

► EIIP Afghanistan News Brief



International
Labour
Organization



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► **Welcome** to the tenth edition of Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) Afghanistan News Brief. The purpose of this publication is to disseminate news and updates concerning the ongoing activities of the EIIP Afghanistan project. Its primary goal is to keep the audience informed and engaged by providing relevant information and insights into the project's progress and initiatives.

The Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA) is funding this project and ILO is implementing it as an intervention for Promoting Employment and Decent Work through the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.

We will also provide you with a brief on our interventions to address the humanitarian crisis through the project, particularly the efforts being made at promoting employment and decent work through employment intensive investment programmes. Our aim is to inform how the project is being implemented together with the people and for the people and will also include human interest stories. While updating you on developments, this edition continues on a series of human-interest stories that promote inclusivity with another touching story of Mah Jabin from Mangajik district, who is proud that she is now also a breadwinner for the family.



Laying Geo composite for Stabilization of Subgrade

► Project Update...

The EIIP Afghanistan project has marked a milestone with the successful culmination of its activities in the Northern region which has resulted in the creation of jobs for 5,660 people including women, men, PwD, and youth and provided 77,866 work days. This in turn created and improved community assets through implementation of 12 community infrastructure assets, including 4 in Mazar-e-Sharif city, 4 in Shortepa district, 3 in Mardyan district, and 1 in Mangajik district of Jawzjan province. The project managed to improve access to communities through rehabilitation, spot-improvement and maintenance of about 30 kms of roads and construction of structures including a 100-meter-long flood protection structure. In this issue, a community member has shared how the travel time which was about 1 hour has reduced to 10 minutes because of the EIIP Afghanistan projects.

The project strived to restore broken linkages, ensure sustainability and resilience of communities while addressing climate change using both innovative and traditional solutions. The construction of the Shortepa District Road, a scenic primary arterial road linking the district of Shortepa to the outside world was restored using both innovative geo-composite and traditional bamboo-composite materials to stabilize the subgrade road formation material due to the sandy soil layer and to address the high water table along the area. The road was cut-off by encroaching of the nearby Amu River, which also presented challenges necessitating diverting the new alignment and protecting it against future encroachments. The rolling and sandy terrain, dunes and harsh weather required the design and installation of gabion protection structures, lined drains and stone pitching to protect slopes and ensure adequate drainage. To safeguard and manage the sandy terrain, the project employed bio-engineering techniques, such as planting Cherkas bushes in critical locations to stabilize sandy hills and stop sand from encroaching onto the road.

The project integrated capacity-building interventions through training of 1,320 individuals from implementing partners, contractors, and workers. The EIIP also trained 37 construction companies on the adoption of local resource-based approaches, the project also promoted Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and Decent Work principles to enable the project provide

► Project Update...

provide interventions beyond the project lifetime, in collaboration with the Enterprise Development component of the ILO programme, the EIIP trained 500 women entrepreneurs, linked to beneficiaries, thus enabling them to start their own businesses or find employment elsewhere.

As part of collaborative activities, the project has developed a Guidance Note on Employment and Decent Work Social Safeguards under the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus (HDPN). This Guidance Note, developed in collaboration with other UNAFPs and to be disseminated to the UNCT, aims to support staff, consultants, and partners. It contributes towards enhanced capacity to identify, deliver, and monitor employment-based and cash-for-work plus approaches to create more and better decent work across the HDP Nexus.

► Human Interest Story

Work is Work, As I Put My Dentistry Skills Aside to Earn a Livelihood and Dignity

Mah Jabin has a compelling and touching story as one of the workers who has had to leave aside her dentistry skills to work on a road maintenance project in Mingjik District, Jawzjan Province. Originating from Mazar-e-Sharif, Mah Jabin who is well educated, having completed dentistry at one of the semi-high universities in Mazar-e-Sharif had to move to Mingjik district following her marriage to a person in Mangajik.

Mah Jabin says, "As I began my new life in Mangajik, I thought the working conditions for a dentist in Aqcha market would be better than anywhere else" She wanted to continue her career but was unaware of the cultural restrictions on women working outside in the area.

The ILO Community Liaison Officer (CLO), overseeing the project explains, "It is unfortunately the cultural stigma and perspective of the local community, that working women are shameless and against Islamic customs and traditions. When I arrived in the area, men were surprised to see me, and I rarely saw women walking on the streets." CLO says, "When I wanted the women to apply to work in the project, I was faced with aggressive behaviour from Some of the men, until finally, we came to the conclusion that women were not allowed to leave their homes, and the only thing they could do in the project was either washing clothes, cooking food, or baking bread. They were not allowed to participate in any activities outside their homes."



Mah Jabin as Office's Assistant at Contractor's office in Road Routine Maintenance and Spot Improvements in Mangajik in Jawzjan Province

Exciting Expansion of EIIP Project to the Western Region

Following the successful completion of the EIIP project in the Northern region, the project has now expanded to the Western region, Herat province, commencing operations on 1 June 2024. This expansion is part of the Post Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Delivering as One (DaO) initiative, funded by the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan.

The project aims to replicate the success achieved in the Northern region by addressing the infrastructure, employment, and livelihood needs of earthquake-affected communities in Khushk district, Herat province. This will be done by integrating with the Enterprise Development component, this expansion marks a significant milestone in the ongoing commitment to rebuild and empower communities across Afghanistan, whilst the EIIP will continue to provide critical support and opportunities, fostering resilience and sustainable development in the region.

Following this agreement, Mah Jabin was one of the few women chosen by the contractor company and the community council to carry out the mentioned activities, and after the CLO talked with Mrs. Mah Jabin, she accepted. The CLO remembers, "I was fearful, on whether Mah Jabin will accept the work, considering her qualifications, but this was the only opportunity that we could provide for her way I could help her so that she could earn through this project."

Mah Jabin says, "I worked for more than three months carrying out works as a cook, laundress and doing other activities to support the camp activities." Mah Jabin says, "It never occurred to me that I was doing a demeaning job of washing clothes, compared to my dentistry job, as the job provided me with a livelihood, dignity and resulted in me being financially independent. I was now not dependent on others, despite not being allowed to work outside my home, and I was playing my small part in the maintenance project, which was worth the world to me. To me the position or status is not important, the only thing that matters to me is working and working hard. I am now working hard, receiving a halal income, which is the greatest honour for me."

The CLO shares that, "What surprised me was how a woman moved from Mazar to Mingjik and is satisfied with life here, far from the conveniences of urban life which she initially had in Mazar Sharif." Mingjik is one of the remote districts of Jawzjan province, dry and barren, with many reliant on canal water and located about 15 kilometres away from Aqcha market, near Qarqin and Khamab locations of Jawzjan province, or the border of Turkmenistan.

There is limited potable drinking water, no electricity with a few able people having solar energy, no reliable telecommunication network, with no internet at all. There is limited choice for food. Mah Jabin says, "On my behalf, I sincerely thank and appreciate the International Labour Organization, Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan and others for hearing the voice of our poor and helpless people and holding our needy hand. We used to cover 13 kilometres in an hour or less to reach our destination, but now we cover this distance in ten minutes, which is extremely easy."

The CLO says, "One of the reasons why we recruited Mah Jabin as a worker was the inclusiveness integrated within the ILO and STFA programmes, and the extent to which they seek for the empowerment of the woman. I want women like Mah Jabin to be able to freely access work opportunities, gain income and skills, and be provided with a livelihood that can enable them to contribute to the family and community."

► Photo Gallery...



Shortepa District Road before Rehabilitation



Shortepa District Road After Rehabilitation



Using Bamboo Composite layer for Stabilizing Subgrade



Bio Engineering, Cherkas Bushes Plant for Slope Protection



On-Jobs Worker's Orientation Session



Manufacturing Bamboo composite on Project site



In-Class Pre-Bid Training



Filling Gabion Baskets