

ILO Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program develops very rapidly in Afghanistan

2002...

After an absence of several years, the ILO resumed activities in Afghanistan in 2002 and reopened its former office in the UNDP compound in Kabul. Showing serious commitment to the peace and reconstruction process, the ILO dedicated over \$1.2M of core funds for program development and investment in addition to cost of the Kabul liaison office,

In the first stage of the ILO's return to Afghanistan, a number of quick impact projects were initiated. These capacity-building interventions were in The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and The Ministry of Women's Affairs. The interventions included training of Ministry officials in both the English language and computer science.

2003...

From the outset, the ILO has established a *two-track strategy* for serving the people of Afghanistan. The *first track* that the ILO is following is to contribute to the international effort to reduce poverty in Afghanistan. The ILO is providing assistance in this regard, in close collaboration with MoLSA, within the TISA's national development framework, in collaboration with the relevant Counterpart Ministries, the United Nations Organisations, and the Non Government Organisations. The TISA has opted for an employment led development strategy. This approach fits very well with the ILO's poverty reduction, economic and social development perspective. The ILO promotes interventions that will stimulate decent work for the women and the men of Afghanistan.

These interventions are in the areas of: a) Employment Generation through Labour-based Infrastructure Development; b) Vocational Training and Skills Development; c) Employment Services and Labour Market Development; d) Local Economic Development and Self-Reliance.

The *second track* is to assist in the re-establishment and the strengthening of the ILO constituents; the MoLSA, the worker's organizations, and the employer's organizations. In addition to strengthening the traditional tri-partite structure, the ILO intends to strengthen social dialogue with other key social and economic actors. In August 2003, the ILO will field a mission that will design, in consultation with the partners, a program for technical assistance to achieve these goals.

Major milestones in the ILO recovery programme...July 2003...

a) Employment Generation through Labour-based Infrastructure Development:

In July 2003, the ILO will sign a USD3.8m contract with the World Bank to provide technical assistance to the *National Emergency Employment Programme* (NEEP) developed by the ILO. NEEP is the largest relief-development program in Afghanistan with an annual investment level of over \$100M. NEEP will generate *several million workdays of employment to Afghan women and men*, and it is part of the TISA's social safety net strategy. The ILO will provide guidance to the NEEP so that the employment objectives of the program are met, within the concept of decent work, and so that the infrastructure that is improved is of appropriate quality to ensure the sustainability of the investments.

Complementing the World Bank programme of technical assistance that the ILO is providing directly to NEEP, the ILO, with Swedish support, will carry out a USD4.5m demonstration and training project. This intervention, known as the Employment Generation Infrastructure Project (EGIP), will not only generate employment directly, but will also build the capacity of the public and private sectors to carry out the NEEP. It will assist the government in its private sector led strategy by training small-scale contractors.

Additionally the ILO and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) are exploring ways of further support to the NEEP program, by ILO technical assistance to the UNHCR's capital assistance. And likewise the European Union is also interested in working with the ILO in the NEEP.

b) Vocational Training and Skills Development.

The ILO is currently negotiating with Japan for financial support for the USD6.5m Employment Skill Development for War Affected Afghans Project (ESDWA) project which it has developed over recent months by the ILO. This will be the largest vocational training project in the country. It will provide skills training for war-affected people including ex-combatants, refugees, displaced people, etc. It will assist these people towards self employment, paid employment and will lay the groundwork for the national vocational training program. This project is also designed to support the re-integration phase of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (DDR).

Related to the DDR, the ILO is currently preparing, at the request of the government, an intervention to assist with the integration of underage soldiers. This project will be orientated towards supporting the educational and skills needs of the young soldiers.

c) Employment Services and Labour Market Development:

The ILO has already launched a pilot project, working in partnership with the German International Organization AGEF, to establish an *Employment Service Center (ESC)* in the Kabul Department of Manpower. At the request of the German Government,

the ILO, has now submitted a concept paper for the expansion of the ESC to a national level.

d) *Re-entry of Afghan Women into the Labour Market.*

Another important ILO project that is a priority of the TISA is the *Re-entry of Afghan Women into the Labour Market*. The ILO is financing the pilot project and is seeking a donor for the full-scale project. The Netherlands is sponsoring an ILO Associate Expert to provide the technical support to this project.

In a separate project, the Italian government is already providing the financial support to the ILO's International Training Center in Turin to implement the Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship Project. This project will commence in August 2003.

e) *Local Economic Development and Self Reliance:*

At the request of the TISA, the ILO will place an Advisor to the new Department of Rural Economic Development and Promotion of Alternative Livelihoods (*REDPAL*) in September 2003. This new Department is established in the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

The ILO will be providing advice for the policies and strategic framework for the REDPAL. Special emphasis will be given for strengthening economic opportunities of women and other vulnerable groups, and for finding alternative livelihoods to poppy cultivation.

The ILO is providing capacity building assistance to the national micro-finance program. In this regard the ILO is helping local organizations that are *micro-finance practitioners* to increase their capacity to a standard whereby they will be able to access the capital funds that are provided by the World Bank for lending. The Micro-Finance unit is located within the REDPAL.