

▶ EIIP Afghanistan News Brief



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▶ **Welcome** to the eleventh 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.

Following the successful completion of EIIP interventions in the Northern region, the programme is now actively engaged in the Western region, specifically in Herat province. The ongoing STFA-funded interventions are part of the UN Delivering as One (DaO) Initiative, focusing on post-earthquake recovery efforts, while the Japan SSN-funded interventions, which were also designed as an earthquake response, have been successfully concluded with the completion of two infrastructure projects in Zindajan district. This issue highlights the latest developments, including infrastructure rehabilitation, employment generation, livelihood enhancement, social safeguards, and knowledge-sharing efforts. 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 Parisa from Kushk Robat Sangi district of Herat, who, through training and financial support, has gained confidence and recognition as a key contributor to her family's livelihood.

▶ Project Update...

The EIIP Afghanistan project has successfully concluded two Japan-SSN-funded infrastructure projects in Zindajan district, Herat province, aimed at enhancing community resilience and access to essential services. These projects were part of the earthquake recovery response and involved the rehabilitation of 8 culvert structures, the construction of a 40-meter gabion protection wall, and the restoration of an irrigation super-passage structure. Additionally, 736 m³ of debris and rubble were removed, and a 52-meter settlement adjacent to a rural road, caused by the earthquake, was backfilled to prevent potential road damage, avoid traffic blockage, and ensure uninterrupted transportation.. These interventions not only improved infrastructure but also generated 4,851 workdays for 385 earthquake survivors, providing

much-needed short-term employment opportunities and economic benefits for the local population. The interventions have strengthened local capacities and delivered sustainable infrastructure, contributing to resilience and fostering social and economic recovery in the region.

Meanwhile, under STFA funding, EIIP is actively engaged in supporting earthquake survivors in the Western region through a series of infrastructure and enterprise development initiatives. The programme has completed comprehensive assessments and identified eight community infrastructure projects designed to address urgent needs, including rural road rehabilitation, flood protection, culvert construction, kariz restoration (irrigation), and school repairs. With design and procurement phases finalized, the projects are now poised to commence physical works, marking a significant milestone in post-earthquake recovery efforts. These interventions integrate climate-resilient approaches, ensuring that infrastructure remains durable and adaptable to future challenges. The infrastructure interventions are expected to benefit over 10,000 people, half of them women. In addition to infrastructure development, the integrated enterprise component of the intervention is making remarkable progress in fostering long-term livelihood opportunities. Through ILO-certified business skills training, 274 women (including 34 developed as trainers) have been trained in entrepreneurship, enterprise development, and financial education. Furthermore, 82 women in Kushk district received in-kind financial support to start or scale their businesses. Six MSMEs in the carpet sector have also been supported, sustaining 352 jobs and providing on-the-job vocational skills training. Strengthening market linkages remains a priority, enabling beneficiaries to integrate into the broader economic landscape.

As part of collaborative activities, the project has developed a Guidance Note on Social Safeguards for employment-intensive approaches, which aims to enhance the capacity of decision-makers, implementing partners, and contractors to integrate social safeguards into infrastructure projects. This note aligns with the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN) and focuses on preventing social risks while promoting decent work, conflict sensitivity, and gender inclusivity.

To support the dissemination of the guidance note, EIIP organized a Knowledge Sharing Workshop in Kabul, bringing together UN agencies, Workers and Employers, representatives from DfA, NGOs and implementing partners, to exchange best practices on social safeguards, wage-setting mechanisms, and employment-intensive project implementation. The workshop provided a platform for refining social safeguard strategies and strengthening collaboration among development actors and national stakeholders in Afghanistan.

► Human Interest Story

Parisa's Journey: From Struggling to Thriving

"The GET Ahead training and financial support have completely changed our lives, lifting us out of poverty and hunger", says Parisa



Figure 1: Parisa attends to customers in her shop, confidently managing sales and inventory—a skill she gained through the GET Ahead training and financial support from the ILO, with funding from STFA

I am Parisa, an 18-year-old girl from Khuaja Gulbid village, Kushk Rabat Sangi district in Herat. Growing up in a poor family, I often felt useless, believing that I had no role to play in shaping our future. Our family of seven struggled to make ends meet, relying mainly on my father's small shop, which had limited goods and brought in a very low income. The only other source of support was my elder brother, who had to leave for Iran as a refugee to find work.

Thanks to the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA), my life has taken a new direction. The GET Ahead training and the business toolkits provided to me were truly a blessing, not just for me but for my entire family. Before this support, our living conditions were harsh, and I had to drop out of school after seventh grade. However, my passion for education remains strong, and I still dream of becoming a successful entrepreneur in my village.

With this opportunity, our situation has significantly improved—we can now afford better food, and our quality of life has changed for the better. What makes me happiest is that my family now values my opinions and trusts my decisions. When my father needs to restock the shop, he asks me to prepare the list of goods to buy. Despite cultural barriers and social stigma, I confidently run the shop alongside him.

One of the most fulfilling aspects of this journey is how we share knowledge. My father teaches me shopkeeping skills—like how to weigh goods and set prices—while I teach him what I learned in the GET Ahead training, such as marketing strategies, building good customer relationships, handling risks, and managing finances.

I have seen firsthand the positive impact of this training and the tools you provided. Not only has our family income increased, but our home is now filled with a sense of peace, respect, and teamwork. My family depends on me, and I feel valued and respected. The people in our village encourage and appreciate my efforts, saying they are lucky to have an accessible and well-managed shop nearby.

A Call for More Support

Parisa expresses her deep gratitude:

"I am truly thankful to the the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA) for their generous and life-changing support. I am now a breadwinner, just like a man, for my family, and my confidence has grown immensely. I no longer feel useless—I am an important person in my family and my community. Many more women in our communities need to be supported. I strongly believe that women are capable of doing any job if given the right support. Please continue helping more women—we truly need it."

► Photo Album...



Figure 1: Rubble Cleaning activity, Zindajan District, Herat Province



Figure 2: Road Formation Work, Zindajan District, Herat Province



Figure 3: Culvert after construction, Zindajan District, Herat Province



Figure 3: PUNOs Joint Assessment in Earthquake Affected Areas of Kushk Robat Sangi District, Herat Province



Figure 5: Community Engagement and Consultation, Earthquake Affected Areas of Kushk Robat Sangi District, Herat Province



Figure 5: Assessment of earthquake damage in a school building, Earthquake Affected Areas of Kushk Robat Sangi District, Herat Province



Figure 7: STFA M&E team visiting an ILO-supported woman entrepreneur who started a shop after training and financial assistance, Kushk Robat Sangi District, Herat Province



Figure 8: Knowledge Sharing Workshop on Social Safeguards and Wage Setting in Employment-Intensive and Cash-for-Work Programmes, Kabul, Afghanistan.