



Final Independent Project Evaluation: Towards a more inclusive economy through immediate job generation and enterprise development in Jordan

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Jordan

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Administrative Office: RO-Arab States

Technical Office: DWT Beirut

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BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project “Towards a more inclusive economy through immediate job generation and enterprise development in Jordan” (hereafter “the project”) was launched in June 2020 as part of the ILO’s response to difficult labour market conditions in Jordan, and to the ongoing Syrian Refugee Crisis. The project received funding from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and implemented in collaboration with the Jordanian Ministry for Local Administration (MOLA) and three municipalities in the Irbid and Mafrq Governorates.

Project design was based on two well established ILO programme models, the *Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme* (EIIP) and the *Women Do Business* (WDB) entrepreneurship programme. At its highest level, the project would “contribute to forming a more inclusive and accessible labour market for vulnerable populations, among Jordanians and Syrian refugees.”

At the Outcome level, the project was divided into two programme streams. Outcome 1 would “support a more inclusive and accessible labour market for vulnerable groups among Syrian refugees and Jordanians in host communities”. Outcome 2 focused support on “increasing the number of female-run small and micro enterprises.” Integrated into the project was the cross-cutting objective of promoting inclusion, with the participation of vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian, women and men, and Persons with Disability.

Present situation of the project

The project closed in May 2023, after 33 months of operation and three no-cost extensions. COVID-19 restrictions produced significant start up delays, and rescheduling of implementation.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The evaluation was asked to provide an “objective assessment of the accomplishment of project activities in terms of relevance, validity of design, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.” The Evaluation Objective was supported by seven Sub-objectives and 21 evaluation questions, responding to the evaluation criteria of relevance, validity of design, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Emphasis was placed on assess the crosscutting issues of gender equality and non-discrimination,



and the inclusion of Persons with Disability. The evaluation scope comprised all activities completed by the project while it was active (June 2020 to May 2023). The geographic scope included three targeted municipalities - Mansheyyat Bani Hasan (Mafraq Governorate), Dair Abi S'eed Municipality (Irbid Governorate) and Rabeyat Al Koora Municipality (Irbid Governorate). The locations were identified in consultation with the Jordanian Ministry of Local Administration (MOLA), based on criteria provided by the ILO. The evaluation audience includes the ILO (Project Management in Amman and at staff at Regional Level), the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, ILO's tripartite constituents including the Government of Jordan (MOLA) and other relevant stakeholders.

Methodology of evaluation

The approach and methodology were based on the ILO's evaluation policy and procedures, which adhere to international standards and best practices set out in the *OECD/DAC Principles and the Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (revised 2019) and approved by the United Nations Evaluation Group. The evaluation used a theory-based approach, aligned with the relevant ILO guidance.¹ The method was mixed, using both qualitative and quantitative sources identified during the inception period. For consistency, the evaluation used the same performance grading system as the project's logical framework and performance reporting.

The method included a review of documents followed by semi-structured interviews with Amman and regionally-based stakeholders (Donor representative, ILO and MOLA officials, and the two Implementing Partners).

Field study in the Mafraq and Irbid governorates occurred during May and June 2023 and comprised; extended semi-structured interviews with officials from the three participating municipalities, infrastructure works engineers, accompanied by verification visits to the infrastructure works sites; the Job Search Consultants retained by the ILO; phone interviews with graduate project workers from each of the three municipalities. Extended semi-structured interviews were also held with a sample of graduates from the

¹ ILO, *Guidance Note 1.1: Project Design and Theory of Change*, revised version 2020

Women’s Entrepreneurship programme, conducted at their business locations.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Assessment
Relevance	Satisfactory
<p>The project’s relevance was satisfactory, to the: mandates and priorities of the main Stakeholders (the Donor, ILO and the Government of Jordan/ MOLA), the priorities of municipalities and to needs of workers and women entrepreneurs. The project’s relevance to the ILO’s Programme and Budget and Decent Work Country Programme for Jordan (2018-2022) and SDG’s 1, 2, 3, 8 and 11 was very satisfactory.</p>	
Validity of Design	Unsatisfactory
<p>The project’s validity of design was unsatisfactory. The project made effective use of existing programme models and resources, developed by the ILO in Jordan and at the regional and international levels. However, project design was not theory-based. It did not develop internal coherence and synergy within Outcome 1, and between the Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 programme streams. Critical Gaps in the Logical Framework hinder results achievement and performance reporting, particularly for graduate worker’s job attainment, infrastructure delivery and the results of women’s entrepreneurship.</p>	
Effectiveness	Satisfactory
<p>Overall project effectiveness was satisfactory, based on achievement against existing Activity, Output and Outcome objectives and targets. However, the project’s two Outcomes function and separate programme streams and showed different results.</p> <p>Outcome 1 performance was satisfactory to the extent that Output employment targets were met or exceeded. However, there were significant concerns for the quality and durability of the infrastructure delivered, and little or no evidence that being a graduate worker will improve entry into the labour. Also, Output</p>	



1.1 met its training targets, and extent to which training graduates contributed to promoting/delivering the EIIP model. Outcome 2 performance is satisfactory, with good achievement at the Output and Outcome levels. From the reporting and interview sample, there is tangible evidence that the project has supported an increase in women’s entrepreneurship, and the improvements to the female-run businesses supported.

Efficiency	Satisfactory
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Project start up occurred during the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, producing implementation delays and required three no cost extensions. Otherwise, the project leveraged existing programme, management and operational resources in the ILO’s regional structure. These included effective leveraging of the ILO’s resources and programme models to promote gender equality and non-discrimination, and the inclusion of People with Disability. Contracts with the two Implementing Partners were completed within the scope of work and budget agreed, as were project components contracted to the municipalities.

Impact	Satisfactory to Unsatisfactory
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The evaluation approached impact in terms of trajectory and possibility, rather than as observed changes. The impact possibility of impact of Outcome 1 appears to be unsatisfactory. For graduate workers, the project delivered an important but short term increase in their income. This came with limited skills development and without a discernible improvement in their access to the labour market. Quality and durability concerns diminished the possible impact of the infrastructure delivered.

The Impact trajectory for Outcome 2 is satisfactory, showing a positive trajectory towards. The businesses observed show tangible progress against project objectives, with increased income and the possibility of sustainability.

There is also evidence of a positive impact trajectory the cross-cutting issue of gender equality. Municipal officials appeared to accept and be supportive of gender inclusion goals. Inclusion remains a more difficult issue when related to disability, in part because stakeholders are less familiar with disability and solutions for inclusion. Enterprise development provides an

	alternative route into the labour market and income generation, in socially restrictive contexts.	
	Sustainability	Satisfactory to Unsatisfactory
	The Sustainability of Outcome 1 deliverables was unsatisfactory. Sustainability for this Outcome is understood as the willingness of national officials to adopt the (green) EIP model. Within this metric, quality concerns for the infrastructure delivered may undermine the willingness of municipal officials to promote and use the model. A determination of Sustainability for Outcome 2 deliverables requires further data. However, the evaluation observed that the trajectory is positive, towards satisfactory.	
	Cross-cutting Issues	Very Satisfactory
Achievement for cross-cutting issues is very satisfactory, across the full project. Project design placed an emphasis on the issue of Inclusion based on: Nationality (vulnerable community members of Jordanian and Syrian nationality); Gender Equality (women and men), and; the inclusion of Persons with Disability. Indicator targets were met or exceeded for each of the four project Outputs.		

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

The overall performance grading for the project is Satisfactory. The ranking reflects important achievements on short term employment creation (Outcome 1) and Women’s Entrepreneurship (Outcome 2). The latter shows a positive trajectory, towards achieving its Outcome objective of increasing and enhancing women’s. The project has successfully leveraged the ideas, initiative and creativity of the local women.

The project met or exceeded most of its performance targets, under difficult Covid-affected conditions, albeit with implementation delays. Notwithstanding, these rankings are based on the objectives, indicators and targets established in the project’s design and *Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (2020)*. As such, the ranking also reflect deficiencies and gaps in the plan’s scope of monitoring. There is particular concern for following issues:

The project lacks a clearly defined synergy between Outcome 1 and Outcome 2. Conceptually, both Outcomes contribute towards the project goal of “support a more inclusive and accessible labour market for vulnerable Syrian refugees and Jordanian men, women and persons with disabilities”. However, the two Outcomes operate as separate and unrelated programme streams, with no synergy between them.

The Logical Framework does not assess the quality of green infrastructure delivered by the project. The ILO appears to focus on employment creation, to the exclusion of the infrastructure works that are used to generate that employment. Infrastructure is a core project deliverable, and of primary concern to municipal officials. However, the ILO does not monitor or assess project-delivered infrastructure.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Plan is not sufficiently robust or resourced to meet the project’s accountability and learning objectives. Project design is not theory-based, and the plan monitors at the Activity and Output levels. By design, the plan does not consider the relationship between Outputs and Outcomes, nor does it monitor Outcome achievement. The utility of reporting as an input to project management and learning on the EIIP and Women do Business models, therefore, is limited.

Recommendation 1: Ensure ILO guidance on Theory of Change is used for design of the next project iteration. Emphasis should be given to understanding project assumptions and the causal pathways that support design.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen Output and Outcome monitoring, with the use of ILO guidance for design of the Logical Framework and monitoring instruments for data gathering. Projects must be appropriately resourced for monitoring tasks, consistent with the ILO’s accountability and learning objectives.

Recommendation 3: The EIIP and WDB project models should be implemented separately, within their own project frameworks. Synergies will be more effectively developed at a higher level, within the ILO’s Country Programme.

Recommendation 4: EIIP and WDB synergies may be found by matching project-sponsored entrepreneurs and graduate workers, within a broader Decent Work country programme framework. This presents an opportunity in isolated and disadvantaged communities, where employment opportunities are limited.

Recommendation 5: Clarify and strengthen the EIIP's value proposition to MOLA and the municipal governments, highlighting the broad range of goods (economic, social and public goods) to be delivered, but ensuring that the proposition includes delivering infrastructure that is of good quality and durability, and meets municipal standards.

Recommendation 6: Within the EIIP project model, increase the person days of work allocated to each individual from 30 to 60 Person Days. Ensure also that the project has identifiable skills development and experience components. These actions should be designed to: i) allow workers to leverage project skills and experience in their job searches; ii) improve the quality and durability of the infrastructure delivered to municipalities.

Recommendation 7: Strengthen the "green" dimension of the current EIIP value proposition to Jordanian stakeholders, broadening the employment-intensive development approach from infrastructure to include other forms of community assets, natural areas and landscapes, contributing to environmental goals and the adaptation to climate change.

Recommendation 8: Commission a tracer study of the 124 women (Output 2.1) and the 60 women (Output 2.2) that received support, to better determine Outcome level results, the factors influencing results and sustainability, and lessons learned to strengthen the WDB model.

Main lessons learned and good practices

Main Lessons Learned

1. Theory-based design of essential to performance and learning

Using a theory based approach increases the likelihood of positive outcomes. Most performance difficulties were influenced by deficiencies in the Logical Framework and Risk model. In particular, the framework does not describe the causal pathways within the



project, particularly between Outputs and Outcomes, nor does it provide the necessary means for Outcome achievement. Project performance was negatively affected precisely where there was a break in the Output to Outcome pathway. A theory-based approach enhances the ILO's understanding of causal relationships between project elements, and, critically, how they should be designed, resourced and monitored. It also contributes to sustainability, to the extent that positive performance produces durable community assets leading stakeholders to choose the EIIP model in the future.

2. The quality and durability of infrastructure matters

Short-term job creation for the delivery of green infrastructure generates a broad set of goods: an economic and capacity development good for the workers; an economic and social stabilisation good for the community; a set of public goods for Municipal and Government of Jordan stakeholders. Each of these goods, and the synergies between them, need to be understood and described in the value proposition to stakeholders.

Currently, the ILO's approach focuses on employment creation, with inclusion and social stability. In contrast, the priority of Municipal stakeholders appears to be the delivery of quality infrastructure, for which they are accountable to the communities. These priorities are not exclusive. However, the combined value of project goods needs to be sufficient to offset any perception that labour intensive infrastructure development is cost inefficient. Critically, the quality and durability of the infrastructure delivered must meet the relevant standard, or it ceases to have value as a public good. Adequate training for workers is a critical factor contributing to quality.

Good Practice

1. Leveraging established programme models and trusted relationships

The assessment of factors enabling project achievement shows that the ILO was effective leveraging established programme models and trusted partnership, with the Donor, Government of Jordan entities and Implementing Partners. These contributed to positive start-up



results under Covid-19 constraints and, therefore, contributed to achievement and risk mitigation.

2. Taking a “green” approach to designing project outputs

The project integrated the ILO’s Green Works concept into its employment-intensive infrastructure model, leveraging existing EIIP and Women do Business services with an approach that simultaneously contributes to national priorities for climate risk mitigation, environmental conservation and disasters prevention.

3. Use of transparent and merit-based beneficiary selection involving national stakeholders

The ILO and project Stakeholders used transparent and merit/criteria based selection processes for the EIIP worker and Women Entrepreneur candidates. For the EIIP Outcome, the use of a lottery brought the perception of fairness to the process and mitigated reputation risk. For the Entrepreneurship Outcome, selection and two-tiered training process produced a qualified and motivated group of candidates, increasing the possibility of success.