analysis of gender sensitive strategies and objectives and gender-specific indicators; by forming a gender-balanced team, and (iv) assessing outcomes to improve lives of women and men; (v) inclusion of qualitative methods and utilization of a mix of methodologies, (vi) Thus, analysis of gender-related concerns will be based on the [ILO Guidance Note 3.1: Integrating Gender Equality in Monitoring and Evaluation](#).

The evaluation is conducted following [UN evaluation standards and norms](#) and the Glossary of key terms in evaluation and results-based management developed by the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

The clients of this final independent evaluation are ILO’s donor, the US Department of States (USDoS) ILO’s headquarters, project team and its constituents in Afghanistan, NUAWWE, ACCI, AWCCI and the MSMEs.

The ILO’s responsible regional evaluation officer, ILO’s responsible officer in the evaluation office (EVAL), PARDEV, and ILO’s technical and administrative units in headquarters will also benefit from the findings of this final independent evaluation. The evaluation’s findings are intended also to other stakeholders, such as the Department of Women’s Affairs (DOWA) Afghanistan Women’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI), Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Investment (BCCI), the Afghanistan Chamber of Industries and Mines (ACIM), the provincial government and non-governmental Institutions.

The evaluation complied with the United National Evaluation Group (UNEG)’s Evaluation Norms and Standards and adhered to the UNEG ethical guidelines.

### C. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation is based according to the following criteria, priorities and outcomes:

- 1) Policy directions

*Table 2: Policy Criteria*

	Priorities	Outcomes
1	Priority 1 of the Programme and Budget (P&B 2019-21 and P&B 2022-23)	Decent work for peace and resilience, in particular for young women and men, rural

	Priorities	Outcomes
		and urban groups, persons with disabilities, internally displaced, migrants and returnees
	More specifically to Outcome 1.1	Entrepreneurship and enterprise development policies, strategies and programmes can increase access to decent jobs and incomes for women and men, especially through micro, small and medium sized businesses.
2	Country Programme Outcomes (CPO) AFG105	Outcome 5: People have improved private sector-led opportunities for income, employment, and trade, including through value-added activities and value chains
3	United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), One UN for Afghanistan 2018-2021	Outcome 2. By the end of 2022, essential services are sustained that address basic human needs for the people in Afghanistan.
4	UN Transitional Engagement Framework 2022	

## 2) OECD-DAC criteria<sup>23</sup>

Table 3: OECD-DAC Criteria

Evaluation questions	
<b>Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right things in this context?</b>	
1	How did the project align with and support national development plans and priorities of the ILO constituents?
2	How the project contributed to the ILO's Programme and Budget (P&B 2019-21 and P&B 2022-23) and Afghanistan national development goals and the implementation of the One UN Model in Afghanistan?
3	To what extent the project has contributed to current and long-term development in Afghanistan, the needs and priority of participants, tripartite constituents and policies of partners and the donors?
<b>Validity of the design of R2DJ4ALL</b>	
4	Was the scale and scope of the project sufficient to achieve system level impacts?
<b>Coherence: How well does the intervention fit with other local initiatives?</b>	

<sup>23</sup> OECD, 2021. Applying evaluation criteria thoughtfully. Paris: OECD.

5	To what extent is the market systems development approach appropriate for use in conflict contexts like Afghanistan? How the project adjusted its strategy to address the identified challenges?
6	To what extent of synergies and interlinkages between the interventions and other interventions carried out by ILO Kabul, government and social partners?
<b>Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?</b>	
7	How effective has the project been in achieving its immediate objectives? Is the project contributing to achieving the objectives of the government of Afghanistan on employment generation?
8	How effective has the project been in addressing the constraints identified in the market systems? What transformations in the structure or dynamics of the system has led to actual systemic changes, and how can these be attributed to the project?
9	How effective has the project been in achieving large-scale job creation?
10	The extent to which Covid 19 and the change in administration affected the achievement of results?
<b>Efficiency: How well are resources being used?</b>	
11	What are the strengths and weaknesses of the project's monitoring and evaluation system? What can be done to improve the weaknesses of this system?
12	Are resources (human resources, time, expertise, funds etc.) allocated strategically to provide the necessary support and to achieve the broader project objectives?
13	Are the project's activities/operations in line with the schedule of activities as defined by the work plans?
14	How efficiently have resources (human resources – men/women, time, expertise, funds etc.) been allocated and used to provide the necessary support and to achieve the broader project objectives and results?
15	Were resources allocated strategically to achieve gender-related objectives?
16	Has cooperation among project partners been efficient? What is the value addition of the cooperation/ collaboration of the project?
<b>Impact: What difference does the intervention make?</b>	
17	What changes has the project made in the stakeholders' lives? (a) How have the changes affected men and women?
18	To what extent did the intervention advance strategic gender-related needs, which can have a long-term positive bearing on?
19	Are there any systematic differences in the impact of the project for men and women, and if so, why?
20	What have been unintended results of the project positive and negative?
<b>Sustainability: Will the benefits last?</b>	
21	To what extent are the results obtained sustainable or can they be sustained?
22	Do the project strategies and interventions, including the sustainability plan at the level of individuals, enterprises and systemic change at market system level? What actions might the

	project take to help ensure sustainability of key outputs and outcomes in a possible second phase?
23	What are the outputs and outcomes that are most likely to be sustained?

### 3. Cross-cutting themes

The evaluation cross-cuts the themes of gender equality, environmental sustainability and disability inclusion paying particular attention to gendered experiences relating to the project as well as investigating questions with regard to environmental sustainability and disability inclusion.

## III. Methodology

The methodology applied for this evaluation focused primarily on capturing R2DJ4All's threefold approach. This threefold approach included:

- i) indicators linked to the OECD-DAC criteria,
- ii) the market systems development approach and
- iii) the tripartite constituents (interaction of government, employers and workers).

Within this methodological approach, data collection for the evaluation was centred on the MSMEs, which were supported by R2DJ4All, the local people involved and R2DJ4All itself. Further, the tools of the methodology aimed to capture perspectives of non-participants to R2DJ4All in order to conduct a comparative perspective between participants and non-participants.

In sum, the methodology includes: i) a review and assessment of related desk research documentation; ii) an involved stakeholder's feedback assessment (particularly from the Project's Advisory Committee (PAC), employers of the 21 approved businesses (SMEs), employees of the 21 approved businesses, involved partners and non-involved local people); (iii) an assessment of all the above in order to comprise and suggest the project's Theory of Change.

The evaluation adheres to the UNEG Norms and standards and ethical safeguards.

## A. Research sampling and tools

Table 4: Summary of Data Collection Tools

Tool	Sample size	Distribution by actor and location Sector
KIIs	15	<p><b>5 PAC members</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Union of Afghanistan’s Workers and Employees – Balkh North (NUAWE)</li> <li>• Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Investment (BCCI)</li> <li>• Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries (AWCCI) - Balkh North</li> <li>• Balkh Chamber of Industries and Mines</li> <li>• Balkh Chamber of Craftsmen and Shopkeepers</li> </ul> <p><b>4 ILO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Manager</li> <li>• Market Systems Development officer</li> <li>• Local Economy Development Coordinator</li> <li>• Monitoring and Results Measurement (MRM) officer</li> </ul> <p><b>2 Training institutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GET Ahead</li> <li>• SURE</li> </ul> <p><b>3 Collaborating agencies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IOM</li> <li>• UNICEF</li> <li>• UN Women</li> </ul>
FGDs	6	<p><b>Directly involved (participants) and non-directly involved people (non-participants)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 male</li> <li>• 2 female</li> <li>• 1 male and female</li> </ul>
Case study	1	<p><b>Woman with disability</b></p>

Phone surveys	428	<p><b>20 MSMEs (approved by PAC and funded by ILO)</b></p> <p><b>Carpet (4)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almas Kabir Handicrafts Company</li> <li>• Qasimi Brothers Carpet Company</li> <li>• Tashguzar Co. Ltd</li> <li>• Marhaba Zarin Handicrafts Company</li> </ul> <p><b>Handicrafts (9)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maharat E Zindagi Company</li> <li>• Roz Balkh Khayati &amp; Khamak Dozi Company</li> <li>• AMU Fashion</li> <li>• Balkh Drukshshan Design Handi Crafts Company</li> <li>• Ahmad Reshad Rasouli Handicrafts Company</li> <li>• Aryoub Zazai Tailoring and Embroidery Company</li> <li>• Arasta Arfan Clothes Production Company</li> <li>• Ayesha Design</li> </ul> <p><b>Food processing (5)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nawid Hamid Tomato Paste Production</li> <li>• Afrosha Food Production Company</li> <li>• Naw Shad Mazar Ash Production</li> <li>• Aisu Babur Food Production Company</li> <li>• Nazif Confectionery</li> </ul> <p><b>Poultry (1)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saalem e Balkh Poultry Services</li> </ul> <p><b>Technology and mobile app (1)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hashmatullah Zaher Technology Services Company</li> </ul> <p><b>TVET (1)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yousuf Akbari Mobile Repairing company</li> </ul> <p><b>Total :</b>  <b>214 participants and 194 non-participants</b></p>
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### Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Fifteen key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with R2DJ4All's involved stakeholders such as PAC members, ILO project staff, training institutions (GET Ahead, SURE) and collaborating agencies (IOM, UNICEF, UN Women). Interviewees were given the opportunity to provide their overall rating of the project, which is to be found at the end of the evaluation. This rating provided the evaluation team with an overall assessment of the interviewees' perception on the project's progress in quantitative terms.

### Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) – Case study

The research team conducted six Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with participants and non-participants disaggregated by gender and sector, involving one case study with a person with a disability. Thus, focus group respondents have been selected to have gender parity and represent both local host and IDP communities.

## Phone surveys

The phone-based survey targeted in total 428<sup>24</sup> people aiming at understanding their socio-economic situation (both participants and non-participants) as well as their perception and future aspirations with regard to R2DJ4All (for participants). From the total of 428 respondents, 214 participants were directly involved people such as employers and employees and 194 non-participants. Participants were provided with an incentive payment of 100 AFN as a compensation for the time they devoted to answering the survey's questions. Participants were selected based on their availability to answer the survey's questions.

## B. Stakeholder Validation workshop

The evaluation included feedback from the stakeholder consultation workshop, which took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2023, organized by ILO and Samuel Hall. The aim of the workshop was to present to ILO and stakeholders the main findings of the evaluation and to integrate collective recommendations into the evaluation based on feedback from the involved stakeholders.

## C. Limitations, contradictions and difficulties encountered

A limitation relating to the survey findings is that the sample used only covered approximately 10-20%<sup>25</sup> of the project's involved participants. However, the findings of the surveys were triangulated against the MSMEs reports and ILO's baseline indicators, in order to draw conclusions with the least possible deviations. In any case, the evaluation presents rigorous findings which were processed through a systematic and scientific approach, based on all available data which the evaluators could access. Of course, deviations may have occurred during this process due to the relatively large amount of data collected during a limited time within the specific challenging current context in Afghanistan.

The research team spent significant time and resources assessing the MSME's reports and ILO's baseline indicators figures. Results achieved (RA) figures have been interpreted differently by different companies, which restrained the research team from conducting a comparative analysis based on these findings. For instance, some companies calculated their RA job creation figure by adding the baseline figure (BL) to the new hired persons, while other SMEs presented their RA figure with just the number of new hired people. The research team therefore resorted to the best possible interpretation methods, cross-checking the findings of the MSME's reports, ILO's baseline and RA indicators with the evaluation's survey findings.

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<sup>24</sup> The sample of 408 was investigated through two questionnaires. One questionnaire was designed for participants and non-participants consisting of total 60 questions including evaluation questions. This questionnaire was divided in two parts in order to address basic elements of both participants and non-participants such as their individual profile, resilience and household economic security, social dimension, social inclusion and psychosocial factors and external factors (COVID-19 implications, political situation, environment). The second part was addressed only to R2DJ4All participants capturing their view on their participation in the project. One separate section has been designed to address specifically people with disabilities, participants of R2DJ4All. Non-participants have been identified through a snowballing technique by having asked participants to provide contact details of their community members and relatives. The second questionnaire was specifically addressed to the supported 21 SMEs consisting of 42 quantitative and qualitative questions including overall evaluation questions of the project.

<sup>25</sup> 214 survey participants evaluated out of 2.112 total employed: 10,1%,  
214 survey participants evaluated out of 1138 new skilled employees: 18,8%.



## IV. Findings of the evaluation

### A. Afghanistan on the ground: Struggling for survival

Living in Afghanistan is not easy, particularly for women and marginalized groups such as IPDs, returnees or refugees. Overall, grim living conditions characterized by food insecurity, widespread deprivation, economic contraction, increase of prices, lack of consumer demand, supply constraints and loss of business confidence<sup>26</sup> leave little space for hope for the people of Afghanistan. The findings of the evaluation strongly confirm this observation. Of the survey's evaluation of 214 participants, 42% expressed that their lives are worse compared to a year ago, 17% answered that their lives are the same, and 36% answered that their lives are better (Figure 1). The data are even starker for non-participants respondents, 67% of whom indicated that their life is either worse or much worse. When disaggregated by gender, the figures are similar for men and women – 59% of female non-participants indicated 'worse', compared to 57% of men, whereas for participants, the figures were 42% for both genders.

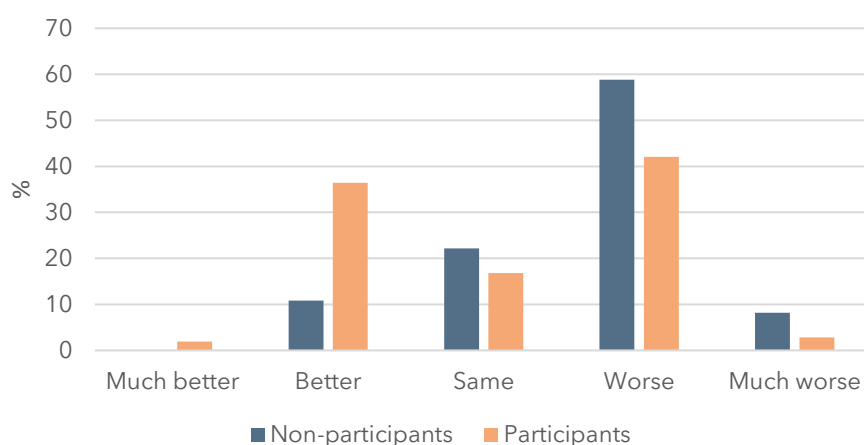


Figure 1: In general, would you say that your life is better now than it was 1 year ago?

Rating their household's economic situation, compared to other people in their area, 51% of participants-respondents answered the same, 27% worse and 18% better (Figure 2). The figures are again starker for non-participants, 49% of whom indicated that they perceive their economic situation to be either worse or much worse than those around them.

<sup>26</sup> The World Bank, IBRD. (2022). Afghanistan Development Update. Adjusting to the new realities. Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group.

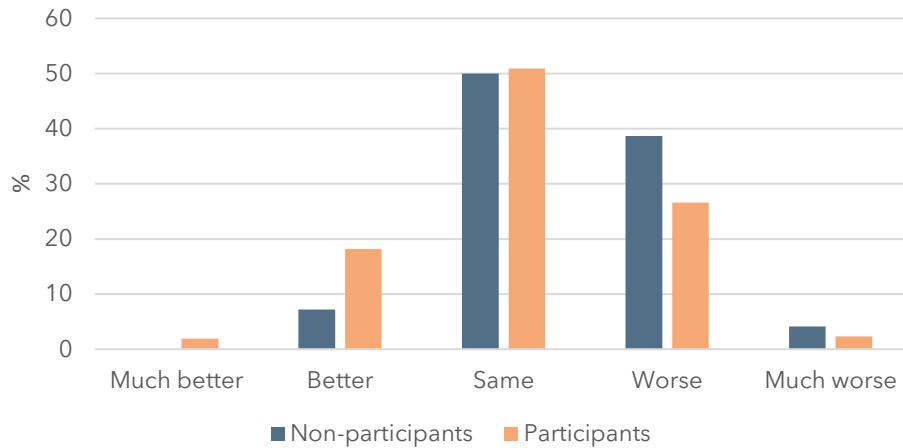


Figure 2: Compared to other people in this area, how would you rate your household's economic situation?

Seventy one percent (71%) of participants-respondents answered that their income is not sufficient to provide for them and their families with only 21% answering that their income is sufficient. Sixty three percent (63%) of participants-respondents answered that their income from their employment does not suffice to enrol their children in education, while 36% expressed that their income is sufficient to enrol their children in education.

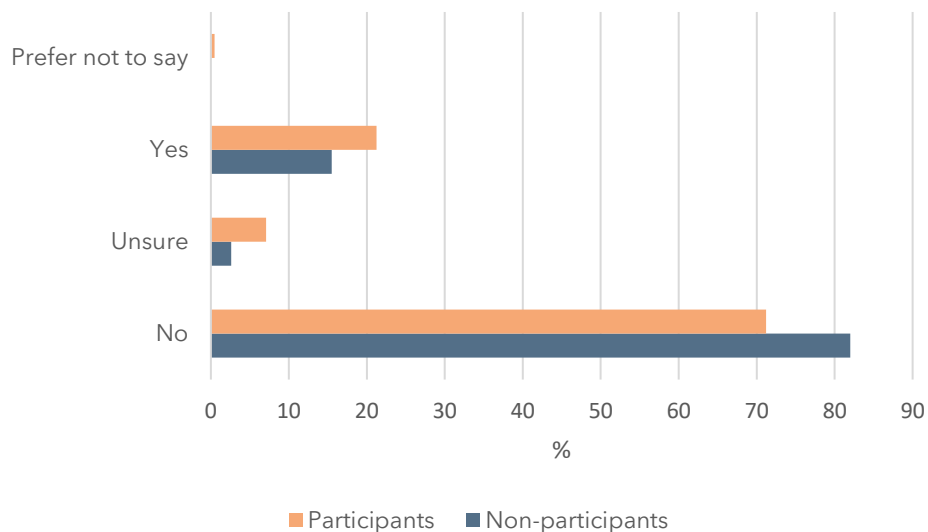


Figure 3: Is the income you make from your employment sufficient to provide for you and your family?

These data indicate the severe circumstances of Afghanistan's population and particularly for IDPs, returnees and women, considering that 85% of all the respondents were women, 15% men, 67% considered themselves IDPs, 25% members of a host community and 7% returnees.

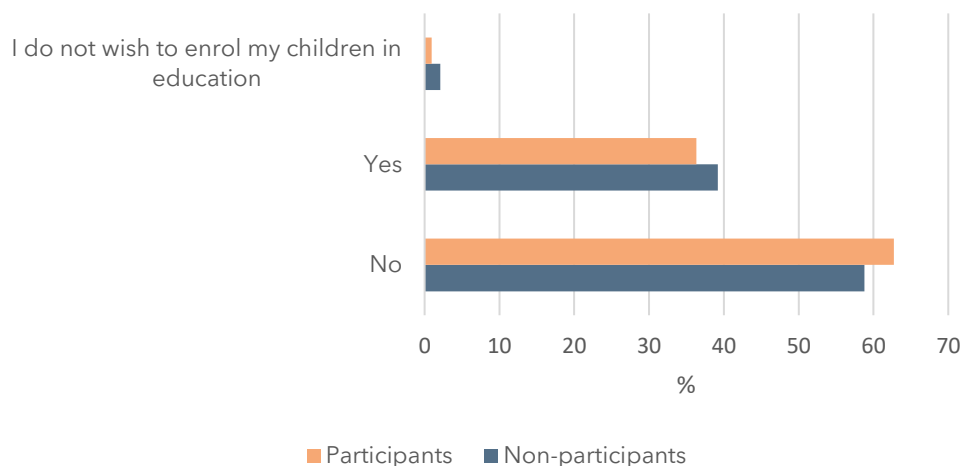


Figure 4: Is the income you make from your employment sufficient to enroll your children in education?

## B. OECD-DAC criteria

This section evaluates R2DJ4ALL, based on the evaluation questions under the six main OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: relevance (and validity), coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

Table 5: OECD-DAC Criteria - Results synopsis

RELEVANCE-VALIDITY	COHERENCE	EFFECTIVENESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribution to Afghanistan’s National Development Agenda and ONE UN Model</li> <li>Bipartite instead of tripartite constituents</li> <li>Systemic change needs national and local initiative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of linkages has worked relatively well, but can be further enhanced</li> <li>Market systems development approach in Afghanistan’s conflict context worked relatively well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decent employment particularly for women IDPs successfully implemented</li> <li>Child labor combatted, but needs systemic change</li> </ul>
EFFICIENCY	IMPACT	SUSTAINABILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funds allocation need enhanced monitoring through internal safeguarding processes</li> <li>MSMEs monitoring needs to strengthen</li> <li>PAC’s role key for success to linkages with local communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decent jobs successfully created</li> <li>Women are still underpaid compared to men</li> <li>Skills development successfully implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for introduction of innovative aspects for MSMEs</li> <li>Securing businesses sustainability is challenging</li> <li>Women’s security needs particular attention</li> </ul>

### Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right things in this context?

R2DJ4ALL’s relevance and validity is in line with Afghanistan’s, ILO’s and UN’s objectives, outcomes and policies. The evaluators rate R2DJ4ALL’s relevance and validity as high<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Based on ILO’s scale:

- High: met or exceeded most targets for the period evaluated, with mostly positive feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

## Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) and ILO's Programme and Budget (P&B 2019-21 and P&B 2022-23)

### Improved capacities of IDPs and returnees as skilled workers

R2DJ4ALL is in alignment with ILO's Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP)<sup>28</sup> and ILO's Programme and Budget (P&B 2019-21 and P&B 2022-23) objectives in Afghanistan,<sup>29</sup> having facilitated decent employment opportunities in Balkh and having built the capacities of women and men in undertaking skills-based work in relatively high economic potential sectors such as embroidery, handicrafts, carpet weaving, food processing and technology. The project has showcased increased opportunities of employment for trained individuals. By incentivizing MSMEs to achieve higher productivity through machinery and inputs, the project has built a conducive working environment for the MSMEs.

### Childcare centers and occupational health and safety

A key outcome of the DWCP is the elimination of child labour<sup>30</sup>. R2DJ4ALL supported women's work centers in setting up childcare centers so that women could bring their children and undertake productive work in a nurturing space (KII8, ILO). Childcare centers have contributed therefore to some extent in eliminating child labour especially in work centers near camps as women no longer assigned work-related tasks to their children while being at work. R2DJ4ALL's team focused on generating knowledge about occupational health and safety at the workplace.

### Strong and representative Employers' and Workers' Organisations.

The project increased participation of women representatives in PAC through female membership of Women's Chamber of Commerce and created linkages between workers' representatives and employers' representatives. Yet, women's representation needs further strengthening for future programming so that consultations on wages, workers' welfare, working hours and other social security benefits can be achieved as part of the DWCP commitments.

## Contribution to Afghanistan's National Development Agenda and ONE UN Model

### Private Sector Development Programme through market-based programming

The National Priority Program (NPP) underscores the importance of ensuring an enabling environment especially for MSMEs as they are an *"engine of the Afghan economy and create millions of jobs"*<sup>31</sup>. R2DJ4ALL concentrated on strengthening local markets of carpet,

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- Above-moderate: met or exceeded most targets for the period evaluated, but with mostly neutral or negative feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

- Moderate: missed most targets for the period evaluated, but with mostly positive feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

- Low: missed most targets for the period evaluated, with mostly neutral or negative feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

<sup>27</sup> ILO (2012) Decent work in Afghanistan.

<sup>28</sup> As described in the project's ToR. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/organigramme/program/dwcp/lang-en/index.htm#:~:text=A%20DWCP%20is%20the%20expression,to%20national%20situations%20and%20priorities>.

<sup>29</sup> ILO (2012) Decent work in Afghanistan.

<sup>30</sup> ILO (2010) Launch of Decent Work Country Programme for Afghanistan Kabul, Speaking Points, Kabul, Afghanistan.

<sup>31</sup> Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2017) Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) 2017 to 2021, Available: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5b28f4294.pdf>

handicrafts, food processing, poultry, technology and TVET by building capacities of local MSMEs and their workforce. The project's priorities have therefore been in line with strategic national plans such as NPP and Afghanistan National and Peace Development Framework (ANPDF).

R2DJ4ALL's objectives align with the outcome of improved access to livelihoods within the return and reintegration component of the ANPDF policy. Through market-based programming, R2DJ4ALL has targeted women IDPs and returnees. The project indicates contextually relevant objectives given that Balkh province has received a high proportion of IDPs and returnees. Women centers that have been set up in camp sites have improved the mobility and accessibility for women participants<sup>32</sup>.

#### Productive and broad-based economy that creates jobs

R2DJ4ALL targeted employment sectors in which Balkh holds a competitive advantage. In accordance with ANPDF II<sup>33</sup>, R2DJ4ALL ensured that MSMEs were incentivized through the provision of inputs such as machinery and raw materials for the enhancement of private sector's capacity. However, linkages of the MSMEs to markets within other regions of Afghanistan and across the border could allow the targeted sectors to thrive and create further opportunities for job creation.

#### Promoting ease of doing business

Training sessions on topics of resilience building (SURE), gender and entrepreneurship have built capacities for women IDPs and returnees to start their own enterprises. Women who showcased work-related skills were also trained in business generation skills such as learning how to calculate profit and losses, incomes and how to choose a business location<sup>34</sup>. *"Throughout the training sessions, we taught the women how to turn their plans and ideas into real businesses and how to develop their businesses using the most effective methods"* (KII14).

#### Women's economic empowerment programme

A central focus of R2DJ4ALL involved women participants as key interlocutors in business generation activities within the supported MSMEs. While women IDPs and returnees were trained to improve their labor skills, those who showcased availability of capital and some levels of education were also equipped to start their own enterprises. The project also focused on ensuring that women were also provided with access to technical inputs such as machinery which improved their productivity skills, but also with a positive impact on their health. Women workers reported an increase in wages as a result of their participation in R2DJ4ALL which is a major contribution of the project. However, these efforts need to be scaled beyond programmatic interventions.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Afghanistan National Peace and Development Plan II (ANPDF II) 2021 to 2025: Forging our Transformation – Afghanistan. ReliefWeb" (2020, November 25). Available: <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-national-peace-and-development-plan-ii-anpdf-ii-2021-2025-forging-our>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

### Bipartite instead of tripartite constituents

Addressing tripartite constituents – government, workers’ and employers’ organizations – is partly complete taking into consideration that the DFAs abstain from cooperating with the rest of the tripartite partners. *“It is no longer ‘tripartite’, I can say bipartite, if there is any such word”*, notes an interviewee (KII8, PAC). Although R2DJ4ALL has collaborated with the previous government engaging as such the tripartite partners, with the current DFAs takeover, this was not possible. The ILO works, however, with social partners as part of the tripartite constituents. The official social partners in Afghanistan are Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investments and National Union of Afghanistan (ACCI) Workers and Employees (NUAWE) and extended to working with Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries. However, in the absence of the DFAs relevant line ministries and departments, and in the interest to increase representation, the project opened up to working with other organizations such as the Chamber of Shopkeepers and the Chamber of Industries and Mines. The involvement of the workers’ union in R2DJ4ALL’s future design was another issue raised.

### Validity

#### Systemic change needs national and local initiative

Contributing to systemic change can be a suitable overarching objective for R2DJ4ALL. However, more time is needed for this achievement, not least given Afghanistan’s current political, economic and social context. On a positive note, the supported MSMEs continue to be considered as business partners by R2DJ4ALL - following R2J’s approach. Taking into account the participants' perception and the outcomes of the project, this seems to be the right strategy for ILO’s work in Afghanistan. Yet, as widely recognized by the international community, international aid will struggle greatly in achieving systemic changes<sup>35</sup> unless initiatives are led by local policy makers and market actors, while actors such as the ILO continue in a facilitatory role. The people of Afghanistan and Afghanistan’s political authorities need to pursue systemic changes for the enhancement of employment opportunities, especially for women and youth, who collectively represent more than 60% of Afghanistan's total population.<sup>36</sup>

R2DJ4ALL has facilitated participation in exhibitions and direct support to local companies through funds, raw material (although this particular option has proven to not be sustainable), and machinery – reflecting the real needs of the local communities. However, a strategic approach can be further developed by ILO in order to address systemic changes. An interviewee noted, *“there is no particular strategy to resolve the challenges we confront, but we plan to participate in national and international exhibitions and festivals through which we can attract customers who are willing to purchase our products”* (KII1, ILO). Thus, achievements in terms of systemic change would benefit from being addressed on a higher, more strategic level.

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<sup>35</sup> Zürcher, C. (2019). The folly of “aid for stabilisation”. *Third World Quarterly*, 40(5), 1-16.

<sup>36</sup> United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Available: <https://afghanistan.unfpa.org/en/node/15227>

## Coherence: How well does the intervention fit with other local initiatives?

In terms of the evaluation criterion of coherence, R2DJ4ALL is considered to be relatively successful, taking into consideration the level of involvement of international partners in the project, and bearing in mind Afghanistan's conflict context. The evaluators rate R2DJ4ALL's coherence as above-moderate.

### Market systems development approach in Afghanistan's conflict context

R2DJ4ALL's market systems development approach has worked relatively well, taking into consideration Afghanistan's conflict-driven context. As an interviewee has noted, *"the challenges are not so much into the system, but in the environment which we operate in"* (KII8, ILO). A market systems approach is thus expected to develop differently in fragile, insecure environments compared to steady and robust systems. In light of this perspective, the same interviewee conceptualized Afghanistan's volatile situation: *"Market systems approach in fragile settings, like Afghanistan might not yield the desired result because we are talking of an environment that is highly disenfranchised, highly fragmented, you know, markets have been broken down, the infrastructure is broken down. So, on a pure market systems approach, it will not give the desired results at the same time"* (KII8, ILO). An ILO representative noted that many organizations closed during the takeover of the government by the DFAs. However, many of ILO's supported projects turned profitable *"reporting higher turnovers during that time"* (KII8, ILO). Indeed, the incomes of several of project's participants and revenues of MSMEs increased, as confirmed by the evaluation's survey (see table 7).

Remarkably, a whole 80% of the 20 MSMEs surveyed reported "somewhat positive impact on program outcomes" when asked how the social and economic context in Afghanistan, and in Balkh particularly, since August 2021 has impacted the results and outcomes of the project for their enterprise. 65% answered that they expect a lot more work for their business in 2023 compared to the previous year. However, 75% answered that they consider Afghanistan's security and political situation as a main constraint for the expansion of their business. Overall, based on the testimonies of the participants and stakeholders involved in the project, as well as the assessment of the SME's reports, R2DJ4ALL has made available decent employment opportunities for its participants, which is of significant importance for the project's market systems development intervention.

### Creation of linkages worked well, but can be further enhanced

R2DJ4ALL's alignment and coherence with international and local partners has contributed to the project's overall success. The project coordinated and collaborated with UN in activities that targeted the same type of participants for example women, IDPs or MSMEs. These were meant to build on project reach and create space to demonstrate some of ILO modules such as the OSH. An interviewee noted that R2DJ4ALL created linkages with similar interventions and programs in the region initiated by international agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, GIZ and NGOs in youth entrepreneurship, participation in exhibitions and data collection. *"Whenever we had the chance to cooperate with other organizations, we never refused to cooperate with them... and we have never faced any particular challenge while cooperating and coordinating our activities with UN agencies/other*

*collaborating partners*" (KII1, ILO). Nevertheless, the evaluation's data collection could not retrieve specific names and objectives of the other initiatives. Taking this into account, the role of UN agencies was found to be fairly limited in the project.

Another particular key aspect for the project's success was the contribution of PAC along with the associated chambers and organizations. An ILO representative noted that the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment and the labor union were quite fundamental in supporting ILO in the implementation of its projects and the publicizing of the programs. This, in turn, ensured the engagement and participation of the different MSMEs to ILO's projects. *"UN agencies cooperate with us... and are not willing to compete with each other. For instance, we conducted a program regarding gender awareness through the coordination of other organizations"*, noted an interviewee (KII1, ILO). Further, MSMEs proposals have greatly increased after Balkh's Chamber of Commerce and Investment (BCCI) announcement, because they are well interconnected with the local communities. A PAC member highlighted: *"Fortunately, the ILO could create linkages during the last 3 years despite all the challenges in the country. They created coordination whether it's through chambers of commerce or other governmental authorities. So, they could manage all this coordination better than other agencies through the management they had. In their future programming, we suggest that they should directly get in touch with the chambers of shopkeepers and craftsmen so that we could address the problems in these areas collectively"* (KII13, PAC). Also, PAC contributed to R2DJ4ALL's facilitation through their communication channels to the DFAs. For instance, an interviewee reported, *"I am a member of the governing council, which holds meetings once a month. During the previous meeting, the representative of the Taliban leader, the director of the Directorate of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, and the governor of Balkh wanted to prevent women from working. However, I suggested that women who are working in the private sector and running businesses must not be prevented from working because they created jobs"* (KII11, PAC). The interviewee noted that the council accepted women to work under certain restrictions (wearing hijab). It is evident thus, that PAC's role has been crucial to R2DJ4ALL's achievements.

Table 6: R2DJ4ALL's collaborating agencies

UNICEF	ILO partnered with UNICEF to train young population in preparing business proposals, identifying business opportunities and entering job markets in Balkh.
UN Women	ILO partnered with UN Women to build technical capacities of women entrepreneurs in running their own enterprises. UN Women identified potential women candidates who underwent training on marketing and business management. Some of these women also participated in an exhibition that was organised by ILO in 2022 indicating increased opportunities for women entrepreneurs to showcase products. While women have developed their technical expertise on entrepreneurship, there is further demand for developing their financial skills.



IOM	As per ILO's commitment of reducing child labour and ensuring occupational health and safety at work, ILO conducted awareness raising trainings on reducing child labour and OSH. These trainings were conducted with four returnees that were involved in IOM's business partner unit.
GIZ	GIZ undertook the development of Sustainable and Resilient Enterprises (SURE) training programme. The objective of the SURE training programme was to build MSMEs capacities in preparing for, adapting and responding to risks, and uncertainties such as disasters, conflicts and pandemics. GIZ's technical team facilitated the development of robust and practical based SURE training modules that were delivered by trainers hired by ILO.

### Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?

R2DJ4ALL was effective in achieving its objectives taking into consideration the number of people recording positive change in terms of their incomes and working conditions as well as the number of women participating in the project. The evaluators rate the outcome of R2DJ4ALL's effectiveness as high.

### Decent employment particularly for women IDPs successfully implemented

The project managed to create decent, safe and respectful employment opportunities, especially for women IDPs and returnees. Hence, the project allocated its resources effectively in terms of reaching its gender objectives. This is confirmed by the evaluation's survey, which counted 85% female participants respondents and 15% male. Further, based on the MSMEs reports of the 1.138 new skilled employees over 800 were women. Of the 20 MSMEs surveyed at least 1.138 new skilled people<sup>37</sup> were recruited out of the total 2.112 employed people during the evaluation with most of them (1.861) being women IDPs. Of the 214 survey participants-respondents, 85% answered that it is common for women to work at their current/past workplace and 69% answered that their current or past workplace is dominated by women. An interviewee noted that women receive more support through interventions such as R2DJ4ALL compared to before. For instance, *"women were assisted to receive work permits from the government in addition to receiving training and funds"* (KII4, PAC). The interviewee continued reporting, that *"some of the companies and women who receive the funds are self-sufficient and can continue their businesses without relying on the funds"*. Indeed, as shown in the table below, a significant increase of income for employees and an increase in revenues for the MSMEs per month is evident. This is an important milestone for the MSMEs sustainability.

<sup>37</sup> based on the MSMEs reports and ILO's indicators

Table 7: MSMEs Results Achieved

MSMEs	Number of new skilled staff recruited	Number of trainers contracted	Increase of income for workers per month (AFD)		Increase in revenue for MSMEs per month (AFD)	
			From	To	From	To
Marhaba Zarin Handicrafts Company	200	10	2200	2800	N/R	N/R
Almas Kabir Carpet Weaving	63	4	15000	18000	5000	7000
<b>Qasimi Brothers Carpet Company</b>						
Tashguzar Co. ltd	300	4	2500	4500	40000	60000
Nazif Confectionery	20	4	2500	4000	20000	60000
Nawid Hamid Tomato Paste Production	30	2	8000	35000	300000	350000
Afrosha Food Production Company	23	2	3000	3000	15000	15000
Naw Shad Mazar Ash Production	40	N/R	3000	3000	15000	15000
Aisu Babur Food Production Company	27	N/R	3000	3000	15000	15000
Maharat E Zindagi Company	60	4	3000	3500	12000	10000
Roz Balkh Khayati & Khamak Dozi Company	100	2	6000-8000	4000-5000	18000	50000
AMU Fashion	20	N/R	2000	2000-3000	2000	40000
Bamika Suit and Waistcoat Making Company	22	1	0	0	15000	35000
Balkh Drukshhan Design Handi Crafts Company	15	2	4000	7000	20000	48000
Ahmad Reshad Rasouli Handicrafts Company	26	2	2500	3500	6000	32000
Aryoub Zazai Tailoring and Embroidery Company	50	2	2000	6500	10000	30000
Arasta Arfan Clothes Production Company	35	2	0	0	24000	40000
Ayesha Design	40	N/R	2000	3000	5000	10000
Saalem eE Balkh Poultry Services	40	1	N/R	N/R	0	30000
Hashmatullah Zaher Technology Services Company	12	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R
Yousuf Akbari Mobile Repairing company	15	N/R	0	7000	0	30000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1138</b>	<b>42</b>				

Further, it is evident from the graph below that 93% of the respondents increased/greatly increased their partnerships as a result of the project, 76% increased/greatly increased their customers, 77% increased/greatly increased their output, and 73% increased/greatly increased their monthly income.

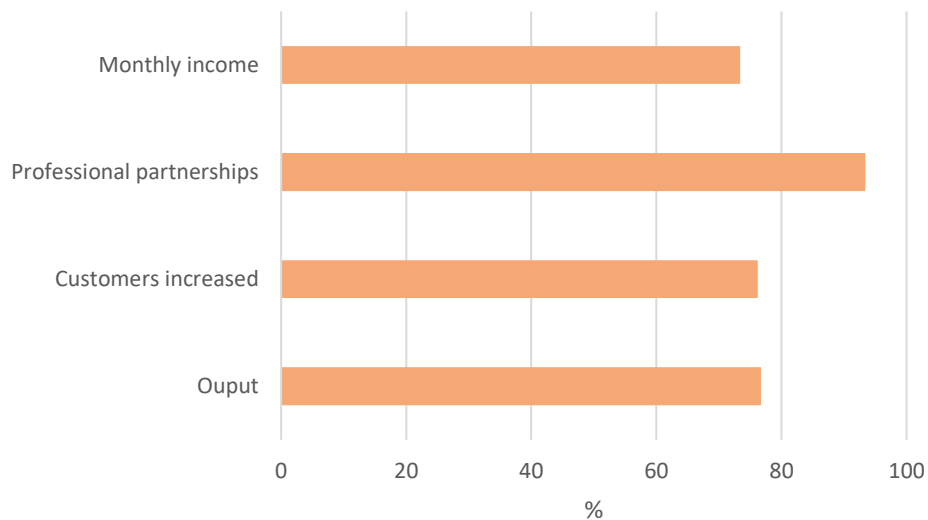


Figure 5: Percentage of respondents reporting an increased/greatly increased evolution in their business as a result of the project

Another crucial point of the project’s success was the facilitation of women’s independence towards men. A PAC representative highlighted that *“many women who were interested in running businesses directly received the funds. Previously, women could not directly contact us, because men were receiving the funds on behalf of the women”* (KII4, PAC). Nevertheless, further gender awareness in consultation with UN Women may potentially improve more women’s rights, noted an ILO representative. Thus, R2DJ4ALL’s focus on women’s entrepreneurship has achieved its objective to a great extent. An interviewee of a training institution noted that 60 women were trained in total with about 40-45% of them sustaining their business after the training (KII5, SURE TOT). It is important to note that education was not a major criterion for the selection of women’s participation, since some women had skills, such as tailoring and carpet-weaving and were capable of starting and running a business without having formerly received any formal education. Indeed, the findings of the survey confirm that 20% of participants respondents had a university degree/tertiary education, 24% had no formal education and 28% had secondary education.

#### Child labor combatted but needs systemic change

Child labor continues to be a major issue in Afghanistan. As an interviewee noted, *“child labor is significantly prevalent in Afghanistan due to its poverty”*, adding that families send their children to work due to poverty (KII9, IOM). Indeed, this is confirmed in the evaluation’s survey. Of the 214 participants-respondents, 83% answered that it was never common for children to work at their workplace. However, 14% responded that very frequently, frequently or sometimes children may work at their workplace. This is a significantly high percentage, which aligns with the remarks of another interviewee: *“One of the weaknesses of the programme was that it was always discussing the issue of how to prevent children from doing heavy duty jobs and to find an alternative decent job for them but in practice, they couldn’t do anything regarding this issue. For example, they did not know how child labour negatively affects the mental and physical health of children”* (KII2, PAC). An entrepreneur noted, *“yes, there are girls who are under the age of 16, 17 and 18 and they work for me... these underage girls told me, that if I don’t hire them and they won’t learn something, and they would not be able to find a job or earn an income to support their*

*families. We have categorized the underaged children in our company. We give them veils to embroider them but we don't give them chest embroidery because that requires more effort and it may cause problems for their eyes or hands"* (KII10, Training Institutions). It is thus evident that child labor is a structural issue in Afghanistan, which needs further consideration and support for systemic change.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, significant efforts have been made by R2DJ4ALL in raising the awareness among local communities regarding the negative effects of child labor on children. Characteristically, an interviewee noted, that *"businessmen did not know how child labour negatively affects the mental and physical health of children, while also being predisposed to join terrorist activities ruining thus their future"* (KII6, PAC). The same interviewee noted that the shortlisting of the businesses to join the program has ensured that no children would be included in the workforce of the business. Another interviewee noted that a childcare center was supported by ILO providing space for children to learn and play (KII8, ILO).

### Political insecurity crucial, but with not substantial impact on the project

The DFAs' takeover has created certain security challenges in most areas where R2DJ4ALL was implemented. R2DJ4ALL's progress was not directly affected, though, due to its flexible approach which enabled it to avoid any significant issues with the DFAs. However, Afghanistan's political transition has greatly affected people's access to jobs. The majority of the participants in the focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted as part of the evaluation highlighted the deterioration of their economic situation during the project's implementation period. Of the 214 participants-respondents of the evaluation's survey, 79% reported that their access to employment opportunities had decreased or significantly decreased. When respondents were asked to specify the reasons why their access to employment had decreased, 69% mentioned the restrictions imposed by DFAs, 75% stressed the difficulty in purchasing raw materials, and 45% indicated the closure of businesses. This last point - the closure of business - is confirmed by the World Bank's development update on Afghanistan, which explains: *"the political uncertainty and fear resulted in a confidence crisis causing an exodus of highly skilled people and the closure of businesses and economic activities"*.<sup>39</sup> Another issue reported concerned corruption issues within the DFAs. However, in the midst of people's unemployment, bad weather conditions and lack of access to food, R2DJ4ALL was perceived by most participants as a significant opportunity in raising their hopes and optimism, allowing them to feel respected in the community due to their employment status.

### COVID-19 pandemic decreased incomes and revenues

The COVID-19 pandemic and its post-period has evidently affected the domestic market through restrictions, increase of prices and a generalized crunch. Of the 214 participants--respondents of the survey, 70% answered that their economic situation has become worse or much worse compared to other people in their community since the COVID-19 pandemic began, while 83% answered that their income has decreased/significantly decreased by the

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<sup>38</sup> ILO, 2018. Training manual on child labor in Afghanistan. Geneva: ILO.

<sup>39</sup> The World Bank, IBRD. (2022). Afghanistan Development Update. Adjusting to the new realities. Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group.

pandemic. Arguably, these findings explain the project's high demand and interest in participation, which was reportedly very high – in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic. Shifting to the delivery of online training during COVID-19 was not possible, however, since the physical presence of participants was necessary (e.g. for carpet weaving). In addition, the education level of the participants did reportedly not easily allow for online participation. Instead, R2DJ4ALL's innovative approach involved the training of smaller groups of employees, who then transferred their knowledge to larger SME's groups by replicating their training.

### Efficiency: How well are resources being used?

R2DJ4ALL's efficiency needs to be significantly improved taking into consideration the amount of funds allocated to the MSMEs in relation to the project's overall budget, the discordance of ILO's budget allocation with the actual funds spent for each MSME, and the loss of the project's files. The evaluators rate the outcome of R2DJ4ALL's efficiency as low.

### Funds allocation need further monitoring

Overall, the project's operations are in line with the schedule of the activities as defined in the workplans. Further, the funding and timeframes were deemed sufficient to achieve the intended outcomes. However, with regard to the efficiency of the funds' allocation, R2DJ4All's evaluation has concluded to following findings:

- The total funds spent on the MSMEs up to the evaluation time amounted to \$202.669,5 (underneath table), which amounts to 10,34 % of the entire program's budget of \$2.096.050,11. This amount appears significantly low compared to the project's total budget.
- MSME's budget allocation as confirmed by ILO is not aligned with ILO's overall budget.
  - ILO's 2022 budget allocation for the MSMEs for the two objectives amounted to \$253.780.
  - ILO's 2021 budget allocation for the MSMEs for the two objectives amounted to \$243.799.
- However, the total amount spent to the MSMEs for 2022 and 2021 amounted to \$202.669,50 (excluding training with the allocated funds amounting to \$37.520,13 for 2021-22). ILO could not provide the evaluators with an explanation of this difference.

The evaluators could assume that these gaps may potentially be explained either by the fact that ILO's files were destroyed by ILO in accordance with the DFAs' compliance requirements, or due to the loss of the files for the above-described reasons. ILO confirmed that the Monitoring Results Measurement files were lost at the separation of MRM officer from ILO in July 2022. However this, according to ILO, did not affect that repository of financial expenditure information. Further, ILO noted that the 2021 expenditure was affected by the COVID 19 induced lockdowns while the latter part of the year was impacted by the fall of the Afghanistan government.

Table 8: Total Funds Spent per MSME Sector

MSME categories	Funds spent 2022 \$	Funds spent 2021 \$	Total funds spent 2022-2021 \$
Carpet	59.320,5	25.050	83.370,5
Handicrafts	43.864	13.013	56.877
Food processing	29.321	4.788	34.109
Poultry	12.040	-	12.040
Technology and mobile app	9.730	-	9.730
TVET	5.543	-	5.543
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>159.818,50</b>	<b>42.851</b>	<b>202.669,5</b>

(see Annex 4 for detailed funds spent for each SME and timeframes)

Overall, respondents expressed their satisfaction with R2DJ4ALL's implemented activities. However, they noted that the project's budget was limited and insufficient on the provincial level (KII4, PAC).

### MSMEs monitoring needs to strengthen

Taking the above into consideration, R2DJ4ALL's reporting and monitoring mechanisms including those of the supported MSMEs need to be further enhanced. The project's and the MSMEs' files need to be kept safely and regularly backed up in order to avoid the repetition of a loss of files. ILO's previous existing files were lost due to the departure of an ILO officer from Afghanistan, who sent back his laptop without files (KII8, ILO), which must be considered a critically important lesson learnt for the future. Further, MSMEs reports and ILO's baseline indicators need to be monitored cohesively and coherently in order to be streamlined with the project's/MSMEs' strengths and weaknesses. The research team devoted significant time to assess the MSMEs reports and ILO's baseline indicators in order to conclude to tangible "results achieved" (RA) findings. However, RA figures have been interpreted differently by different companies, which restrained the research team from conducting a comparative analysis based on these findings. In light of this, ILO should consider providing streamlined guidance to the MSMEs in providing precise figures based on their specific achievements. This is particularly important in order to measure the project's success. When such important figures are missing or are found to not be measurable as they are deemed to be unreliable, they undermine the project's overall success.

Concerning the in-person monitoring of MSMEs, some incidents were reported. For instance, respondents of the Saalem e Balkh Poultry Services noted that they were either not given any poultry or that they did not receive chicken feed. Other survey respondents noted that the support they were given was mainly concentrated on food assistance, such as flour and oil. Women employees from Marhaba Zarin handicrafts have received training, and currently produce rugs but have not received any income. An embroidery company is buying finished items from the participants at much cheaper rates than the rates offered in the bazaar. Other respondents reported not having received their salaries or raw materials that they were supposed to be given by their employer. Thus, ILO ought to closely monitor both the SME's results in terms of indicators/results achieved, but also to hold employers accountable towards their employees and ILO. Overall, though, employees' perception towards their employers is highly positive (see section decent jobs created under impact).

Some of the MSMEs were located inside the houses of the project's participants (e.g. the business was located on the first floor and the participant's home on the second). This has reportedly created some challenges to ILO, as the latter has sometimes been refused to conduct an assessment of these companies, which has in turn caused certain delays to the project. However, overall MSMEs retained a good and frequent exchange with ILO.

#### PAC's role key for success to linkages with local communities

R2DJ4ALL's approach to integrate the PAC within the project and the selection of the MSMEs was key to the project's success. PAC's awareness and knowledge of the local context facilitated the essential engagement of R2DJ4ALL with the communities. Characteristically, *"the expression of interest by the MSMEs increased from 25 in 2021 to more than 79 in 2022 due to PAC's community level of work"*, noted an interviewee (KII8, ILO). As a result, PAC bridged the communication of the MSMEs and the local people to UN agencies. Another key point that was stressed through the PAC collaboration is the transparency in the selection process of the MSMEs, because multiple key actors have assessed the MSMEs proposals, which are not directly related to ILO. Conversely, some respondents raised concerns that the identification of specific individuals (proposed as project participants) might lead to the PAC members selecting their relatives over others. This aspect needs to be taken into consideration by ILO's future programming.

#### Impact: What difference does the intervention make?

R2DJ4ALL's impact is deemed rather successful taking into consideration the positive changes described in the lives of the project's participants. The evaluators rate the outcome of R2DJ4ALL's impact as high.

#### Decent jobs successfully created

The evaluation's survey findings reveal (as per the table underneath) that those who received support by R2DJ4ALL consider their employment to be overall decent, in accordance with ILO's standards. In most aspects, such as being respected by their community through their employment, feeling secure and safe in their work, being equally treated by their employer, their employer being open to dialogue, tensions at work being dealt in respectful, fair and constructive manner, their needs and aspirations being heard and respected, being integrated within their community and feeling in control of their life, the findings exceed 90%. Three major themes with lower percentages are found in following categories amongst participants: being fairly paid (58% somewhat/strongly agree), common for children to work at your workplace (14% very frequently/ frequently/ sometimes), and health coverage provision by employer (10% somewhat/strongly agree). It is worth to note, however, that these three categories are strongly influenced by Afghanistan's current context and not necessarily the project itself. The centrality of Afghanistan's current context, and the challenges it brings, are reflected in the first part of the evaluation. Meanwhile, the overall positive results reflected in the previously mentioned categories suggest the overall success of R2DJ4ALL's objectives in securing more income-earning opportunities in high-potential economic sectors, in safe and dignifying employment especially for women, refugees, returnees and IDPs.



Table 9: Survey Respondent's Perception of Decent Work<sup>40</sup>

Indicator (Agree/Strongly agree)	Non participant (%)		Participant (%)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Think that their current job (or past job if unemployed) gives them respect in their community.	99.4	89.3	100	100
Feel secure and safe working in their current job (or past job if unemployed)	96.4	96.5	99.5	100
Think they are fairly paid	45.2	32.2	57.5	63.6
Health coverage provision provided by employer	4.8	3.6	8.8	18.2
Employees are equally treated by the employer	62.1	82.2	94.5	93.9
Employer open to dialogue	60.3	85.7	92.3	93.9
Tensions are dealt in a respectful, fair, constructive manner	58.5	82.1	87.3	97
Needs and aspirations are heard and respected	63.3	82.2	89.5	100
Common for children to work at your workplace	10.2	17.9	6.1	6
Feel integrated in their community within the past year	94	92.8	97.8	97
Feel in control of their own life (sense of autonomy and decision-making power in the different aspects of your life)	84.3	96.4	87.9	97

Another significant contribution of R2DJ4ALL is the reduction of the employees' working hours in some cases. Reportedly, the working hours of employees in some companies have been previously 10-11 hours. Following R2DJ4ALL's intervention the working hours have been reduced to eight. In other cases, the working hours have remained stable, but the wage of women has increased. Another entrepreneur, who was previously an employee, noted that he has managed to hire 80 workers through the support of R2DJ4ALL, paying his employees upon deliverables and not through a monthly salary, having agreed a one-year contract with them (KII10, Training Institutions).

<sup>40</sup> Weighting has been used in the calculation of percentages to account for differing sample sizes



### Women are still underpaid compared to men

A significant finding of the evaluation’s survey is that the average wage per month for male employees, which amounts to 8.176 Afn while it is only 5.785 Afn for women, indicating a striking difference of nearly 24%. R2DJ4ALL’s future intervention should take this finding into consideration and implement necessary steps to address this imbalance.

### Skills development successfully implemented

Skills development is arguably the most important aspect of R2DJ4ALL, having achieved its most significant impact and added value in society and on the economy through the provision of trained and skilled entrepreneurs. The project’s design from beginning to end has been rooted in the society and the local context, addressing the most crucial aspects to ensure the project’s success. For instance, some of the criteria for the shortlisting of SMEs and individuals were the acceptance by the community, their affiliation with the market and the specific target on the number of jobs to be created by each company. Another aspect of the training concerned the ‘snowball effect’, which has enabled employees to become entrepreneurs. The evaluation’s survey reveals that 25% of the 214 surveyed participants declared to be self-employed. An interviewee noted, that *“one of the positive impacts of the Get Ahead training was that 3 of my employees who have participated in the training want to start their own businesses.”* (KII10, Training Institutions). Remarkably, the evaluation’s findings reveal that just over half (53%) of the total 214 participants of the survey felt very or somewhat weak in their business skills before their participation in the program. After their participation in R2DJ4ALL, 98% of participants felt strong or somewhat strong in their business skills. Another crucial finding is that 83% of the participants think that their current job (or past job if unemployed during the evaluation) offers them personal development in terms of their skills.

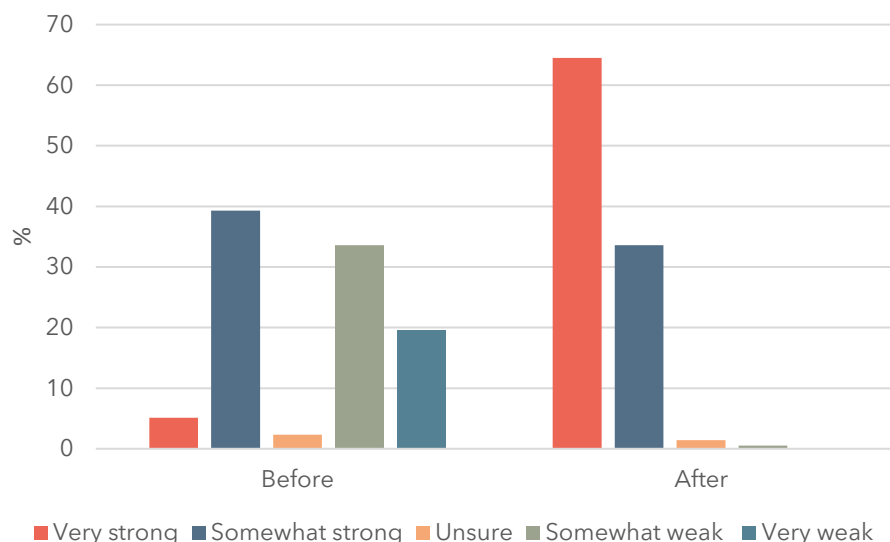


Figure 6: How strong do you feel your business skills were before and after taking part in the programme?

Essential business skills have been taught to women participants such as calculating the income, expenses, profit and losses in order for them to be able to sustain their business in the long-term. On the training of 60 women, a trainer noted, that *“the training was effective and impactful both for us and the women whom we trained because they had the talent and*

ability to start and run a business and have found the courage and skills to use their talents and abilities in initiating and running businesses” (KII5, Training Institution).



Figure 7: In what capacity were you involved as part of ILO's R2DJ4ALL programme?

Other significant findings from the evaluation’s survey are indicated in the below table: 94% of the evaluation’s survey respondents had received a training as part of the program, 97% considered the trainings to have had an impact on their work/employment opportunities, 74% reported that the project had increased their ability to produce goods in better quality, 49% thought that the project increased their ability to become a better service provider, 49% found that the project had increased their ability to produce goods in greater quantity, and 34% reported that the project had increased their ability to become an entrepreneur to run their own business.

Table 10: Survey Respondent's Perception on Trainings

Indicator	Response (%)
Received a training as part of the program	94.4
Think the trainings had an impact on their work/employment opportunities	97
Ability to produce goods in better quality	73.5
Ability to become a better service provider	49
Ability to produce goods in greater quantity	48.5
Ability to become an entrepreneur to run own business	34.1

### Creation of market facilitation interventions

One crucial aspect of R2DJ4ALL is the market facilitation interventions, which have strengthened the internal capacities and skills of the local communities. While the need for certain products from neighbouring countries illustrates local Afghan communities’ continued dependency on obtaining certain products through imports, R2DJ4ALL has contributed to a great extent to a decrease in external trade dependencies. For instance, a

PAC member reported on the difficulties to access poultry markets in Balkh province when the borders with Pakistan closed, explaining that this had led to an increased costs in the provision of poultry. *“This is one of the great contributions of PAC with this project...these MSMEs provided chickens to the people to grow them and sell their products such as eggs in the market and earn a livelihood or sell them in the market with a higher price”*, noted the interviewee (KII2, PAC member). *“From another perspective, the high demand for Afghanistan’s domestic products and the increase of the price of raw materials resulted in handicrafts improvement”*, noted an interviewee (KII1, ILO). He continued explaining: *“Because the exchange rate between Afghani and Dollar is not stable, the price of the raw materials has increased, and we cannot import our raw materials from China. Since we cannot import raw materials from China and traders cannot travel there, our handicraft dramatically improved”*. Remarkably, of the 20 SMEs employers surveyed by the evaluation team, only 10% considered international competition as a barrier to the expansion of their business. Thus, R2DJ4ALL’s market facilitation interventions created opportunities for suppliers of domestic products.

Further, the MSMEs participation in exhibitions is a crucial aspect contributing to the access of the MSMEs’ products to domestic and global markets, facilitating the project’s market systems development intervention despite Afghanistan’s fragile context. An interviewee noted, *“currently we participate in Imam Abu-Hanifa International Exhibition in Kabul, where we managed to have a contract to produce 50,000 jackets and around 20 to 30 embroideries that we are going to send to Dubai for selling”* (KII1, ILO). Another exhibition was organized by ILO in the Balkh province and following the DFAs takeover, and ILO and AWCCI facilitated the participation of MSMEs in an exhibition in Mazar-i-Sharif, with around 77 exhibition rooms and 6 women entrepreneurs (R2DJ4ALL participants) (KII8, ILO). Nevertheless, as stated in the validation workshop, there is a need to organize further opportunities for exhibitions accessible to women’s MSMEs in Balkh.

#### **Inclusion of people with disabilities can be further enhanced**

R2DJ4ALL seems to have addressed the inclusion of people with disabilities to a low extent. The findings of the evaluation’s survey reveal that 7 persons out of 214 (3%) identified as living with disabilities. The SMEs reported a total of 42 people with disabilities being employed at the time of the evaluation. However, it is not clear whether these individuals were hired as part of R2DJ4ALL. An interviewee noted, *“we have been introduced to a woman who was deaf and really skillful in handicrafts, but we could not succeed to train her because she joined the training sessions very late and was unable to hear our speeches”* (KII5, Training institution). An employer engaged in the embroidery and weaving sector, previously having worked for the Roz Balkh company, noted that he had hired a person with a hearing disability (KII10, Training Institutions). Another woman with a disability expressed her satisfaction being able to earn an income through her work in the carpet weaving sector (CS1).

#### **Environmental/ecological sustainability awareness can be strengthened**

Environmental sustainability was not a major component of R2DJ4ALL. Of the evaluation’s survey of total 214 respondents, 69% felt that their job was not affected by climate change and environmental implications. However, 31% noted that their employment was indeed affected; out of these respondents, 11% believed that climate change creates damage to

crops and 6% said that they needed to relocate. This relative high percentage (31%) of participants feeling that their employment is affected by environmental reasons was confirmed by the interest among the SMEs during the validation workshop in awareness raising sessions on environmental/ecological sustainability.

### Compliance measures introduced

Compliance measures have been implemented in some cases, and included wearing uniforms and face masks, and the monitoring of the placement of fire extinguishers. Further, complaint boxes have been installed in each of the partner companies with the telephone number of ILO officers being accessible to the employees, in order to allow for the timely reporting to ILO of potential cases of issues with the employers (KII7, ILO).

### Sustainability: Will the benefits last?

R2DJ4ALL's sustainability is considered relatively challenging taking into consideration the cost-benefit analysis that the MSMEs are able to sustain without ILO's support as well as the existing political, financial and current market risks. Traditional labor market sectors such as carpet making and handicrafts may prove more resilient compared to other sectors. MSMEs' individual management, innovation and adaptability to the changing circumstances will determine the level of their future sustainability and success. The evaluators rate the outcome of R2DJ4ALL's sustainability as moderate.

### Need for introduction of innovative aspects

R2DJ4ALL seems to support traditional businesses, providing significant incentives and skills development for Afghanistan's traditional professions. On the other hand, the approach of solely providing support to traditional businesses may entail the risk that these businesses are not profitable in the long-term, after the end of the project. An interviewee highlighted *"just 10 women sit and weave a carpet in one month and at the end, there is nothing to receive...there is no change in the situation of the producers, only those who are dealing these carpets and buying them with cheaper prices, and exporting these products"* (KII3 Collaborating Agencies). The interviewee implied that the open market leaves little or no space for the businesses profit and sustainability. *"The result is unfortunately not significantly reasonable due to the open market. The borders are open and if we can find a 12 square meter carpet with USD100, then why should we spend USD500 or 1000 to weave that carpet"*. The remarks of another interviewee appear to confirm the validity of this observation: *"the weakness of the project was that some of the persons and companies, which received funds more than three times were skilful in receiving funds, but could not continue their businesses when the project was finished. We suggested companies must not receive funds more than three times"* (KII4, PAC). In addition to calling for better monitoring mechanisms, this point appears to be very important in suggesting that the lack of future support available for innovative and technological approaches may increase the risk of Afghan businesses struggling to sustain global market competition. The need to introduce more innovative aspects in future programming was confirmed by ILO staff members in the validation workshop as well. Meanwhile, an ILO representative highlighted an innovative approach, found in ILO's partnership with a company to develop an e-commerce online platform, providing a space and opportunity for women producers to sell products such as

handcrafts and carpets (KII8, ILO). This is certainly a significant tool which leverages technological and innovative elements in order to allow women to access the open market in a more efficient way, whilst simultaneously supporting existing employment opportunities.

### Securing businesses sustainability is challenging

Another challenge that needed to be addressed by the project concerned the departure of skilled and trained workers from their companies for several reasons (e.g. due to decisions to leave the country). An interviewee noted, *“Arasta Arfan production company faced some challenges and problems when their skilled laborers left. But currently, they are focusing on having more skilled laborers to avoid single point failure when a skilled laborer leaves the company”* (KII7, ILO). The same respondent continued to explain: *“Arasta Arfan has received through an order to produce 50,000 jackets per month for the winter but since they lacked the capacity to produce that amount, they have accepted to produce about 10,000 jackets per month”*, notes an ILO representative (KII7, ILO). These developments reflect the sustainability of the MSMEs despite the various difficulties encountered.

On other occasions, when MSMEs had limited resources, ILO suggested the introduction of shifts for the workers. Although workers earned a decreased income due to such changes, this nonetheless meant that they were able to stay in employment, which was of crucial importance to them. Another suggestion from ILO involved the brokerage of products by former employees who could be involved as brokers and receive a commission through the sales of products to markets. Solutions-based approaches were thus part of R2DJ4ALL’s strategy in order to support and maintain people’s employment. Further, the evaluation’s survey reveals that out of 214 participant respondents, 78% were employed during the evaluation, while 19% held two jobs simultaneously, either at the time of the evaluation or in the past.

In other cases, such as in the poultry sector, linkages between smaller and bigger poultry farms have been created, thus helping to increase the access of smallholder (backyard) farmers to the markets. Another factor contributing to the increased productivity of the MSMEs was the provision of machinery, for instance in the carpet weaving sector where machinery contributed to the employees’ productivity and improved physical wellbeing. In a similar vein, food processing MSMEs (spaghetti) were also provided with electronic machines, allowing them to shift away from manual production (KII7, ILO). By the same token, carpet weavers who had previously worked in front of the machines, which caused bone diseases, (KII1, ILO) also benefited from the provision of machinery through the project. On another occasion, women were trained as technicians able to repair mobile phones, which can be understood as contributing to closing the gender gap in society as regards male-dominated professions. Furthermore, Almas Kabir can be highlighted as an additional successful case-study. In this example, a weaving carpet factory built a kindergarten for the children of employees, where children were looked after while their parents worked in the factory (KII1, ILO). This is another important step to support women’s participation, in particular, in the labor force.

### Women's security needs particular attention

One of the future challenges facing the R2DJ4ALL project relates to its continuation under Afghanistan's current political circumstances, which include, among other, the ban on female workers in humanitarian assistance, their access to work and education. Whilst the situation is highly uncertain and challenging for all parts of society, women's future is inarguably highly unpredictable under the current governance of the DFA's. Taking this into consideration, the future phases of the project ought to include carefully considered – and locally informed – approaches aimed at mitigating the risks facing women participants in the project and in the wider Afghan labor force. These approaches may include both men and women in this dialogue. Particularly men should be potentially more engaged in understanding better the role of women in the society and the economy of Afghanistan.

### Strangulated financial system poses constraints

Afghanistan's strangulated financial system posed significant constraints and delays to the facilitation and progress of the project. Restrictions and delays of cash transfers to the MSMEs due to certain bank restrictions caused delays to the implementation of certain activities for the MSMEs. Such challenges were particularly burdensome for new MSMEs, which were sometimes unable to continue their operations due to these constraints.

### Scalability and replication are feasible

Scalability and replication of R2DJ4ALL are possible at a regional and provincial level (Samangan or other provinces) providing that support by facilitating partners (chambers, PAC members) and partner companies (MSMEs) as well as availability of funds are in place. One crucial aspect, which was mentioned in the stakeholder validation workshop, concerned whether the same MSMEs should be supported in upcoming projects. Existing work and established partners in other areas could facilitate the replication of R2DJ4ALL's flexible approach by adapting to the market systems of the different areas following the assessment of their local circumstances and the adjustment of the project to their local context (KII8, ILO). Taking into account the current limited operations of other agencies, ILO's further continuation with the project is essential for the viability of the MSMEs and the empowerment of local entrepreneurship particularly for women. Reportedly, MSMEs located in Samangan, Jawzjan, Sar-i-pul and Faryab present prospects for potential future support through the application of similar interventions.

## C. Evaluation of R2DJ4ALL by stakeholders, participants and the MSMEs

Overall, the project is evaluated with a high rank<sup>41</sup>, meaning that it met or exceeded most targets for the period evaluated with mostly positive feedback from key stakeholders and

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<sup>41</sup> Based on ILO's scale:

- High: met or exceeded most targets for the period evaluated, with mostly positive feedback from key stakeholders and participants.
- Above-moderate: met or exceeded most targets for the period evaluated, but with mostly neutral or negative feedback from key stakeholders and participants.
- Moderate: missed most targets for the period evaluated, but with mostly positive feedback from key stakeholders and participants.
- Low: missed most targets for the period evaluated, with mostly neutral or negative feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

participants. Furthermore, of the total 214 surveyed and involved people in R2DJ4ALL, 99% of the respondents reported that their participation in the program was very or somewhat helpful, and 98% answered that they were overall very or somewhat satisfied with the program. Further, 63% mentioned that there were no negative aspects related to the program.

Table 11: R2DJ4ALL Evaluation by stakeholders and MSMEs

Scale	No. of actors (Including MSMEs)
High	23
Above-moderate	6
Moderate	2
Low	0

## V. Conclusions

The Road to Decent Jobs for All (R2DJ4ALL) project has been successful in creating decent employment opportunities particularly for women, IDPs and returnees in the Balkh region of Afghanistan. Continuing its previous experience of the Road to Jobs (R2J) project, R2DJ4ALL has been successful in enhancing people’s skills development in the 21 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that were supported by the project across the value chains of carpet making, handicrafts, food processing, poultry, technology and TVET.

The project’s market system development (MSD) approach in Afghanistan’s fragile conflict-driven context has worked relatively well considering the de facto authorities’ (DFAs) takeover following the completion of the project’s first year of implementation. The integration of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) into the project’s processes appears to have been a highly appropriate strategy in order to identify the needs of local communities and align the project’s objectives with the communities’ aspirations.

Collaborating agencies such as GIZ, UN Women, UNICEF and IOM have contributed to the project’s success. However, more involvement in the future is suggested in order to streamline the project’s outcomes with the partners’ outreach capabilities. Within this framework, there is a need to introduce more innovative and technological aspects to the existing MSMEs, but also to train interested participants in developing their enterprises through possibilities of placing their products on the open markets. This perspective is particular crucial for the sustainability of the MSMEs, which should ideally be able to sustain themselves without the provision of ILO’s support in the future. Participants of R2DJ4ALL have significantly developed their skills, through which they can progress in sustaining their SMEs. Taking this into consideration, the adoption of a monitoring and results measurement (MRM) system is important both for the project’s success and for the MSMEs sustainability. Within the given context in Afghanistan, it is important to find ways to contribute to women’s safety and security, reducing their fear of being persecuted. The recent ban on women by the DFAs is causing particular concern for the future of women in Afghanistan,



and their mental and physical health. R2DJ4ALL has contributed to alleviate women’s barriers through elevating their entrepreneurial skills and emancipating them financially. However, further efforts are needed, with the inclusion and participation of men as part of a dialogue aimed at encouraging gradual systemic change, which can come from bottom to top and top to bottom. ILO’s stance in this should be careful and distant, to ensure the non-interference in the sovereignty of Afghanistan’s politics, but nonetheless ensuring a supportive approach through the creation of further decent potential employment opportunities for women and men.

Undoubtedly, systemic change needs national and local initiative, which should come from the people of Afghanistan, its communities and political authorities. Despite the difficulties and the lack of the tripartite constituents – the DFAs did not cooperate with the project - R2DJ4ALL managed to proceed with its objectives and outcomes in line with Afghanistan’s Decent Work Country Programme, Afghanistan’s National and Peace Development Framework (ANPDF), ILO’s Decent Work Country Programme (DCWP) and UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) having focused on the local perspective and action initiation of Afghanistan’s local actors.

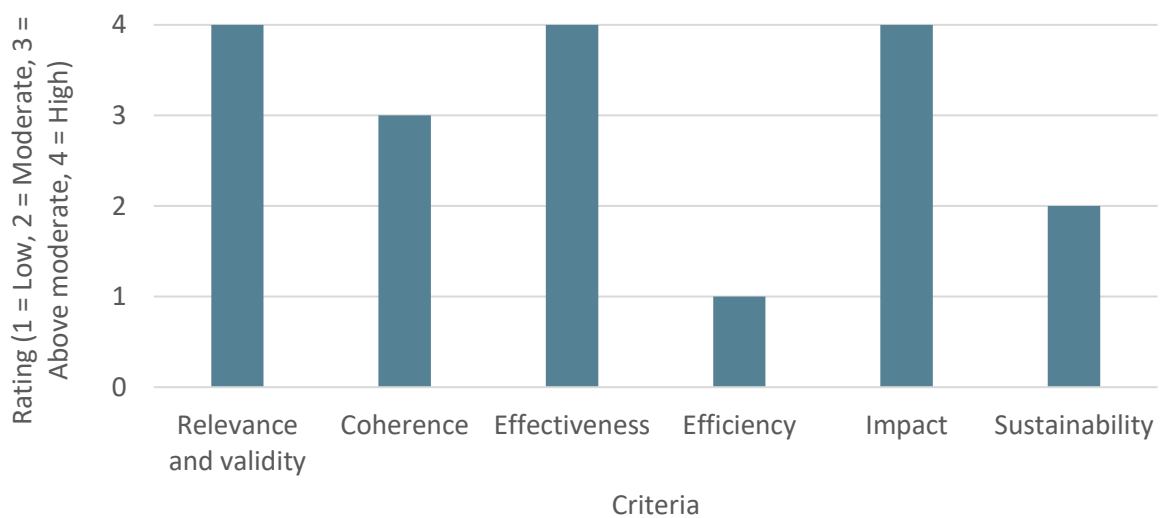


Figure 8: R2DJ4ALL rating by evaluators

## VI. Lessons learned

### Programmatic level

**1. Integration of technological and innovative approaches can strengthen the sustainability of the MSMEs, and provide market diversification in Balkh’s labor market.** Support of non-traditional innovative employment opportunities can diversify economic opportunities, and can provide access to the open market in a more efficient way, at the same time supporting existing employment opportunities. The enhancement of existing traditional employment sectors, and the creation of an online e-platform for access of MSMEs products to open markets, which is in progress, are approaches which have worked well.



**2. Effective and efficient allocation of funds: Further implementation of strategic and operational approaches are required to ensure better monitoring of the project and MSMEs' progress.** ILO should provide streamlined guidance to the MSMEs in providing precise figures based on their specific achievements. This is particularly important in order to measure the project's success. When such important figures are missing or are not measurable, because they may be deemed not reliable, they undermine the project's overall success.

### External environment

**3. Support of the DFAs to the project in order to fulfil its tripartite constituent requirements is needed.** Addressing tripartite constituents: The tripartite arrangement consisting of the DFAs, workers' and employers' organizations is only partly complete due to the DFAs' abstention from cooperating with the rest of the tripartite partners.

**4. Environmental/ Ecological sustainability awareness needs to be further enhanced for MSMEs.**

Given the evaluation findings, 31% noted that their employment is affected by climate change and environmental implications, and 11% out of them believed that climate change creates damage to crops and 6% needed to relocate.

### Community level

**5. Support to women considering the restrictions/bans imposed by the DFAs is further needed.** The project's continuation should include sophisticated approaches in order to decrease in any way possible the risks facing women project participants and the women labor force more broadly including men into this dialogue.

## VII. Emerging good practices

### 1. Skills development in Balkh's traditional labor market sectors

Skills development is arguably R2DJ4ALL's most important achievement. R2DJ4ALL's main impact is the added value it has had in society and on the Afghan economy through the provision of trained and skilled entrepreneurs. Some of the criteria for the shortlisting of MSMEs and individuals were the acceptance by the community, their affiliation with the market and the specific target on the number of jobs to be created by each company. Another aspect of the training concerned the snowball effect, which has enabled employees to become entrepreneurs.

### 2. PAC's role key for success to linkages with local communities

PAC's awareness and knowledge of the local context facilitated the essential engagement of R2DJ4ALL with the communities. PAC bridged the communication of the MSMEs and the local people to UN agencies. Another crucial aspect is the transparency in the selection process of the MSMEs, since multiple key actors assessed the MSMEs proposals, which are not directly related to ILO.

## VIII. Recommendations

Table 12: Recommendations

Recommendations	Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
1. <b>Strong monitoring mechanisms</b> i) for the funding allocations and their alignment with ILO's budget, ii) for the progress of the MSMEs based on the indicators and iii) for the project's overall progress. Such mechanisms have the potential of strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of the MSMEs	ILO HQ Administration, ILO country office	High	High	Immediate
2. More support to <b>traditional and non-traditional businesses with innovative and technological approaches</b> may potentially increase the competitiveness of the supported MSMEs	ILO HQ	High	High	Immediate
3. <b>Deeper collaboration</b> with representatives of different Chambers may potentially enhance systemic change and the sustainability of the MSMEs	Project staff	Medium	Medium	Medium
4. Differentiation in strategic approach of <b>ban on women</b> by the DFAs including men in the dialogue	ILO HQ, Project staff	High	High	Immediate
5. Deepening and streamlining the <b>institutional cooperation</b> with international and local actors may prove beneficial for <b>some systemic change</b> in market development approaches	Project staff, business partners	High	Medium	Long
6. Prolonging the <b>training period</b> for the MSMEs and <b>provision of a mentor as focal point</b> may enhance their understanding of the inputs and potentially increase their productivity and efficiency	Project staff	Medium	Medium	Long
7. Implementation and monitoring of <b>compliance measures</b> may	Project staff	Medium	Low	Medium

professionalize and advance the level of the MSMEs				
8. Further <b>inclusion of people with disabilities</b> may potentially have an impact on prejudiced context against them by the community	ILO HQ, Project staff	Medium	Medium	Long
9. <b>Environmental/ecological sustainability awareness</b> through capacity-building of participants may provide channels of innovative employability opportunities	ILO HQ, Project staff	Medium	Medium	Long

## IX. Appendices

### Annex 1: Terms of reference



#### Terms of Reference

##### Title

#### Final independent evaluation of “A Road to Decent Jobs for All Afghans (R2DJ4All) project”

#### 1. Key facts

Title of project being evaluated	A Road to Decent Jobs for All Afghans (R2DJ4All)
Project DC Code	AFG/20/01/USA and AFG/20/02/USA
Type of evaluation (e.g. independent, internal)	Independent
Timing of evaluation (e.g. midterm, final)	Final
Donor	US Department of State (USDOS)
Administrative Unit in the ILO responsible for administrating the project	ILO Kabul
Technical Unit(s) in the ILO responsible for backstopping the project	Partnerships and Field Support Department
P&B outcome (s) under evaluation	Outcome 4 - Sustainable enterprises as generators of employment and promoters of innovation and decent work
SDG(s) under evaluation	8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth
Publication date	05 October 2022
Application deadline (midnight Geneva time)	20 October 2022
Date of the evaluation	November 2022 to January 2023

#### 2. Background information

On 15 August 2021, the Taliban retook control of Afghanistan. That means the country is no longer in war. Despite this, the Global Peace Index<sup>42</sup> (GPI) 2022 states that Afghanistan is the least peaceful country in the world for the fifth consecutive year, followed by Yemen, Syria, Russia, and South Sudan. It is noteworthy that Afghanistan has experienced around four (4) decades of armed conflicts. These latter produced significant involuntary population movements<sup>43</sup> inward and outward of the country. Since 2002, Afghans have started returning to Afghanistan. This return fosters pressure in labour market due to high proportion of job seekers. According to ILO estimates for 2018, Afghanistan’s unemployment rate was around 30%<sup>44</sup>. This situation is exacerbated since August 2021, when the Taliban takeover due to the departure of the United States armed. Thus, the unemployment rate is expected to reach 40% this year<sup>45</sup>.

However, the shift in power in Afghanistan since August 2021 has severely impacted its economic situation and fostered the persistence of poverty. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) projects that in a worst-case scenario, the country would face near-universal poverty as the share of the poor population could increase by 25 percentage points from

<sup>42</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Peace Index 2022: Measuring Peace in a Complex World, Sydney, June 2022. Available from: <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources> (accessed Date Month Year).

<sup>43</sup> According to UNHCR there are almost 2.5 million registered refugees from Afghanistan. They comprise the largest protracted refugee population in Asia, and the second largest refugee population in the world

<sup>44</sup> Afghanistan Has Highest Unemployed Work Force: ILO | TOLONews

<sup>45</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/fd774233-7b2e-4b9a-b9ad-fb160ed2445f/internal-displacement.org-One%20year%20on%20the%20Taliban%20takeover%20and%20Afghanistans%20changing%20displacement%20crisis.pdf>

2020 to 97 per cent in mid-2022<sup>46</sup>. The persistence of poverty could foster the persistence of inequalities due to a limited access to employment opportunities which expose households to pursuing other means of meeting their needs, including negative coping strategies such as child labour, foregoing of educational opportunities and early, forced and child marriage. In this context, women are most affected and risk becoming caught in a vicious cycle of low-quality employment and continued vulnerability: only 23.3 per cent of labour force participants are female<sup>47</sup>. The gender gap persists in Afghanistan. Even before the events of 15 August 2021, women's labour force participation was extremely low by global standards at 17 per cent nationwide, and 10 per cent in urban Afghanistan in 2020<sup>48</sup>.

To cope with unemployment, the Government of Afghanistan, with support from international organisations, committed to focusing on growth policies that result in sustainable job creation and poverty reduction. To this end, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) built rural roads, with the financial support of Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), to provide rural communities with the opportunity for better connectivity to markets. In connection with UNOPS work, International Labour Organization (ILO) Afghanistan, funded by SIDA, implemented an innovative livelihoods and local economic development project called "*Road to Jobs*"<sup>49</sup>, which lasted from 2015 to 2020.

The "*Road to Jobs*" project worked with eight rural districts and host communities in Balkh and Samangan provinces, and with host communities and returning and displaced Afghan women and men to increase their incomes and give them dignity through decent work. This project carried out market system analysis in selected value chain sectors. It emphasised local ownership of high-impact, market-driven interventions in agriculture and other related value chains. The ultimate findings of the "*Road to Jobs*" showed that this project achieved numerous key milestones and successes including 52,165 improved decent jobs (out of which 3,475 for women) and generated more than USD 3.5 million of additional income for businesses and workers in the Balkh and Samangan provinces.

It is noteworthy that Balkh is one of the provinces with a relatively stable security situation. It received considerable number of returnees. Out of the 419,375 arrival IDPs currently residing in Balkh province, 147,508 (35%) arrived in the 2021-to-2022 period<sup>50</sup>. This province hosts 7% of the total arrival IDPs in the country<sup>51</sup>. Yet, Balkh had relatively few development partner activities to support returnees. This context was exacerbated by COVID-19, which imposed a heavy burden on the economy, with GDP contracting by an estimated 2.4 per cent in 2020<sup>52</sup>. However, returnees also reported stigmatization from local communities. Yet, returnees have potential that they can leverage to foster their reintegration in their living environment. Building on successes and challenges of "*Road to Jobs*" project, funded by SIDA, and in order to leverage returnees' potential to foster their reintegration in labour markets, the ILO Afghanistan, funded by United States Department of State (USDoS) through a Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), has implemented "*A Roads to Decent Jobs for All Afghans (R2DJ4All)*" project in Balkh province, with a specific focus to women returnees, refugees, and internally Displaced People (IDPs) to enable them to become more economically productive, using their skills and knowledge. Therefore, the project conducted a thorough and targeted mapping during the inception phase and identified the most relevant areas and sectors in Balkh province to support returnee livelihoods. The project is using a market system development approach to create decent work and sustainable livelihoods. This approach has been successfully trialled in the Afghan context by the ILO since June 2015. The project is also monitored through Monitoring and Results Measurement (MRM) approach to monitoring and evaluating its interventions instead of other ways such as Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL). The MRM approach has provided a structure for collecting regular data to help inform the project how the intervention is performing, to demonstrate programme impact by constantly gathering and aggregating data that is aligned to indicators and targets identified in the project's logical framework. To implement the *R2DJ4All* project, ILO has focused on its tripartite approach, involving Afghan constituents.

However, the *R2DJ4All* project contributes to:

1. **Priority 1 of the Afghanistan Decent Work Country Programme**  
Decent work for peace and resilience, in particular for young women and men, rural and urban groups, persons with disabilities, internally displaced, migrants and returnees  
**More specifically to Outcome 1.1.**  
Entrepreneurship and enterprise development policies, strategies and programmes are increasing access to decent jobs and incomes for women and men, especially through micro, small and medium sized businesses
2. **Country Programme Outcomes (CPO) AFG105**  
Entrepreneurship and enterprise development policies, strategies and programmes have increased access to decent jobs and incomes for women and men through micro, small and medium sized businesses
3. **United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)**  
**One UN for Afghanistan 2018-2021**

<sup>46</sup> UNDP Afghanistan (2021), Economic Instability and Uncertainty in Afghanistan after August 15: A Rapid Appraisal

<sup>47</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.NE.ZS?locations=AF>

<sup>48</sup> [wcms.834525.pdf \(ilo.org\)](https://wcms.834525.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> See [https://www.ilo.org/empent/Projects/the-lab/WCMS\\_695028/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/empent/Projects/the-lab/WCMS_695028/lang--en/index.htm) and <https://fragilestates.itcilo.org/road-to-jobs/>

<sup>50</sup> [https://displacement.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11461/files/reports/IOM-AFG-DTM%20BMA-CBNA\\_Round15\\_Balkh%20Province.pdf](https://displacement.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11461/files/reports/IOM-AFG-DTM%20BMA-CBNA_Round15_Balkh%20Province.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Idem

<sup>52</sup> [wcms.834525.pdf \(ilo.org\)](https://wcms.834525.pdf)

Outcome 5: People have improved private sector-led opportunities for income, employment, and trade, including through value-added activities and value chains

#### **UN Transitional Engagement Framework 2022**

Outcome 2. By the end of 2022, essential services are sustained that address basic human needs for the people in Afghanistan.

The outcome includes:

- Job Creation through asset creation and business support at community and household level
- Agriculture livelihood support
- Time critical irrigation rehabilitation
- International Labour Standards for crisis response
- Elimination of child labour

The *R2DJ4All* goal is “Improved access to decent work opportunities, sustainable livelihoods, and economic resilience and peace for all Afghans”. To achieve this purpose, the project has established the following objectives:

**Objective 1:** More Afghan refugee returnees have accessed income-earning opportunities in high-potential economic sectors.

Under this first objective, the project aimed at improving the capacities of the target population to sustainable livelihoods, using these strategies:

- 1.1 Tripartite-based sector selection;
- 1.2 Facilitating access to entrepreneurship services;
- 1.3 The promotion of collective entrepreneurship and social cohesion between refugee returnees and host communities;
- 1.4 Technical skills development for returnees and host communities to respond to industry needs.

**Objective 2:** Afghans, especially women, refugee returnees and IDPs are in safe and dignifying employment in competitive and resilient value chains.

The second objective aimed to improve the availability of opportunities for the target population to sustainable livelihoods, using following market-based strategies:

- 2.1 Participatory local economic development analyses to improve the competitiveness of local firms, and attract inward investment;
- 2.2 Market facilitation to ensure better opportunities of the target group in prioritized sectors and value chains.

As per the ILO Evaluation Policy, the R2DJ4All project has been subjected to annual reviews, an internal midterm evaluation and a final independent evaluation. The midterm evaluation took place in November 2021. The current evaluation is the final independent one. It has to be managed by an ILO certified evaluation manager overseen by EVAL and conducted by an external evaluation consultant. However, this evaluation team should demonstrate well understanding of MRM approach. As previous evaluations, the report must be submitted to EVAL for approval prior to dissemination to the donor by Partnering for Development (PARDEV) or the ILO responsible official.

### **3. Purpose, objectives, and scope of the evaluation**

#### **➤ Purpose**

The purpose of this final independent evaluation is to assess whether the market systems analysis identified opportunities that can be harnessed to create more decent work for all Afghans, including returnees. This evaluation will also help understand why and to what extent intended and unintended results were achieved. These results will be used by project stakeholders for learning in the pursuit of decent work agenda.

#### **➤ Objectives**

The objectives of this evaluation are described below:

- Extract aggregated findings of the effectiveness of the interventions;
- Identify what components of the programme were most and least effective, why, and what are the conditions for success;
- The efficiency of approaches;
- Factors contributing to the achievement of results;

- Examine how the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the takeover of Taliban have affected programme implementation, looking at both new opportunities and challenges;
- Analyse how the project contributes to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), Programme and Budget (P&B) outcome 4, and National Priority Programmes (NPP);
- Assess how the project is considered by beneficiaries and partners;
- Bring out the project synergies with other projects/programs in the implementation area;
- Assess the relevance of the project's tripartism approach to achieve project goals;
- Analyse to what the extent the project activities contribute to reduce the persistent gender gap;
- Analyse the sustainability of programme outcomes;
- Provide recommendations for future work and similar interventions;
- Identify emerging potential good practices and lessons learned;
- The extent to which the project helped in positioning the ILO mandate.

#### ➤ Scope of the evaluation

This final independent evaluation will cover all the planned results from the project start-up to the time of the evaluation, taking into account the activities planned until the end of the implementation period. In fact, the project starts in September 2020, with a baseline study, and will end in January 2023. It is implemented in the province of Balkh. Therefore, this final independent evaluation will be conducted in the above project area. The primary project stakeholders are: National Union of Afghanistan Workers and Employees (NUAWE), the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI), returnee refugees in Balkh province. The secondary project's stakeholders are: Internally Displaced Persons, host communities. Besides the above actors, the project has other stakeholders, namely: Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI); Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Investment (BCCI) and the Afghanistan Chamber of Industries and Mines (ACIM); Provincial government; Non-Government Institutions.

The evaluation will integrate gender equality and non-discrimination, international labour standards, social dialogue, and environmental sustainability as part of the ILO crosscutting themes. It will also include the evaluation of the project interventions in relation to the ILO's programme and policy frameworks at the national and global levels, UNDAF/UNSDCF and other relevant national sustainable development strategy or development frameworks.

Where possible, the evaluation must be conducted with gender equality as a mainstreamed approach and concern. This implies (i) applying gender analysis by involving both men and women in consultation and evaluation's analysis, (ii) inclusion of data disaggregated by sex and gender in the analysis and justification of project documents; (iii) the formulation and/or analysis of gender-sensitive strategies and objectives and gender-specific indicators; (iv) inclusion of qualitative methods and utilization of a mix of methodologies, (v) forming a gender-balanced team, and (vi) assessing outcomes to improve lives of women and men. Thus, analysis of gender-related concerns will be based on the [ILO Guidance Note 3.1: Integrating Gender Equality in Monitoring and Evaluation](#). The evaluation will be conducted following [UN evaluation standards and norms](#) and the Glossary of key terms in evaluation and results-based management developed by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

The clients of this final independent evaluation are ILO's donor, ILO's project team in Afghanistan, ILO's constituents in Afghanistan - National Union of Afghanistan Workers and Employees (NUAWE), ACCI, and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME).

The ILO's responsible regional evaluation officer, ILO's responsible officer in the evaluation office (EVAL), PARDEV, and ILO's technical and administrative units in headquarter will also benefit from the findings of this final independent evaluation. These findings will also be intended to other stakeholders for use, such as Department of Women's Affairs (DOWA); Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI); Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Investment (BCCI) and the Afghanistan Chamber of Industries and Mines (ACIM); Provincial government; Non-Government Institutions.

#### 4. Evaluation criteria and questions (including Cross-cutting issues/ issues of special interest to the ILO)

This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and the ILO Evaluation Policy. It will focus on the overall project aspects, considering standard evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability).

Gender concerns should be addressed in line with EVAL guidance note n° 3.1, and EVAL Guidance Note n° 4.5 should be taken into consideration to ensure stakeholder participation (see question 3 under effectiveness, question 2 under Orientation towards impact, as indicative). The evaluation will also address disability inclusion as a cross-cutting concern throughout the deliverables and processes, including in the final report (see question 3 under Relevance, as indicative). Furthermore, it should pay attention to ILO cross-cutting policy issues related to tripartism, social dialogue and international labour standards, as well as the just transition to environmentally sustainable economies (see question 3 under Coherence and validity of the design, as indicative).

- **Relevance:** The extent to which the intervention objectives, and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, and partners/Institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change



1. How did the project align with and support national development plans and priorities of the ILO constituents?
  2. Are the needs addressed by the project still relevant considering the COVID-19 pandemic? How has the Project adapted its activities to the changing priorities? Has the programme provided a timely and relevant response?
  3. Were the needs of different groups (e.g. women, people with disability, and other marginalized groups) incorporated into consideration in the design of interventions? To what extent?
  4. Do stakeholders perceive project's activities appropriate to advance decent work for returnees, IDPs, and refugees?
- **Coherence:** The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution
    1. To what extent are the project design (objectives, outcomes, outputs, and activities) and its underlining theory of change logical and coherent, given the needs, the expectations of the ILO and the Donor?
    2. To what extent other interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine the intervention?
    3. To what extent has the project promoted coordination with interventions led by national partners?
  - **Validity of the design:**
    1. To which extent the project theory of change was relevant to promote decent jobs for all Afghans?
    2. Is the project relevant to the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDFs), A-DWCP of Afghanistan, and other national frameworks and Programme and Budget Outcomes of the ILO? How did the Project objectives and interventions consider relevant SDG targets and indicators? To what extent the project considered tripartite issues, social dialog, transition to environmentally sustainable economies, and other ILO standards?
  - **Effectiveness:** The extent to which the interventions achieved, or are expected to achieve, their objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups?
    1. The extent to which the project has been value addition to the achievement of target CPOs?
    2. The extent to which Covid 19 and the change in administration affected the achievement of results?
    3. What are the project successes, the best practices, and lessons learnt? And what are challenges and barriers encountered in the implementation of project activities, including mitigation measures suggested to solve these barriers? Which strategies were provided to address challenges, not initially forecasted?
    4. To what extent has the gender dimension, disability inclusion, and non-discrimination, International Labour standard, been taken into account?
    5. Has the project made sufficient progress towards its planned objectives? Has the project achieved its planned long-term and medium-term outcomes?
    6. How effectively did the project monitor performance and results? What were the systems put in place at national level to track progress and risks in a quickly evolving environment?
  - **Efficiency:**
    1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the project monitoring and evaluation system? What can be done to improve the weaknesses of this system?
    2. Are resources (human resources, time, expertise, funds etc.) allocated strategically to provide the necessary support and to achieve the broader project objectives? (specific sub-questions can be: (i) To what extent do the project management capacities and arrangements put in place, support the achievement of the expected results? (ii) Are the project's activities/operations in line with the schedule of activities as defined by the work plans? ;
    3. Has cooperation among project partners been efficient? What is the value addition of the cooperation/ collaboration of the project? Was there a mechanism to facilitate coherence and synergy by the partners? How effective was it?
    4. How has the project leveraged new or repurposed existing financial resources to mitigate COVID-19 effects in a balanced manner?
  - **Orientation towards impact**
    1. What changes has the project made in the stakeholders' lives?
    2. To what extent did the intervention advance strategic gender-related needs, which can have a long-term positive bearing on?
    3. What have been unintended results of the project positive and negative? To what extent have the project interventions contributed (or not) to the relevant SDGs and related targets?
  - **Sustainability**
    1. To what extent are the results obtained sustainable or can they be sustained? What are the conditions for this?

## 5. Methodology

The evaluation will be conducted in line with the ILO's evaluation policy and procedures, which adhere to international standards and best practices, articulated in the OECD/DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance and the



Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the United Nations System of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) from 2016. The evaluation will comply with the UNEG ethical guidelines (2020).

The evaluation methodology should include examining the interventions' Theory of Change, specifically in the light of logical connect between levels of results, its coherence with external factors, and their alignment with the ILO's strategic objectives, SDGs and related targets, national and ILO country level outcomes. The evaluation should consider that the project has used MRM approach, which provided a structure for collecting regular data. A special focus will also be on the response of the project to evolving project context.

The evaluation methodology is expected to use a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, to be defined and approved as part of the evaluation inception report. All data will be triangulated. The methods are expected to create a space for a sample of all stakeholders and beneficiaries to voice their opinions and analysis, that will be compared and consolidated into the evaluation document. To the extent possible, all categories of project participants should be represented.

To this end, the consultant's work will comprise:

(1) desk review: the project will make available all its documents, including proposal revised final, baseline study, various Technical Progress Reports (TPRs), mid-term evaluation report, etc.;

(2) Qualitative data: Through a desk review, the consultant team (evaluator team) will carry out a systematic analysis of existing project documents and record relevant data. The evaluation will involve field visits and face-to-face engagements with project staff, tripartite constituents, stakeholders, and partners, considering the pandemic situation (if not advisable, interviews should be done only virtually). During these field visits, the consultant team will check the evidence of data recorded through desk review. However, [ILO Evaluation Office guidance on the evaluation process during COVID-19](#) should serve as the main guidance on the subject.

(3) Quantitative data: To perform this mission, the consultant team will produce data collection tools for both qualitative and quantitative data. During the field visits, the evaluator team will conduct surveys, using a sample of respondents selected from representatives of project staffs, project direct and indirect beneficiaries, and other project partners. Specific questionnaire will be administered to these respondents and have specific factors such as sex, race, age, etc., to ease the analysis of the findings got.

In line with ILO's evaluation policy guidelines and related guidance notes, the evaluation will pay specific attention to ILO's cross-cutting issues, notably the ILO's normative and tripartite mandate, environmental sustainability, and disability inclusion. Contribution of the ILO to the relevant targets set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the global pandemic response will also be considered by the evaluation. The gender equality dimension will be a cross-cutting concern throughout the methodology, deliverables, and final report of the evaluation. This implies involving both men and women in the consultation, evaluation analysis and evaluation team as possible. Moreover, the evaluator team should review data and information that is disaggregated by sex and assess the relevance and effectiveness of gender and disability inclusion related strategies and outcomes within the purview of ILO's work. Specific measures to reflect gender and inclusion concerns should be elaborated in the inception report, in line with the UN GEEW-SWAP guidance in this regard.

Building on the aforementioned approach, the consultant will develop a detailed methodology that will enable him to achieve evaluation expectations.

During the evaluation, the consultant team will discuss with several actors, including: Evaluation Manager, Project team, ILO's constituents, returnees refugees beneficiaries, and other stakeholders deemed relevant.

The evaluation team should assess each of the project's objective(s), outcome(s), and output(s) according to the following scale:

- High: met or exceeded most targets for the period evaluated, with mostly positive feedback from key stakeholders and participants.
- Above-moderate: met or exceeded most targets for the period evaluated, but with mostly neutral or negative feedback from key stakeholders and participants.
- Moderate: missed most targets for the period evaluated, but with mostly positive feedback from key stakeholders and participants.
- Low: missed most targets for the period evaluated, with mostly neutral or negative feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

## 6. Main deliverables

The consultant will provide the following deliverables:

- An inception report: It is an operational evaluation plan. It will include a detail review of the evaluation questions and methodology. This latter will be updated considering the TOR and providing needed details on data collection methods. The [inception report](#) will also contain data collection tools (interview guide, focus group discussion

questions, etc.), list of stakeholders to be interviewed (considering gender approach), criteria for selecting these stakeholders, detail data collection plan, worksheet (provided by the evaluation manager and maybe updated by the consultant team), detail workplan for all the mission which will indicate varied phases of the evaluation.

- A first draft report (initial report): To produce this report, the evaluator team will perform fieldwork for data collection to stakeholders. At the end of this fieldwork, the consultant team will organize a workshop to share preliminary findings of this evaluation. This workshop will be in Dari (local language) with interpretation in English. So, this first report will contain the findings of the evaluation answering to the evaluation questions, bringing out strengths and weaknesses identified, successes, challenges, barriers, best practices, and lesson learned, including the results of this evaluation workshop. Building on these findings, the team will develop the conclusions and recommendations. This report should have the following structure:
  - Title page (standard ILO template)
  - Table of content;
  - List of acronyms;
  - Executive summary;
  - Introduction and Project description;
  - Objectives of the evaluation;
  - Evaluation criteria and questions;
  - Methodology;
  - Difficulties encountered;
  - Findings of the evaluation;
  - Conclusions;
  - Lesson learnt and good practices;
  - Recommendations;
  - Annexes: Terms of Reference, list of documents consulted, list of stakeholders met, photos, templates for [lessons learned](#) and [good practices](#).
- A Final report: It is the first draft report (initial report) enriched with comments of evaluation manager, project team, regional evaluation officer, responsible officer of evaluation, and donor. It follows the structure presented above and includes a [cover page](#), and a separate executive summary ([using ILO/EVAL template](#)).

The consultant team is required to produce the evaluation deliverables (inception, first draft, and final reports) in English. However, all data collection tools will be translated into Dari to foster stakeholders' buy-in in data collection process and resulting findings.

## 7. Management arrangements and work plan (including timeframe)

The evaluation management process is as follows:

### ➤ The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders for the evaluation management:

#### - Evaluation manager:

The designed evaluation manager is **Mr. Emmanuel Moreno CHINAMULA** ([chinamula@ilo.org](mailto:chinamula@ilo.org)). He has no direct bearing with the project. He will work in close coordination with **Pringsulaka Pamornrat** ([pamornrat@ilo.org](mailto:pamornrat@ilo.org)), who is the responsible regional evaluation officer in Asia. The evaluation manager will be responsible for coordinating and managing the evaluation process. To this end, he will receive project documents from the project team (including list of project beneficiaries), search and select the evaluation team, brief it on the ILO policy, procedures and expected deliverables. He will provide it with project documents.

The evaluation manager will receive the inception report from the evaluator / team. He will review and approve it by mutual agreement with the responsible regional evaluation officer. After this approval, the evaluator / team will start data collection process and produce the first draft report of evaluation (initial evaluation report). The evaluator / team will submit this first draft report to the evaluation manager. This latter will review the quality of this first draft report, whether it meets international standards before circulating it to other stakeholders for their comments. The stakeholders will not add their comments into the draft report. They will share them through a log form received from the evaluation manager. Once this latter got stakeholders' feedback, he will consolidate stakeholders' comments into this log form and share that log form to the evaluator / team for updating it. After integrating stakeholders' comments, the evaluator / team will submit the reviewed report to the evaluation manager. This latter will revise the draft of the evaluation final report, before sharing it with the responsible regional evaluation officer and EVAL for quality review and approval. Once approved, EVAL will notify the project responsible official, request the management response to the recommendations, and upload the report to [i-eval discovery platform](#). This latter will submit the approved final evaluation report to the project team.

**- Evaluator team (consultant team):**

The evaluation / team will comprise 2 consultants: A Team Leader (an international consultant) and a national/local consultant.

- The Team Leader will be responsible of the overall evaluation process. S/He will develop a detail methodology for the evaluation, inception report, data collection tools, lead the data collection process, and draft the first draft report and final report, title page and executive summary.
- The national consultant will play, during the fieldwork, the role of interpreter on behalf of the international consultant, to enable her/him to understand stakeholders' feedback, as needed. He will also conduct focus group discussion and support the international consultant in various data collection process, as needed.

Building on the information gathering through desk review of project documents and field work, the evaluator team will produce expected deliverables.

**- Project team:**

The project team will gather project documents and share them with the evaluation manager, including the list of project beneficiaries (direct and indirect). The project team will also provide administrative and technical support to the evaluator / team. The project team will prepare and organize the information sharing workshop with project stakeholders. During data collection process, the evaluator / team will consult the project team as project stakeholders. The project team will provide comments on the draft report.

**- Responsible regional evaluation officer (REO):**

The REO will bring regular support to the evaluation manager throughout the evaluation process. She will also support the evaluation manager in assurance of quality of evaluation deliverables.

- **Project stakeholders:** This group comprises ILO's constituents in Afghanistan (representatives of governments, representatives of employer's, representatives of worker's organizations), donor, other partners. They will provide inputs to the evaluator / team as project stakeholders, through interviews, focus group discussion, etc.

➤ **Work plan (including timeframe)**

The evaluation will be undertaken over 4 months as follows: From October 2022 to January 2023. The fieldwork for evaluator / team is expected to occur between November 2022 and January 2023. To perform it, the Evaluator Team Leader should work 27 days and the national/local consult is required to work 21 days. The fees of consultant / team will cover honorarium, travel to project area, transportation, and Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA).

The suggested workplan and timeframe of the evaluation will be updated by the consultant / team and included into the inception report. However, the project management will bring all logistic support for the fieldwork, including the workshop to share the evaluation preliminary findings.

## - Work plan

The suggested work plan is as follows:

Tasks	September 2022					October 2022				November 2022				December 2022				January 2023			
	Wee k 1	Wee k 2	Wee k 3	Week 4	Wee k 5	Wee k 6	Wee k 7	Wee k 8	Wee k 9	Wee k 10	Wee k 11	Wee k 12	Wee k 13	Wee k 14	Wee k 15	Wee k 16	Wee k 17	Wee k 18	Wee k 19	Wee k 20	Wee k 21
<b>PLANNING - DESIGN OF THE EVALUATION</b>																					
TOR preparation (first draft, consultation, and revision of draft)																					
Consultant / team recruitment																					
Initial consultation with the consultant / team																					
<b>INCEPTION PHASE</b>																					
Desk review of documents (interviews as needed)																					
Drafting of inception report (first draft, and revision based on comments); And Development of data collection tools / stakeholders' identification for main data collection stage																					
<b>DATA COLLECTION - FIELD WORK &amp; SURVEY PHASE</b>																					
Conduct of interviews																					
Develop, launch and analyse results of online survey																					
Workshop (presentation and validation of preliminary findings)																					
<b>ANALYSIS AND REPORTING</b>																					
Data analysis and triangulation																					
Drafting of first draft of report																					
Comments on first draft																					
Submission of revised evaluation report																					
Approval of report (EM, REO/DEPF, EVAL)																					
Dissemination																					

**- Timeframe**

The proposed timeframe for the evaluation is as follows:

Tasks	Responsible: Evaluation manager / Evaluator Team/ Responsible officer regional / Project Team	N° working days Team Leader	N° of working days National/ local consultant
<b>PLANNING - DESIGN OF THE EVALUATION</b>			
TOR preparation (first draft, consultation, and revision of draft)	Evaluation manager in consultation with project team, Responsible regional evaluation officer, Responsible officer in the evaluation office (EVAL), and project stakeholders		
Consultant / team recruitment	Evaluation manager, Responsible regional evaluation officer, Responsible officer in the evaluation office (EVAL). Issued by Project team		
Initial consultation with the consultant / team	Evaluation manager, evaluator / team	1	1
<b>TOTAL 1</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INCEPTION PHASE</b>			
Desk review of documents (interviews as needed)	Evaluator / team	4	2
Drafting of inception report (first draft, and revision based on comments); And development of data collection tools/stakeholders' identification for main data collection stage.	Evaluator / team (comments from evaluation manager in coordination with Responsible regional evaluation officer)	2	1
<b>TOTAL 2</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>DATA COLLECTION - FIELD WORK &amp; SURVEY PHASE</b>			
Conduct of interviews	Evaluator / team	8	8
Develop, launch, and analyse results of online survey	Evaluator / team	3	2
Workshop (presentation and validation of preliminary findings)	Evaluator / team, evaluation manager and project team	1	1
<b>TOTAL 3</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>ANALYSIS AND REPORTING</b>			
Data analysis and triangulation	Evaluator / team	2	2
Drafting of first draft of report	Evaluator / team	5	4
Comments on first draft	Evaluation manager in consultation with project team and stakeholders,		
Submission of revised evaluation report	Evaluator / team	1	0
Approval of report (EM, REO/DEPF, EVAL)	Responsible regional evaluation officer, Responsible officer in the evaluation office (EVAL)		
Dissemination	Project team		
<b>TOTAL 4</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>

This evaluation has been conducted according to ILO's evaluation policies and procedures. It has not been professionally edited, but has undergone quality control by the ILO Evaluation Office.

<b>TOTAL GLOBAL</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>21</b>
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## 8. Profile of the evaluation team

The evaluator / team encompasses 2 consultants (international and national/local consultants). The specific profiles of each of them are as follows:

### ➤ International consultant (Team Leader)

- University Degree in international development, economic, international relations, etc., with minimum 7 years of proven experience in project evaluation;
- Good knowledge of ILO's approach in project evaluation is an asset;
- Expertise and Knowledge on the Monitoring and Results Measurement (MRM) approach to monitoring and evaluating projects that use a Market System Development Approach;  
[ILO Self-induction Module for Evaluation Consultants-Part-I \(itcilo.org\)](https://www.itcilo.org/) and include the attestation of completion of this training in your submission file; (optional)
- Strong knowledge of international project evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability;
- In-depth knowledge of value chain issues and/or market analysis;
- Good knowledge of the informal economy;
- Excellent analytical and communication skills;
- Excellent knowledge in English;
- Excellent report writing skills;
- Knowledge of Arabic is an asset;
- Good knowledge of humanitarian concerns is an asset;
- Previous working experience in Afghanistan is an asset;
- Good experience in using the participatory approach.

### ➤ National (local) consultant:

- Bachelor's degree in social sciences, economic, etc.;
- Good knowledge of ILO's approach in project evaluation is an asset;
- At least 3 years of experience in M&E and/or project evaluation;
- Complete the self-induction programme at: "[ILO Self-induction Module for Evaluation Consultants-Part-I \(itcilo.org\)](https://www.itcilo.org/)" and include the attestation of completion of this training in your submission file;(optional)
- Good knowledge of international project evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability;
- Good knowledge of value chain issues is an asset;
- Good knowledge of the informal economy;
- Excellent analytical and communication skills;
- Good knowledge of English;
- Excellent Knowledge of Dari (local languages);
- Basic knowledge of humanitarian concerns is an asset;
- Good experience in using the participatory approach.

Since August 2021, the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan means that the country is no longer in war. However, the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2022 states that Afghanistan is the least peaceful insecure country in the world for the fifth consecutive year. To perform evaluation in this context, consultants are required to start their mission with a briefing security from UNDSS Afghanistan and comply with instructions received.

## 9. Legal and ethical matters

The United Nations developed accepted evaluation norms and standards inside and outside of its system, through United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). As member of UNEG, ILO adheres to its norms and standards, namely the four (4) [guiding ethical principles for evaluation](#): integrity, Accountability, respect, and beneficence.

To perform an evaluation within ILO, consultant team should also adhere to the above four (4) UNEG guiding ethical principles. Besides these principles, evaluator / team is required to adhere themselves in writing to the attached [code of conduct](#), and comply with specific following obligations: independence, Impartiality, conflict of interest, honesty and integrity, competence, etc.

Given the importance ILO places on evaluation, evaluator / team is required to denounce all conflict of interest that could interfere with evaluation work, including its independence. This involves disclosing the existing relationship between the consultant / team and any party involved to the project.

ILO reserves the right to cancel the evaluator / team contract in case the team does not comply with ILO's code of conduct for evaluator and UNEG guiding ethical principles for evaluation.

## Annex 2: List of persons interviewed

KIIs			
KII Code	Category	Organisation	Position
KII1	PAC Members	National Union of Afghanistan Workers & Employees- Balkh-North	Chairman
KII2	PAC Members	Balkh Chamber of Industries & Mines	Chairman
KII3	PAC Members	Balkh Chamber of Commerce & Investment	CEO
KII4	PAC Members	Balkh Chamber of Shopkeepers & Craftsmen	Chairman
KII5	PAC Members	Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce & Industries- Balkh-North	Chairman
KII6	ILO Project Staff	International Labour Organisation	Project Manager
KII7	ILO Project Staff	International Labour Organisation	Local Economy Development Coordinator
KII8	ILO Project Staff	International Labour Organisation	Market Systems Development Officer
KII9	ILO Project Staff	International Labour Organisation	MRM officer
KII10	Collaborating Agencies	IOM	TVET Technical Lead
KII11	Collaborating Agencies	UNICEF	N/R
KII12	Collaborating Agencies	UN Women	Programme Associate
KII13	Trainers from Training Organisations	SURE TOT	N/R

KII14	Trainers from Training Organisations	GET Ahead	N/R
KII15	Trainers from Training Organisations	GET Ahead	N/R
<b>FGDs</b>			
<b>FGD code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Sector</b>	
FGD1	All male	Tailoring	
FGD2	All female	Embroidery, carpet weaving, wool weaving	
FGD3	All female	Embroidery, carpet weaving, wool weaving	
FGD4	All male	Tailoring	
FGD5	Mixed	Mixed sectors	
FGD6	All female	Embroidery, carpet weaving, wool weaving	
<b>Case study</b>			
<b>Case study code</b>	<b>Category</b>		
CS1	Person with disabilities		

### Annex 3: Evaluation questions matrix

Question/Subquestion	Measure/Indicator	Data sources	Data collection method	Stakeholders/Informants	Analysis and assessment
<b>Relevance</b>	needs and priorities of participants, evaluation's total rating	desk research, Beneficiary questionnaires	Desk research, beneficiary questionnaires	Representatives of tripartite constituents	Identification of relevant plan & policies, including UN Development Cooperation Framework and DWCP
1. How did the project align with and support national development plans and priorities of the ILO constituents?	needs and priorities of participants	desk research, participants questionnaires	Desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employees, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	assess whether the needs and priorities of beneficiaries align with the project and national development plans
2. Are the needs addressed by the project still relevant considering the COVID-19 pandemic?	needs addressed by the project relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employees, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	analyse and assess whether the needs addressed by the project are relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic



3. How has the project adapted its activities to the changing priorities?	prioritized activities	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employees, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	analyse and assess whether the activities listed were in line with the changing priorities of the project
4. Has the programme provided a timely and relevant response?	percentage of funds allocated according to initial planning, program's activities based on needs of participants	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employees, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	assess progress based on allocation of funds in timely response
5. Were the needs of different groups (e.g. women, people with disability, and other marginalized groups) incorporated into consideration in the design of interventions? To what extent?	Percentage of participants who are women, people with disability and other marginalized groups	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employees, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	analyze project's design interventions including the different groups (women, people with disabilities etc.)
6. Do stakeholders perceive project's activities appropriate to advance decent work for returnees, IDPs, and refugees?	Percentage of participants who are returnees, IDPs and refugees (male/female)	Participants, project partners and stakeholders	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employees, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	assess stakeholder's perception on the activities addressed to advance decent work for returnees, IDPs and refugees
<b>Sub-sector of relevance: Validity of the design</b>					
1. To which extent the project's theory of change was relevant to promote decent jobs for all Afghans?	number of decent jobs created and number of quantitative outputs created (increase of monthly income, revenues of business etc.)	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	assess the number of decent jobs created and number of quantitative outputs created (increase of monthly income, revenues of business etc.) and their alignment with quality of decent jobs created within the project's theory of change
2. Is the project relevant to the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDFs), A-DWCP of Afghanistan, and other national frameworks and Programme and Budget Outcomes of the ILO? How did the Project objectives and interventions consider relevant SDG targets and indicators? To what extent the project considered tripartite issues, social dialog, transition to environmentally sustainable economies, and other ILO standards?	number and context of project's strategies and policies	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	identification of relevant plan and policies including UNSDFs, A-DWCP of Afghanistan, other national frameworks
<b>Coherence</b>					
1. To what extent are the project design (objectives, outcomes, outputs, and activities) and its underlining theory of change logical and coherent, given the needs, the expectations of the ILO and the Donor?	number and content of objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities, expectations of the ILO and the Donor	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	assess the alignment of the project design (objectives, outcomes, outputs, and activities) with its underlining theory of change along with the expectations of the ILO and the Donor

2. To what extent other interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine the intervention?	number of policies in alignment with the intervention	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires		identification of relevant plan and policies
3. To what extent has the project promoted coordination with interventions led by national partners?	number of national partners included in the intervention, number of activities where national partners are involved in projects' intervention	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	assess level of intervention of national partners
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<b>evaluation's total rating</b>				
1. The extent to which the project has been value addition to the achievement of target Country Program Outcomes (CPOs)?	Number of people recording positive change in working conditions and/or incomes as a result of the programme (male/female)	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	identify the levels of alignment of the project with the CPOs
2. The extent to which Covid 19 and the change in administration affected the achievement of results?	number and content of changes in administration that affected the projects' process	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	analyse whether the changes in administration have affected and to what extent the progress of the project
3. What are the project successes, the best practices, and lessons learnt? And what are challenges and barriers encountered in the implementation of project activities, including mitigation measures suggested to solve these barriers? Which strategies were provided to address challenges, not initially forecasted?	number and content of project successes, best practices, lessons learnt	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	analyse the project success, best practices, lessons learnt and strategies and assess their challenges and constraints
4. To what extent has the gender dimension, disability inclusion, and non-discrimination, International Labour standard, been taken into account?	number of people who are women, people with disability, and other marginalized groups	Employers, employees,	participants questionnaires	Employers, employees,	assess the percentage of women, people with disability, and other marginalized groups who participated within the entire target population of the project
5. Has the project made sufficient progress towards its planned objectives? Has the project achieved its planned long-term and medium-term outcomes?	number and content of ways people describe experiencing positive change in acquiring decent jobs ( ex increase of income as a result of the programme) (male/female)	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	assess progress of project based on initial planning and final outcomes

6. How effectively did the project monitor performance and results? What were the systems put in place at national level to track progress and risks in a quickly evolving environment?	number and content of tracking systems in place	desk research, participants questionnaires	participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	assess and analyse the effectiveness of project's monitoring performance and results, as well as the systems put in place at national level
<b>Efficiency</b>	evaluation's total rating				
1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the project's monitoring and evaluation system? What can be done to improve the weaknesses of this system?	number and content of strengths and weaknesses of the monitoring and evaluation system	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	assess projects' monitoring and evaluation system, analyse and assess the potential of the improvement of the weaknesses, the sustainability of the strengths
2. Are resources (human resources, time, expertise, funds etc.) allocated strategically to provide the necessary support and to achieve the broader project objectives? Sub-questions: (i) To what extent do the project management capacities and arrangements put in place, support the achievement of the expected results? (ii) Are the project's activities/operations in line with the schedule of activities as defined by the work plans?	number of people involved and level of their expertise, funds allocated to specific categories	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	analyze and assess the efficient allocation of resources (human, expertise, funds)
3. Has cooperation among project partners been efficient? What is the value addition of the cooperation/ collaboration of the project? Was there a mechanism to facilitate coherence and synergy by the partners? How effective was it?	actions taken between partners with regard to their collective and coordinated cooperation	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	analyse and assess the effectiveness of the actions taken to facilitate coherence and synergy between partners
4. How has the project leveraged new or repurposed existing financial resources to mitigate COVID-19 effects in a balanced manner?	amount of financial resources destined for COVID-19 mitigation	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	assess the allocation of resources based on needs and COVID-19 mitigation
<b>Impact</b>	evaluation's total rating				
1. What changes has the project made in the stakeholders' lives?	ways people describe experiencing positive change in their lives (male/female)	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employees, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	analyse the changes in the lives of involved persons as well as the changes, if any, in policy-level

2. To what extent did the intervention advance strategic gender-related needs, which can have a long-term positive bearing on? Sub-question: How have the changes affected men and women?	number and content of policies adopted by the government, perception about the skills of men and women	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, beneficiary questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employees, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	identify gender-related changes achieved and analyse their significance and potential to create further change
3. What have been unintended results of the project positive and negative? To what extent have the project interventions contributed (or not) to the relevant SDGs and related targets?	number of positive and negative results	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employees, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	identify the alignment of interventions with SDGs goals and other higher goals such as national tripartite plan
<b>Sustainability</b>	evaluation's total rating				
1. To what extent are the results obtained sustainable or can they be sustained?	capacity and resources of partners and institutions	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employees, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	analyze the capacity and resources of partners and institutions and assess their ability to continue
2. What are the conditions (outputs and outcomes) for this? Sub-question: What are the differences (in outputs, outcomes and benefits) between male and female actors to the extent outcomes will likely be sustained?	cost-benefit indicators, level of impact (mid-term, long-term)	desk research, participants questionnaires	desk research, participants questionnaires	Government entities, employers, employees, employers' organisations, workers' Organisations, training Institutions, collaborating Agencies	cost-benefit analysis, analyze value of outputs and outcomes and assess their future potential

#### Annex 4: Funds spent per MSME and training

Categories	MSMEs	Funds spent 2022 in \$	Funds spent 2021 in \$	Total funds spent 2022-2021 in \$
<b>CARPET (4)</b>	Marhaba Zarin Handicrafts Company	6400 (May-Aug)	15.600 (May-Nov)	22.000
	Almas Kabir Handicrafts Company	19.815 (May-Oct)	9.450 (May-Aug)	29.265
	Qasimi Brothers Carpet Company	18.450 (Sept-Nov)	-	18.450
	Tashguzar Co. Ltd	14.655,5 (Aug-Nov)	-	14.655,5
<b>Total</b>		<b>59.320,5</b>	<b>25.050</b>	<b>83.370,5</b>
<b>HANDICRAFTS (9)</b>	Maharat E Zindagi Company	5.737 (May-Aug)	5.963 (May-Aug)	11.700
	Roz Balkh Khayati & Khamak Dozi Company	7280 (May-Aug)	4.000 (Jun-Jul)	11.280
	AMU Fashion	5.060 (Aug-Oct)	3.050 (Jun-Aug)	8.110
	Bamika Suit and Waistcoat Making Company	4.850 (Aug-Oct)	-	4.850
	Balkh Drukshhan Design Handi Crafts Company	1.711 (Aug-Oct)	-	1.711
	Ahmad Reshad Rasouli Handicrafts Company	6.371 (Aug-Oct)	-	6.371

TRAINING	2022	2021	Total funds spent for training 2021-22
GET AHEAD	10.409.13	13.197	
SIYB ToE for youth	90	13.824	
<b>TOTAL in \$</b>	<b>10.499,13</b>	<b>27.021</b>	<b>37.520,13</b>

	Aryoub Zazai Tailoring and Embroidery Company	4.715 (May-Aug)	-	4.715
	Arasta Arfan Clothes Production Company	4.700 (Aug-Oct)	-	4.700
	Ayesha Design	3440 (Aug-Nov)	-	3440
<b>Total</b>		<b>43.864</b>	<b>13.013</b>	<b>56.877</b>
	Nazif Confectionery	6.751 (May-Aug)	4.788 (Jun-Jul)	11.539
	Nawid Hamid Tomato Paste Production	7.700 (Aug-Oct)	-	7.700
	Afrosha Food Production Company	6.200 (Aug-Oct)	-	6.200
	Naw Shad Mazar Ash Production	3.890 (Aug-Oct)	-	3.890
	Aisu Babur Food Production Company	4.780 (Aug-Oct)	-	4.780
<b>Total</b>		<b>29.321</b>	<b>4.788</b>	<b>34.109</b>
<b>POULTRY (1)</b>	Saalem e Balkh Poultry Services	12.040 (Aug-Oct)	-	12.040
<b>Total</b>				<b>12.040</b>
<b>TECHNOLOGY AND MOBILE APP (1)</b>	Hashmatullah Zaher Technology Services Company	9.730 (Sep-Nov)	-	9.730
<b>Total</b>				<b>9.730</b>
<b>TVET (1)</b>	Yousuf Akbari Mobile Repairing company	5.543 (Jul-Oct)	-	5.543
<b>Total</b>				<b>5.543</b>

#### Total funds spent 2022 in \$

<b>BCCI Exhibition</b>	<b>10.228</b>
<b>ACCI Kabul Exhibition</b>	<b>5.220</b>
<b>Intercontinantal Exhbition</b>	<b>1.370</b>
<b>Get Ahead Training</b>	<b>10.409,13</b>
<b>MSMEs</b>	<b>159.818,5</b>
<b>Total in \$</b>	<b>187.045,63</b>

**Total funds spent 2021 in \$**

<b>Oxus consulting Group</b>	<b>16.000</b>
<b>BCCI OSH &amp; CL trainign for 50 MSMEs</b>	<b>13.824</b>
<b>DOWA-AWCCI</b>	<b>20.829,6</b>
<b>Uzbekistan Exhibition Trip</b>	<b>22.382</b>
<b>MSMEs</b>	<b>42.851</b>
<b>Total in \$</b>	<b>115.886,6</b>

**MSMEs support in 2021 in \$**

(these MSMEs and budgets were provided by ILO to the evaluators before the final closing of the evaluation and they were thus not assessed)

<b>Behtar Finanical Service Company</b>	<b>12.532</b>
<b>Rahkar Electronic workshop</b>	<b>4.055</b>
<b>Noor e Balkh soap making company</b>	<b>5.750</b>
<b>Green Gold Agriculture Company</b>	<b>12.611</b>
<b>Ayral Prand Company</b>	<b>8.250</b>
<b>Total in \$</b>	<b>43.198</b>

## Annex 5: Lessons learned

### Programmatic level

<b>LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT 1</b>	Integration of technological and innovative approaches can strengthen the sustainability of the MSMEs and can provide market diversification in Balkh's labor market
<b>Brief description of lessons learned</b>	Support of non-traditional innovative employment opportunities can diversify economic opportunities and can provide access to the open market in a more efficient way supporting at the same time existing employment opportunities. The enhancement of existing traditional employment sectors has worked well and the creation of an online e-platform for access of MSMEs products to open markets is in progress.
<b>Context and any related preconditions</b>	R2DJ4ALL seems to support traditional businesses, providing significant incentives and skills development for Afghanistan's traditional professions. However, MSMEs (financial) sustainability is challenging without ILO's support.
<b>Targeted users</b>	ILO, PAC, DFAs, MSMEs
<b>Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors</b>	Support only to traditional businesses may entail the risk for the businesses not to be profitable in the long-term after the end of the project. Further, the lack of future support to innovative and technological approaches may increase the risk of the businesses to sustain global market competition. Other challenges concern the narrow focus on traditional professions, the enhancement of further marketing strategies and the broader lack of skills development and difficulty to access the markets
<b>Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors</b>	The departure of skilled and trained workers from their companies for several reasons (for ex. decision to leave the country) has been treated by ILO's introduction of shifts for the workers. Another suggestion of ILO involved the brokerage of products by former employees who could be involved as brokers and receive a commission through the selling of products to the markets. Further, it has been proved that the provision of raw materials should be avoided since it does not increase competitiveness and innovation. On the contrary, machinery provision increased efficiency, production and revenues.
<b>ILO Administrative Issues</b>	Staff, resources and design implementation
<b>LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT 2</b>	Effective and efficient allocation of funds - Further implementation of strategic and operational approaches for better monitoring of the project and MSMEs progress
<b>Brief description of lessons learned</b>	ILO should provide streamlined guidance to the MSMEs in providing precise figures based on their specific achievements. This is particularly important in order to measure the project's success. When such important figures are missing or are not



	measurable, because they may be deemed not reliable, they undermine the project's overall success.
<b>Context and any related preconditions</b>	Tangible "results achieved" (RA) findings from MSMEs reports and ILO's baseline indicators have been interpreted differently by different companies. MSMEs reports and ILO's baseline indicators need to be monitored cohesively and coherently in order to be streamlined with the project's/MSMEs' strengths and weaknesses. Further, the project's and the MSMEs files need to be kept safely and regularly backed up in order to avoid the repetition of files' loss.
<b>Targeted users</b>	ILO, MSMEs
<b>Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors</b>	Monitoring of MSMEs should be strengthened by the integration of internal safeguarding mechanisms. The allocation of funds to MSMEs are quite limited compared to project's overall budget (including training costs). It is suggested that mentors monitor each MSMEs.
<b>Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors</b>	The allocation of funds to the MSMEs has been quite positively perceived by the project's participants in terms of increasing their incomes and MSME's revenues. The introduction of compliance measures to some MSME's can be more systematically implemented to all MSMEs.
<b>ILO Administrative Issues</b>	Staff, resources and design implementation

### External environment

<b>LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT 3</b>	Support of DFAs to the project in order to fulfil its tripartite constituent requirements is needed
<b>Brief description of lessons learned</b>	Addressing tripartite constituents - DFAs, workers' and employers' organizations - is partly complete taking into consideration that the DFAs abstain from cooperating with the rest of the tripartite partners.
<b>Context and any related preconditions</b>	Systemic change needs national and local initiative, which should come from the people of Afghanistan, its communities and political authorities.
<b>Targeted users</b>	DFAs, PAC, ILO
<b>Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors</b>	Lack of institutional and market support to the MSMEs by the DFAs (lack of incentives)
<b>Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors</b>	Project's progress was not particularly affected by the absence of the DFA's participation. Despite the difficulties and the lack of the tripartite constituents – the DFAs did not cooperate with the project - R2DJ4ALL managed to proceed with its objectives and outcomes in line with Afghanistan's Decent Work Country Programme, Afghanistan's National and Peace Development Framework (ANPDF), ILO's Decent Work Country Programme (DCWP) and UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) having



	focused on the local perspective and action initiation of Afghanistan's local actors.
<b>ILO Administrative Issues</b>	Strengthening ILO's staff engagement with the DFAs
<b>LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT 4</b>	Environmental/ Ecological sustainability awareness needs to be further enhanced for MSMEs
<b>Brief description of lessons learned</b>	Of the evaluation's survey of total 214 respondents, 69% feel that their job is not affected by climate change and environmental implications. However, 31% noted that their employment is affected, out of them 11% believed climate change creates damage to crops and 6% needed to relocate.
<b>Context and any related preconditions</b>	This relative high percentage (31%) of participants feeling that their employment is affected by environmental reasons is confirmed by the interest of the MSMEs during the validation workshop for awareness raising sessions on environmental/ecological sustainability.
<b>Targeted users</b>	ILO, PAC, MSMEs
<b>Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors</b>	Environmental sustainability and ecological awareness were not a major component of R2DJ4ALL
<b>Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors</b>	Training for environmental/ecological concerns (damages to crops, need to relocate due to environmental reasons etc.) can increase innovation, destruction/climate change preparedness and resilience for local MSMEs
<b>ILO Administrative Issues</b>	ILO staff, resources, design implementation

### Community level

<b>LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT 5</b>	Support to women considering the restrictions/bans imposed by the DFAs is further needed
<b>Brief description of lessons learned</b>	The project's continuation should include sophisticated approaches in order to decrease as possible women's risks and persecution.
<b>Context and any related preconditions</b>	A significant finding of the evaluation's survey is the average wage per month for male employees, which amounts to 8.176 Afn while for women 5.785 Afn, an almost 24% difference. R2DJ4ALL's future intervention should take this finding into consideration and implement necessary steps to address this balance.
<b>Targeted users / Beneficiaries</b>	Women and men of Afghanistan, project's participants, ILO, DFAs, MSMEs
<b>Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors</b>	One of the challenges of R2DJ4ALL is its continuation under DFA's governance unpredictable circumstances regarding the future of women.

<b>Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors</b>	The project managed to create decent, safe and respectful employment opportunities, especially for women IDPs and returnees. R2DJ4ALL allocated its resources effectively in terms of reaching its gender objectives despite the difficulties encountered.
<b>ILO Administrative Issues</b>	ILO staff, resources, design implementation

### Annex 6: Emerging good practices

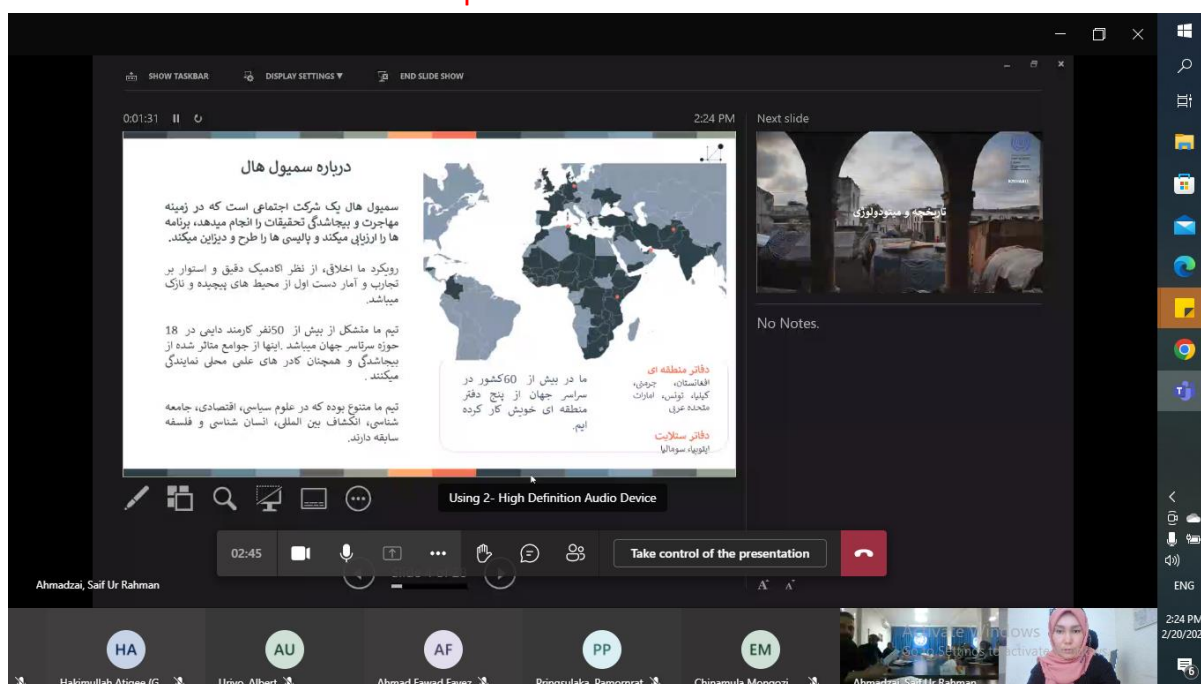
<b>GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT 1</b>	Skills development in Balkh's traditional labor market sectors
<b>Brief summary of the good practice</b>	Skills development is perhaps R2DJ4ALL's most important aspect. R2DJ4ALL's main impact is the added value in the society and economy of Afghanistan by providing them with trained and skilled entrepreneurs. Some of the criteria for the shortlisting of MSMEs and individuals were the acceptance by the community, their affiliation with the market and the specific target on the number of jobs to be created by each company. Another aspect of the training concerned the snowball effect, which has enabled employees to become entrepreneurs.
<b>Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability</b>	Replication of skills development is possible at a regional and provincial level providing that support by facilitating partners (chambers, PAC members) and partner companies (MSMEs) as well as availability of funds are in place. Existing work and established partners in other areas could facilitate the replication of R2DJ4ALL's flexible approach of skills development by adapting to the market systems of the different areas following the assessment of their local circumstances and the adjustment of the skills development trainings to the local context. Taking into account the current limited operations of other agencies, ILO's further continuation of skills development support is essential for the viability of the MSMEs and the empowerment of local entrepreneurship particularly for women. ILO should assess whether and to what extent the same or new MSMEs/participants should be supported in the future.
<b>Cause-effect relationship</b>	Skills development can upscale people's self-esteem, self-respect towards their community and, of course, their income and revenues. The findings of the evaluation reveal that over 90% of the survey's participants-respondents are respected by their community through their employment, are integrated within their community and feel in control of their life. Further, 97% think the trainings had an impact on their work/employment opportunities, 74% think that the project increased their ability to produce goods in better quality, 49% think that the project increased their ability to become a better service provider, 49% think that the project increased their ability to produce goods in

	greater quantity and 34% think that the project increased their ability to become an entrepreneur to run their own business.
<b>Measurable impact and targeted participants</b>	Remarkably, over half (53%) of the total 214 participants of the survey felt very or somewhat weak in their business skills before their participation in the program. After their participation in R2DJ4ALL, 98% of participants felt strong or somewhat strong in their business skills. Another crucial finding is that 83% of the participants think that their current job (or past job if unemployed during the evaluation) offers them personal development in terms of their skills.
<b>Potential for replication and by whom</b>	Potential for replication by ILO and/or other international organizations/agencies
<b>Upward links to higher ILO Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective 1 - 4. Technical skills development for returnees and host communities to respond to industry needs</li> <li>• Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP)</li> <li>• Country Programme Outcomes (CPO) AFG105</li> <li>• United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), One UN for Afghanistan 2018-2021</li> <li>• National Priority Program (NPP)</li> <li>• Afghanistan National and Peace Development Framework (ANPDF)</li> </ul>

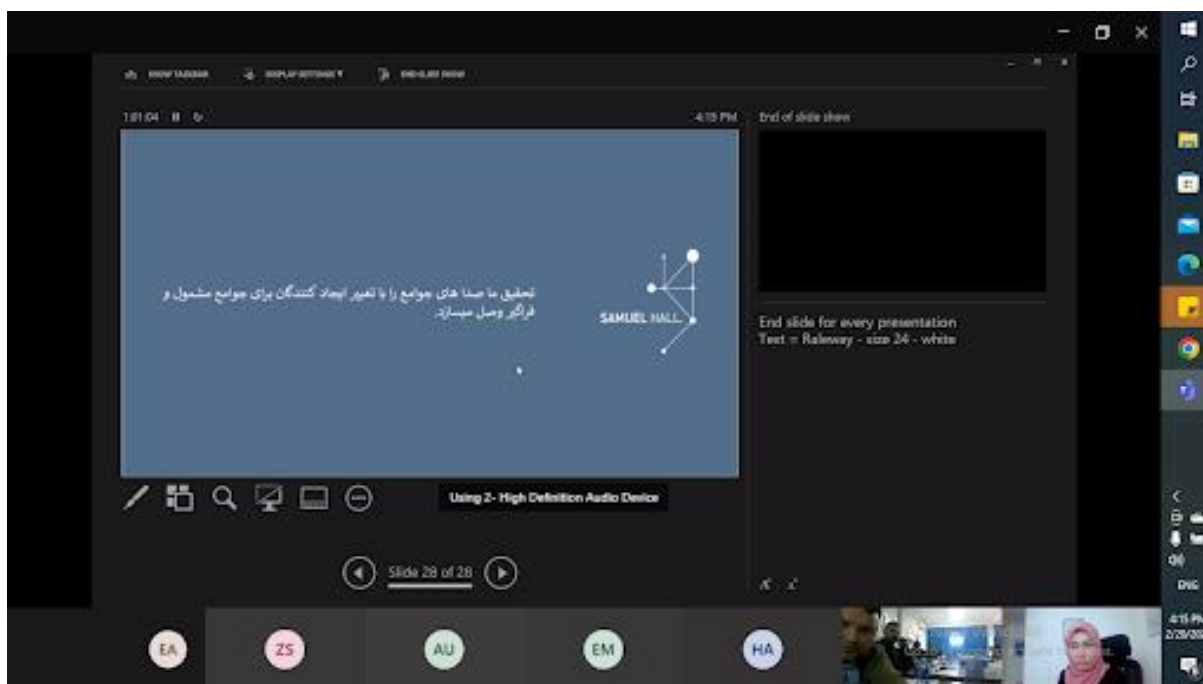
<b>GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT 2</b>	PAC's role key for success to linkages with local communities
<b>Brief summary of the good practice</b>	PAC's awareness and knowledge of the local context facilitated the essential engagement of R2DJ4ALL with the communities. PAC bridged the communication of the MSMEs and the local people to UN agencies. Another crucial aspect is the transparency in the selection process of the MSMEs, since multiple key actors have assessed the MSMEs proposals, which are not directly related to ILO.
<b>Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability</b>	The selection process of potential new MSMEs can be conducted in a more transparent and participatory way. Opening up the space and support for newcomers is suggested. Most importantly, ILO can enhance and facilitate the connection of university students to labor market along with entrepreneurial initiatives and innovation aspects including women, IDPs, returnees, refugees and marginalized population.
<b>Cause-effect relationship</b>	The project's design from beginning to end has been rooted in the society and the local context fulfilling these most crucial aspects for the project's success. The selection of PAC facilitated the smooth integration of the reality of local communities to R2DJ4ALL's objectives. This approach proved successful in transforming the needs and aspirations of local marginalized people into tangible results through their supported MSMEs and their skills development.

<b>Measurable impact and targeted participants</b>	21 MSMEs (business partners) were selected and supported. At least 1.138 new skilled people <sup>53</sup> were recruited out of the total 2.112 employed people during the evaluation with most of them (1.861) being women IDPs.
<b>Potential for replication and by whom</b>	Potential for replication by ILO and/or other international organizations/agencies
<b>Upward links to higher ILO Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 1 - 4. Technical skills development for returnees and host communities to respond to industry needs</li> <li>Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP)</li> <li>Country Programme Outcomes (CPO) AFG105</li> <li>United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), One UN for Afghanistan 2018-2021</li> <li>National Priority Program (NPP)</li> <li>Afghanistan National and Peace Development Framework (ANPDF)</li> </ul>

## Annex 7: Stakeholder validation photos



<sup>53</sup> based on the MSMEs reports and ILO's indicators



## Annex 8: Bibliography

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