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i-eval Discovery



Formalizing Access to the Legal Labor Market for Refugees and Host Communities in Jordan, Phase II

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Jordan

Evaluation date: 27 April 2022

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: ILO ROAS

Technical Office: ILO ROAS

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DC Symbol: JOR/19/05/USA

Donor(s) & budget: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration – US Department of State, \$4,713,883

Key Words: COVID, Constituents, Employment



Executive Summary

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project "Formalizing Access to the Legal Labor Market for Refugees and Host Communities in Jordan – Phase 2" is a result of a collaboration between the ILO and the US Department of State to support the formal labor market participation of Jordanians and refugee men and women, including the provision of training and certification, business development support, employment services, and work permits.

The main goal of the project is to enhance Jordanian and refugee beneficiaries' access to the formal labor market and decent work, to be achieved through the following outcomes: (i) Jordanians and refugees benefit from on the job trainings and the chance to have their skills validated through the application of the Recognition of Prior Learning model in several sectors; (ii) Jordanian and refugee women are supported to enter and remain in the formal workforce through targeted packages of support and business development services; and (iii) Syrian refugee have access to work permits. The project was implemented in nine governorates across Jordan and was managed by a team composed of full time ILO staff and ILO consultants.

Present situation of the project

The project has ended as of the end of September 2021

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purpose of this final evaluation is to assess the overall achievements of the project against its planned outcomes/objectives and outputs to generate lessons learned, best practices and recommendations. The evaluation investigated the relevance, design, efficiency, effectiveness, potential impact, sustainability, and management arrangements of the project, reflecting findings on the extent to which the project has achieved its stated objectives, produced the desired outputs, and realized proposed outcomes/objectives. The evaluation also identified strengths and weaknesses in the project design, strategy and implementation as well as lessons learned with recommendations. Furthermore, the evaluation touched upon cross cutting issues including gender equality, disability, social dialogue, environmental sustainability, and COVID 19. The evaluation covered the entire of the 2nd phase of the



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| | project, from September 2019 to September 2021. While the project itself overlapped between its 1 st and 2 nd phases, this evaluation caters only for the 2 nd phase. The clients of this evaluation include the ILO and the US Department of State. |
| Methodology of evaluation | This evaluation followed a mixed methods approach, relying on available quantitative data collected through the desk review and primary qualitative data collected through interviews with project stakeholders & partners as well as through focus group discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries. Gender was be mainstreamed throughout the methodology from inception to data collection to data analysis. |

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| MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS | <p>The evaluation has found that the project was relevant to the ILO DWCP, ILO P&B, the Jordan Response Plan and fit well in the context of the ongoing crisis in Jordan. The project team provided a quick and relevant response to the COVID-crisis through implementing various contingency strategies. The design of the project was found to be mostly coherent and logical, with appropriate changes introduced during the cost-extension process. But while the chain of results were found to be coherent, the results themselves could have been better formulated according to result based management principles, and a better set of risks and assumptions could have been formulated during the design stage. In spite of the evolving situation in Jordan influenced by the COVID crisis, the target selection of the project remained valid throughout the project lifecycle. The project design was found to have included ILO's cross cutting issues of gender equality, non discrimination and social dialogue.</p> <p>The project was successful in leveraging new financial resources to maintain operations of the project, through a cost extension that enabled the project to successfully continue its operations for another 12 months. However, the evaluation has found that the project has been largely affected by the COVID crisis as the project faced significant delays during the implementation period due to the various repercussions of the crisis in Jordan. But even before the onset of the COVID crisis, the project started on a slow pace with the first implementing partner being involved more than 5 months into the 12-month project. Given the significant delays faced during implementation, the project team had no option but to spread the ambitious project targets across a large number of partners in a swift manner, in order to be able to reach the large targets of the project.</p> |
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This meant that the project had to directly contract some of the project's implementing partners without launching a competitive bidding process. There were 9 implementing partners in the project, 5 of which were explicitly mentioned in the project documents and the donor had approved them before implementation. The efficiency of the project could have been improved if the selection of the remaining partners was done through the usual bidding process. This is because a proper bidding process would have ensured competition and more options for a timely delivery of tasks.

In spite of the pandemic-related challenges faced during implementation, the project managed to achieve many of its intended outcomes and outputs, while partially achieving others. A total of 3,503 beneficiaries had their skills recognized through the RPL methodology and 831 beneficiaries were placed in jobs. With regards to skills development, a total of 876 received vocational training, out of which 430 female beneficiaries received training tailored for women. In addition, the project facilitated the issuance of more than 25,000 work permits for Syrian refugees working in Jordan. As such, the project was able to attain significant achievements despite of the challenges faced during implementation. Having said that, a number of factors limited the overall performance of the project, including a weak overarching project framework the short timeline of the project, a suboptimal M&E plan, and a weak level of communication and coordination with ILO's technical backstopping units.

The use of local skills among project team members has helped the program reach many of its targets. The evaluation has found a relatively high level of coordination between the project team and implementing partners under this project, as well as with ILO constituents, where the project contributed to bringing ILO constituents closer together, but private sector representatives could have been more involved in the project. The evaluation has found some positive changes in the capacity of national partners as a result of this project, especially given the ToT activities undertaken in the project. There was limited national ownership for this project by national partners, as this project is considered a purely humanitarian project by most. But this weak national ownership is not unique to this project alone, but affects most of humanitarian projects in response to Syrian refugee responses in Jordan. A main

positive feature of the project has been its contribution to social cohesion between Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Recommendations

- Improve the design of future projects, including any redesign adjustments
- Carry out an audit for main partners of the project
- Taking into account the context of humanitarian response, minimize the financing of unsustainable activities under future projects as much as possible
- Enhance engagement with employers in future projects
- Carry out a market assessment to identify high-value and in-demand skills for future projects
- Improve project governance, including formulating robust M&E frameworks and plans, to enhance the effectiveness of future projects to achieve results
- Enhance coordination with strategic stakeholders, including employer representatives and ILO's technical backstopping units
- Reconsider types of training provided in future projects, especially trainings provided for women.
- Ensure the incorporation of ILO's cross cutting issues into the design of future projects

Main lessons learned and good practices

Lessons Learned:

- The direct contracting of project partners, coupled with lackluster communication and coordination with ILO's technical backstopping units has adversely affected the efficiency and effectiveness of the project.
- The suboptimal M&E plan of the project, coupled with a large number of implementing partners, created a distance between the project team and some project activities, which in turn led to a weak quality control mechanisms for the project.

Emerging Good Practices:

- Instead of providing financial incentives, one of the implementing partners under this project provided door-to-door transportation for beneficiaries using tourist buses and provided



each beneficiary with one meal per day. Through this way, the implementing partner guaranteed that beneficiaries are attending due to a genuine interest in the training itself and not because of the financial incentives being provided. An added benefit was that the project utilized tourist buses which were dormant due to the COVID crisis, and also utilized its productive kitchen which employs vulnerable Jordanians

- One of the implementing partners of the project adopted a fully fledged public-private partnership (PPP) methodology in its training program, in order to attract active private sector participation throughout all stages of the training program, including the design of training material and the selection of trainers and facilities. This has allowed for a market-driven approach that equipped trainees with the skills and knowledge required in the Jordanian labor market
- One of the implementing partners of the project implemented a very quick and effective response to the COVID 19 crisis, through launching an e-training platform in order to provide the theoretical training to beneficiaries on time, and not to disrupt the project's training schedule. The establishment of the e-training platform was jointly financed by the project and by the implementing partner.