



A Road to Decent Jobs for All Afghans (R2DJ4All) – Independent Final Evaluation

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Afghanistan

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Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: ILO Kabul

Technical Office: Partnerships and Field Support Department

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Key Words: Decent Work, Conditions of employment, Decent Work Country Programme, Market Systems Development



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The International Labor Organization (ILO) implemented the Road to Decent Jobs for All (R2DJ4ALL) project between September 2020 to April 2023 with the aim to provide 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 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 tackle poverty reduction. The final value chains included carpet, 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 on 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 thus several stakeholders at different levels, including the Department of Labour and Social Affairs (DoLSA), the Department of Women's Affairs (DOWA), the Department of Commerce and Industry (DoCI) in the first year prior to DFAs takeover of August 2021, Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI), Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Investment (BCCI) and the National Union of Afghanistan Workers and Employees (NUAWE). Their representatives formed the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). The members of the PAC played an important role in the shortlisting and selection of enterprises that were supported by R2DJ4ALL. The PAC was presented with several business proposals to review from the private sector that would be considered for support and using a set of criteria they selected twenty-one (21) micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).



	<p>The final value chains included carpet, 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. These gaps were then associated with the needs of their employees and R2DJ4ALL’s participants through skills development. MSMEs employees were trained according to their enterprise’s needs and sector requirements. Some MSMEs hired all the people that they had previously trained whereas other MSMEs hired partly some their trainees.</p>
<p>Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>The clients of this final independent evaluation are ILO’s donor, the US Department of States (USDoS), ILO’s project team in Afghanistan, ILO’s constituents in Afghanistan - National Union of Afghanistan Workers and Employees (NUAWE), Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) as well as MSMEs.</p>
<p>Methodology of evaluation</p>	<p>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, 5 focus group discussions, 1 case-study and 428 phone surveys directed to participants and non-participants¹ of the project including the 21 MSMEs, which were supported by R2DJ4ALL. The design of the questionnaires involved thus a threefold approach in order to capture the perspectives of involved stakeholders, the project’s main participants meaning the MSMEs (employers and employees) as well as non-participants in order draw</p>

¹ The evaluation will use the term participants and non-participants instead of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in order to avoid certain biases.



comparative conclusions. The findings of the surveys shall be regarded in light of the limitation that the sample used covered approximately 10-20% of the project's involved participants. However, the findings of the surveys were cross-checked with 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 given all possible data that the evaluators could assess. Of course, deviations may have occurred during this process due to the relatively large amount of data to be collected during limited time and under a cultural context, which demands its own attention due to its individual circumstances.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

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

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

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

1. Strong monitoring mechanisms i) for the fund’s allocation 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 may potentially strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of the MSMEs
2. More support to traditional and non-traditional businesses with innovative and technological approaches may potentially increase the competitiveness of the supported MSMEs
3. Deeper collaboration with representatives of different Chambers may potentially enhance systemic change and the sustainability of the MSMEs
5. Differentiation in strategic approach of ban on women by the DFAs
6. Deepening and streamlining the institutional cooperation with international and local actors may prove beneficial for some systemic change in market development approaches
7. Prolonging the training period to the MSMEs and provision of a mentor as focal point may enhance their understanding of the inputs and potentially increase their productivity and efficiency
8. Implementation and monitoring of compliance measures may professionalize and advance the level of the MSMEs
9. Further inclusion of people with disabilities may potentially have an impact on prejudiced context against them by the community
10. Environmental/Ecological sustainability awareness through capacity-building of participants may provide channels of innovative employability opportunities

Main lessons learned and good practices

LESSONS LEARNED

Programmatic level



- MSMEs (financial) sustainability is challenging 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 supporting systemic change
- More effective and efficient allocation of funds
- Selection of participants with more transparency
- Implementation of further compliance (safety, security, accountability) measures

Community level

- Support to women considering the restrictions/bans imposed by the DFAs is further needed
- Training and skills development for more people

External environment

- Support of Afghanistan's government 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 key for success to linkages with local communities