



International
Labour
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Employment-intensive
Investment Programme

► Forum report

EIIP SSTC Inter-regional forum for Asia-Pacific and the Arab States

✍ 8–10 april 2025 📍 Bangladesh



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for Asia-Pacific and the Arab States**

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► Foreword

Over the past several years, the ILO's Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP), implemented through the Employment in Investments Branch (EMPINVEST), has made significant progress in addressing unemployment, supporting crisis recovery, and strengthening climate resilience across Asia-Pacific and the Arab States. By adopting participatory, local resource-based approaches, EIIP projects have helped Member States in generating millions of workerdays, particularly among vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and displaced populations. In addition, EIIP empowers countries to co-develop innovative, employment-centred solutions that enhance resilience, promote social justice, and build national capacities. Its expert coordination and technical guidance are essential in translating SSTC commitments into tangible, country-owned achievements with lasting impact.

The Branch has been instrumental in advancing South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) through the EIIP, including in the Asia Pacific and Arab States. It has provided a dynamic platform for countries to exchange experiences, share innovations, and adopt practical approaches to employment-intensive infrastructure development. By fostering peer learning and collaboration among governments, technical experts, and social partners, EMPINVEST has helped strengthen national capacities to design and implement labour-based investment strategies that create decent jobs, build local skills, and support sustainable development.

The ILO's PARTNERSHIPS Department serves as a driving force in positioning SSTC as a strategic pillar for achieving decent work and sustainable development. With a strong commitment to fostering inclusive partnerships across governments, workers' and employers' organizations, and development actors in the Global South, the Department excels in facilitating dynamic exchanges of knowledge, technology, and practical experience.

The Inter-Regional Forum, jointly supported by EMPINVEST and the PARTNERSHIPS Department and held from 8–10 April 2025 in Bangladesh, marked a pivotal step in strengthening inter-regional cooperation. The forum brought together more than 80 partners, including ILO tripartite constituents from 19 countries, to exchange practices and advance employment-intensive strategies for sustainable infrastructure and public works programmes. The forum highlighted the growing importance of SSTC as a modality for peer learning and knowledge exchange among countries with shared development challenges. It also showcased the role of the SSTC platform in enabling mutual learning on local resource-based technologies, employment impact assessment tools, and digital innovations that enhance planning and accountability in public works. Furthermore, it has also catalysed new bilateral partnerships and commitments to integrate employment-rich investments into national development frameworks.

Looking ahead, EMPINVEST and the PARTNERSHIPS Department remain strongly committed to supporting countries in leveraging the EIIP and SSTC frameworks to create decent work, stimulate local economies, and build resilience in the face of global challenges.



► Mito Tsukamoto
Chief
EMPINVEST Branch



► Peter van Rooji
Director
PARTNERSHIPS

► Introduction

Asia-Pacific and the Arab States collaborate to intensify job creation through infrastructure development

The first ever inter-regional knowledge sharing forum for Asia-Pacific and the Arab States on employment intensive investment programmes (EIIP) was held in Savar, Bangladesh bringing together 81 participants (26% women) from 19 countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Switzerland and Timor-Leste with online participation from OPT, Syria and Yemen [*Agenda in Annex 1 and List of Participants in Annex 2*].

The forum was carried out in partnership with Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department (LGED). *The ILO takes this opportunity to acknowledge and sincerely thank LGED for its contribution towards this event and look forward towards continued fruitful collaboration.*

The forum provides a platform for peer-to-peer learning among institutions and research think tanks on employment-intensive approaches, spanning crisis response to sustainable development. These approaches—including climate change adaptation, mitigation, and recovery—are critical to generating inclusive green jobs and ensuring that no one is left behind. In addition, strengthening South-South partnerships enables more effective knowledge exchange, transfer of experience, and coordinated action.

The ILO's (International Labour Organization) Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) has implemented a wide range of projects valued at over \$365 million across

Asia-Pacific and the Arab States in the past 15 years, addressing unemployment, responding to geo-political crises and climate-related natural disasters. It integrates participatory and local resource-based methods, income generation, capacity-building, gender inclusion, and sustainability.

In Asia-Pacific, the EIIP projects typically offer emergency employment to address post-natural disaster situations, targeting the most vulnerable populations, and tackling poverty through local resource-based approaches. They predominantly focus on climate change, unemployment and urbanization, with activities involving community-based works, rural roads, irrigation and other key basic assets, services and infrastructure.

EIIP projects in the Arab States, where unemployment levels are currently higher than during the pandemic, were launched on a larger scale following the Arab spring in response to the refugee crisis providing emergency employment in host communities through reconstruction of public works and have become a model for inclusive employment in national public works programmes.

The forum taps into 55 years' experience of applying employment intensive investment approaches and technologies to address unemployment and underemployment through public investments, mostly in the development of infrastructure and environmental works. It has succeeded in supporting Member States in the creation of jobs, skills learning and business opportunities for the most vulnerable and marginalised communities and individuals including women, youth, persons with disabilities and indigenous people. It has also assisted in lifting millions of people out of poverty and building community resilience





to climate shocks and natural disasters. It offers an integrated cross cutting approach including employment impact assessments, training and institutional capacity development and support to national public employment programmes and public works programmes (PEPs and PWPs).

The ILO places strong and strategic emphasis on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) as a powerful modality for advancing its mandate, implementing the Decent Work Agenda, and achieving sustainable development goals. SSTC is more than a mechanism—it is a transformative approach that enables countries of the Global South to share solutions, co-create knowledge, and leverage each other's experiences in tackling common labour market challenges. By aligning the SSTC framework with the Decent Work Agenda, the ILO promotes fair, inclusive, and sustainable labour practices through peer-to-peer learning, solidarity, and mutual benefit.

Within this framework, the ILO actively facilitates the exchange of good practices, the transfer of innovative approaches, and the development of robust partnerships with governments and institutions across regions. The principles of SSTC naturally align with EIIP, which emphasizes on the use of local resources (including knowledge, skills and services) and a participatory method that not only connects communities, workers, employers, and governments, but also empowers local partners to participate in the decision making processes on issues that affect their livelihoods. When integrated, SSTC and EIIP approaches can serve as a powerful catalyst for inclusive economic growth and job creation, particularly in the Global South.

The forum is a result of a collaborative effort between two Regional ILO Offices, Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States, through a South-South Cooperation funding facility managed by the ILO PARTNERSHIPS Department. The Forum was spearheaded by the Regional EIIP Specialists in Asia and the Arab States and supported by Employment in Investments Branch (EMPINVEST), International Training Centre (ITCITO Turin) and the ILO Dhaka Country Office.

► Forum Objective and Outcome

Forum Objective

To strengthening South-South partnerships for employment-intensive crisis response and sustainable development as nations in the Global South face climate change induced natural disasters, conflicts, and economic downturns, regional cooperation becomes vital. This forum facilitated peer-to-peer learning among policymakers, technical officials, social partners and development partners from Asia, the Pacific and the Arab States, focusing on employment-intensive approaches for crisis response and climate adaptation works for sustainable development. The forum was also aimed at enhancing the integration of employment-intensive investments into national policies and programs while fostering new South-South partnerships for knowledge transfer and collaboration.

Forum Focus

The forum was structured around three main outcome areas, outlined as follows:

- **Panel discussions and case studies:** Sharing experiences and best practices in EIIP implementation across Asia-Pacific and the Arab States. Exploring practical applications of EIIP in crisis response, recovery and green job creation.
- **Field visits:** Observing rural community projects with a focus on training and labour-intensive construction, local employment and local economic development.
- **Networking:** Strengthening South-South partnerships and developing action plans for mainstreaming employment intensive approaches.

Key Takeaways

Outcome Area 1 Better understanding of EIIP and its application and potential for scaling: Participants gained an enhanced understanding of the EIIP concept and its application in community projects and crisis response, environmental works and development of long-term policies and plans, and mainstreaming social and environmental safeguards. Resource materials shared by the ILO and participants offer a wealth of information.

Outcome Area 2 Peer-to-Peer Learning: Panel discussions, group work and field visits highlighted good practices, innovations, institutional arrangements contributing to a better and common understanding of the potential of the approach, including 1) key elements of a successful national PEPs, 2) involving communities in road maintenance, 3) EIIP



Nepal © Marcel Crozet/ILO

as a tool for effective refugee response and entry point in post-crisis linking emergency employment with longer term development objectives, 4) EIIP suitability for environmental works and bio-engineering, 5) involvement of private farmers in developing agricultural infrastructure and 6) good practices on information communication technology (ICT) for planning and monitoring of PEPs/PWPs.

Outcome Area 3 Strengthened South-South partnerships: Country delegations agreed to follow-up bilaterally on issue of common interest, e.g. on EIIP application for refugee management, sharing of ICT tools to enhance planning and monitoring of PEPs/PWPs, comparing of technical guidelines, institutional arrangements and capacity building for greater impact and sustainability of interventions. ILO was tasked to facilitate further knowledge exchange and bilateral meetings amongst countries and continue to carry out research, developing technical guidelines and collating and sharing of best practices. It was suggested that the regional forum should become a recurring event.

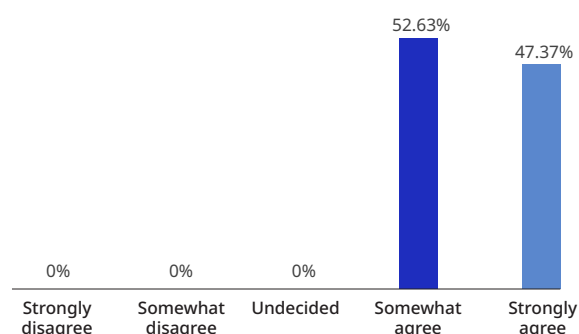
Participants' feedback

A survey was launched following the forum to gauge participants key takeaways, to obtain constructive feedback and to facilitate follow-up activities. All respondents agreed that the forum objective, topics and discussions were relevant and that the outcomes will be beneficial in their daily work. Some results below.

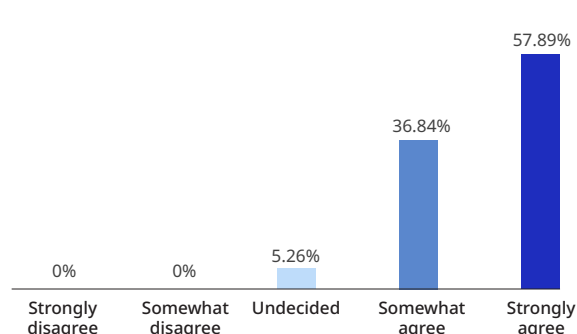
Other key takeaways and feedback from participants included:

- **The power of cross-regional collaboration:** Recognizing that despite geographical and cultural differences, regions such as Asia and the Arab States can benefit from shared knowledge, fostering innovative approaches to issues like sustainability, climate change, and technology integration. The practical examples and field visits showed that employment-intensive projects can effectively build stronger, more resilient communities.
- **Capacity building:** The importance of training and developing local expertise to ensure long-term success in the adoption of new technologies, policies, and practices.
- **Tailored solutions:** Learning that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work in EIIP development, and solutions need to be tailored to the specific needs of each region, considering both local contexts and global trends.
- **Interdisciplinary approaches:** Emphasizing that solutions to complex issues require an interdisciplinary approach, involving government, private sector, civil society, and academia as well as an integrated approach in the planning, implementation and monitoring of EI works.
- **Forum duration and format:** The duration was short and did not allow for in-depth dialogue between participants. Future events could benefit from more interactive formats e.g. hands-on application or case studies, polls, sector-specific roundtables and more breakout groups.
- **Follow up:** Participants agreed that a similar face-to-face South-South event should be organized in the future. In the short term it would be important to firm up and operationalize strategies for cross-team collaboration and funding opportunities that bring South to South collaborations, technical innovations, improved gender strategies and digital monitoring into action.

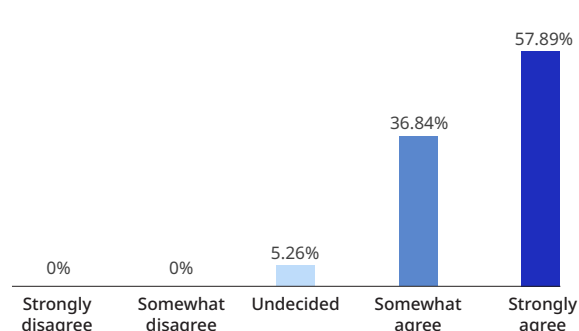
The forum objective, topics and discussions were relevant to my daily work and met my expectations



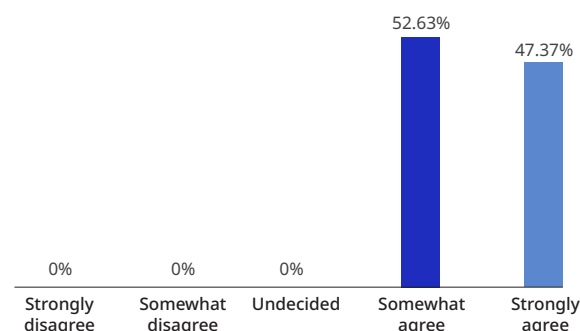
I have a better understanding and appreciation of ILO's Employment Intensive Investment Programme



I learnt something new that I believe will be of benefit to myself and/or my institution



The forum exchange and outcome will help me advance EIIP/PEP/PWP in my institution/country





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► Proceedings

Opening Session

The LGED Chief Engineer **Abdur Rashid Miah** formally opened the event, which also included statements from the ILO Dhaka Country Director **Tuomo Poutiainen** and Representatives from Workers' and Employers' organisations **Badal Khan NCCWE** and **Tahmid Ahmed BEF** as well as remarks by **Anastasiia Pavlova** on behalf of ILO PARTNERSHIPS Department: these were followed by a scene setting by **Mito Tsukamoto** Branch Chief ILO EMPINVEST and an introduction and overview of LGED by the host, delivered by Additional Chief Engineer **Anowar Hossain**.

The LGED Chief Engineer **Abdur Rashid Miah** welcomed participants from 19 countries in Asia and the Arab States, noting the forum as a diverse and strategic gathering to address employment, infrastructure, and crisis resilience, and noted with appreciation the collaboration between ILO, LGED, and other partners, which made the forum possible. In his speech, Eng. **Abdur Rashid Miah** said:

"In the face of climate change, disasters and socio-economic shocks, countries in the global South have much to learn from each other, especially from the ILO approach which emphasizes employment generation through public investment in infrastructure developments." He also emphasised on the need for regional cooperation and said:

"Through South-South technical cooperation we look forward, for example, to learn from India, Indonesia and the Philippines more on disaster response; from Lebanon and Jordan on integrating employment in conflict affected areas; and from Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan on water management and irrigation infrastructure, areas highly relevant to our own climate resilience efforts."

ILO Country Director in Bangladesh **Tuomo Poutiainen**, in his part, emphasised that South-South cooperation

energizes job creation but cautioned on the need to ensure that EIIPs address not only employment and economic concerns but also the environmental and social ones by embracing decent work. He reinforced the message of inclusiveness as central to the UN's four core mandates, of which ILO is a key part and highlighted the critical role of the Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) in promoting inclusive development and expects the forum would serve as a catalyst for new relationships, not just knowledge exchange.

The Vice-President of the Bangladesh Employers' Federation **Tahmid Ahmed** said: *"Employment intensive investment programmes have proven to be an effective strategy for creating jobs, fostering economic resilience and driving social progress. We must also emphasize collaboration to face global challenges such as climate change."* He noted that EIIP plays a strategic role in both development and crisis recovery, and its integration into national employment policies is essential. He further noted that private sector engagement is crucial for the success and scale-up of EIIP and called for enhanced collaboration across governments, employers, workers, and development partners to address global employment challenges.

Workers' representative and Chairman of the National Coordination Committee for Workers' Welfare in Bangladesh, **Badal Khan** affirmed the importance of the EIIP approach to countering high unemployment and underemployment rates in Bangladesh and beyond. He noted that greater investment is needed in labour-intensive sectors, especially informal and care economy sectors where vulnerable workers can benefit. Workers call for continuity and scale-up of ILO-supported initiatives, with an emphasis on local implementation and long-term vision.

Anastasiia Pavlova from ILO PARTNERSHIPS Department emphasized the strategic value of the forum, a platform for international dialogue, a space for mutual learning and a catalyst for collaboration among countries driving the SSTC agenda. She concluded that *"a successful outcome is when participants take home practical ideas and connections that can support implementation in their countries - turning global expertise into local impact."*



► Setting the scene

Mito Tsukamoto
EMPINVEST Branch Chief

Mito Tsukamoto provided an overview of the Global Context and Challenges. She indicated that the world continues to face Decent work deficits, growing informality, and jobless growth increased unemployment (over 200 million) and informal employment (55–80% in some countries) with 780 million workers living on less than \$2/day resulting in growing poverty, inequality, and gender wage gaps. She further highlighted the worsening climate disasters and conflicts causing economic stress and displacement rising concerns about shrinking fiscal space and foreign aid, with major cuts from the US, EU, and others, and stated that unemployment, lack of job security, environmental degradation, and inequality are the root causes of conflict.

Mito Tsukamoto reiterated that the ILO and the EIIP have been supporting governments for over 55 years to develop job-rich, inclusive infrastructure, bridge the gap between humanitarian and development needs to promote rights-based, locally grounded approaches. EIIP is distinct from short-term cash-for-work models, it focuses on decent wages, occupational safety and health, gender equality, sustainable asset creation and systems and national ownership with emphasis on local resource-based (LRB) approaches, employment impact assessments, GIS and data-driven planning tools, training and capacity building for civil society and local contractors MSME support, green works, and climate-smart infrastructure.

Mito Tsukamoto emphasized that *"jobs are the solution"* to environmental, social, and economic recovery - and must be kept at the center of all interventions. She further stated that EIIP is a mature and proven ILO programme, that supports a holistic, cross-sectoral approach with strong experience in crisis recovery, national capacity building, and long-term resilience and concluded with a strong call for regional ownership and regular EIIP knowledge-sharing platforms in Asia-Pacific and the Arab States, inspired by Africa's successful model with the Ethiopian Government hosting its 20th Regional Seminar in May 2025. The last Seminar in Rwanda attracted over 1000 participants and Ministers and their representatives from 17 countries.



► LGED history and current work

Eng. Anowar Hossain
Additional Chief Engineer

Eng. Anowar Hossain provided an overview of LGED. Local Government Engineering Department (of the Ministry of Local Government and Cooperatives) established in the 1960's has evolved over time with over 13,000 staff, with presence at all levels in Bangladesh (77% at local level). LGED is a driver of Local Infrastructure and Development Plans and implements infrastructure nationwide. LGED supports participatory development planning across rural, urban and water sectors for improved service access, focusing on socio-economic development, equal empowerment of men and women, labour-intensive climate resilient infrastructure and disaster response.

The Additional Chief Engineer stated that infrastructure investments, when inclusive and labour-intensive, can be a transformative solution to poverty and inequality, and that sectoral diversification (e.g., care, green economy, digital economy) is essential for long-term job creation. He further recognized ILO's legacy in pioneering local resource-based approaches and integrated rural accessibility tools and the use of GIS and data systems to guide project planning, and the value of South-South knowledge exchange fostering South-South collaboration and mutual learning.

Thematic Area 1

This area explored the relevance of EIIP across the Arab States and Asia-Pacific, highlighting its implementation scope from project-based approaches to large-scale national programs. With a wealth of regional experience, the focus was on cross-learning opportunities, the history and concepts of EIIP, successful projects and national programmes, and the potential for South-South collaboration.

Key reflections & Recommendations:

- EIIP is a highly relevant, flexible tool for both Arab and Asia-Pacific regions, contributing to social cohesion, climate resilience, and local economic development. The peer learning highlighted not only diverse applications but also the shared value of inclusive, labour-based infrastructure development.
- The approach is especially impactful where formal employment options are scarce, leveraging public infrastructure projects to generate decent work. At the same time, it was emphasised to engage social partners (e.g., trade unions) in safeguarding rights and enhancing outreach.
- South-South Technical Cooperation (SSTC) is instrumental in facilitating mutual learning, capacity development and collaboration across similar contexts.

Thematic Area 2

Covered EIIP strategies, tools and training for crisis response and climate adaptation works, the session delved into employment-based interventions for natural disasters, conflicts, refugee crises, and economic downturns in Asia-Pacific and the Arab States. It highlighted peer learning, employment aspects in damage assessment, climate adaptation measures, and SSTC partnerships for crisis recovery funding.

Key reflections & Recommendations:

- EIIP is adaptable to diverse development contexts: post-conflict/crisis recovery, poverty alleviation, and climate resilience. The EIIP approach has proven to be highly effective in integrating the ILO mandate within the framework of the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus (HDPN) in varying levels depending on national and local contexts and the programme's strength lies in its community-based, participatory approach, ensuring ownership, sustainability, and trust-building.
- There is a need to integrate EIIP implementation model in any climate change response to generate jobs that conserve the environment and help communities to adapt to climate change, and employment must be central early on in any crisis response. It is therefore essential to strengthening partnerships with several national, local, and international partners involved in crisis response and mitigation, through joint programming and resource mobilization for collective outcomes.

Thematic Area 3

Focused on long-term recovery and reconstruction through employment-intensive and local resource-based approaches, exploring climate-resilient design, inclusive strategies, and environmental and social safeguards.

Including institutional capacity building, effective procurement, training for public and private sector actors, and financing opportunities for green works.

Key reflections & Recommendations:

- LRB technologies are effective tools for inclusive recovery, job creation, and climate adaptation. There would be great benefit to exchange further information around various implementation models and institutional arrangements adopted in the different countries. We must encourage South-South and Triangular Cooperation to share tools, institutional frameworks, and innovative technologies.
- Sustainability requires capacity development, policy support, and cross-sector partnerships. There is opportunity for learning from countries that have institutionalised training within recognized government and professional systems and with certifications that will ensure sustainability.



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Thematic Area 4

This area examined national Public Works Programs and Public Employment Programmes (PWP/PEP), their structure, impact, and role in poverty alleviation, climate adaptation, and crisis response. Topics included program setup (rationale, political will, fiscal space, challenges), institutional capacity, targeting beneficiaries, wage policies, activity selection, and accountability frameworks.

Key Reflections & Recommendations:

- **“Three Cs” for Effective Public Employment Programmes:** (i) **Community** – engage local communities in planning and design, inclusivity, targeting the most vulnerable, and monitoring, (ii) **Convergence** – link PWP/PEP with broader policies (e.g., social protection, skills, climate adaptation), and (iii) **Credibility** – ensure transparency, impact, and data-backed decisions to build trust and scale.
- Other key considerations: (iv) **climate resilience** should be a central design principle for infrastructure, (v) **social dialogue** must be strengthened - ILO's tripartite model (governments, employers, workers) was emphasized, and always (vi) **ensuring decent work standards**, timely wage payments, and safe working conditions, as noted in the trade union intervention.
- **Use of Technology and Integrated Data Systems** for beneficiary mapping and registration, GIS mapping and monitoring, etc: India's suite of digital tools for asset management (OMMAS), GIS mapping (GeoSadak) M&E (e-Marg) and citizen Feedback (Meri Sadak App) was highlighted as a model for South-South learning.

Group Discussion

Groups were formed around the thematic areas to identify relevance of the EIIP approach for the regions, key take aways from the sessions, opportunities identified for South-South experience sharing and learning and how the ILO can support in the future.

The EIIP approach is relevant to the regions because it addresses

- **Unemployment, underemployment, social exclusion, skills gaps and decent work deficits**, which is a priority for the regions characterized by rural poverty, a high portion of vulnerabilities, unemployment, gender disparities and lack of social security schemes.
- **Infrastructure deficits** through the development and maintenance of important community and agricultural infrastructure using available local resources, such as rural road, irrigation schemes and water supply etc.
- **Environmental degradation** by promoting natural resource management through public works, e.g. afforestation/reforestation, watershed management, use of bio-engineering, preservation of cultural heritage etc.
- **Crisis response** in regions affected by conflict, natural disasters and economic downturn by operating in the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus, linking emergency employment with longer term development, focusing on a human-centered approach where employment is at the core of the response, with ILO's unique tripartite structure being a strength for involving labour-market actors through social dialogue.

Key takeaways from group discussions

- **EIIP approach is cross cutting**: and more effective when implemented as an integrated programme. It would be important to build national ownership among governments to take EIIP forward, e.g. by mainstreaming EIIP through existing infrastructure and public works programmes, noting that EIIP is cross cutting and goes well beyond infrastructure ministries and the approach should be adopted on a broader scale and **coordinated between implementing partners and relevant government entities – particularly in crisis response where many actors are involved**.
- **LBT (labour-based technology) is appropriate**: for rural and agricultural infrastructure and environmental works such as roads, irrigation and water supply, watershed management etc. with local material usually available for construction and applied to various degree by most countries. It was emphasised never to compromise on quality and most countries have adequate quality assurance systems in place.

- **LBT creates decent work**: Construction and maintenance create direct and indirect employment. In India, rural roads programme approximately 25% of the cost goes to labour with wages around 6-7 USD per day whereas these statistics vary for other countries. **It would be useful therefore with more studies around direct and indirect employment generation in such programmes**. Road maintenance in particular is suitable for longer term employment generation and community participation, with countries employing various forms of community-based approaches, as exemplified by Nepal's Road Maintenance Groups (RMG), and Bangladesh Local Construction Societies (LCS), which include a savings component. **It would be useful to study these approaches for regional comparison and develop further guidance**.
- **Innovative approaches where LBT can be applied**: research into indigenous materials for construction, e.g. the use of bamboo in construction, recycling of construction and waste plastic for road construction etc. Further dissemination of experience such as trail bridge construction in Nepal, community contracting and to further work to incorporating digital solutions for LBT.
- **Capacity development and skills training for EIIP is crucial**: however, training needs must be assessed, local skills gaps identified, and training customized to the target groups. Training must be provided at all levels, e.g. national, provincial and local levels and designed for relevant implementers including government officials, contractors, beneficiaries, workers and site supervisors, etc.
- **Training topics needs to include the whole project cycle**: and needs to be expanded to include climate resilience, inclusion and gender sensitivity, tender documents, costing and drafting of bids, and there should be a focus on **Training of Trainers (ToT) to maximise training outcomes**.
- **Expand the use of digital technology**: Many countries have developed sophisticated digital systems for e.g. asset management, monitoring and reporting, beneficiary feedback and early warning etc. The importance of knowledge transfer of digital solutions was highlighted and suggestions to **map digital platforms for replication and adaptation**.
- **Key elements of a successful PWP/PEP**: India's MGNREGA highlighted as a successful case, an employment guarantee scheme with no exclusion criteria, which has provided a safety net for millions of people, with a comprehensive real-time digital monitoring system in place. In Bangladesh and Philippines there is a limitation in terms of budget and



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beneficiary selection criteria becomes a very important element. Countries such as Iraq which are looking at the possibilities of establishing a national PWP can learn from these and other countries in the region. The importance of an exit strategy for beneficiaries from such schemes was noted, e.g. coupled with skills training and convergence with other development initiatives.

SSTC opportunities identified by participants

The most immediate activity for SSTC is to continue bilateral and multilateral knowledge exchange and technology transfer between countries, including sharing of best practices and innovations, publications and guidelines, organising of study tours and seminars. A specific interest was identified around how to mainstream and institutionalise EIIP development approach (including through PWP/PEPs) and sharing of technical expertise including to map digital platforms for replication and adaptation. The benefit of in-person meeting and networking was acknowledged and suggestion to establish this forum as a recurring event.

Specific activities for South-South Cooperation may include

- **Bangladesh/Countries in the Middle East** collaborating on refugee management through EIIP;
- **India/Bangladesh/Nepal/Pakistan/TL** advancing rural road management approaches and innovative approaches for rural road construction and maintenance;
- **India/Iraq** study tour to learn about MGNREGA for development of PWP in Iraq;
- **Iraq/Afghanistan** collaborating on using EIIP for cultural heritage restoration and/or preservation;
- **Myanmar/Afghanistan** sharing experiences on conflict sensitive approaches working in a fragile environment with no recognized government; working with and through civil society and social partners;
- **Philippines/Sri Lanka** could provide more information on the community development and water management approach.
- **Afghanistan** can offer information on EIIP work in the HDPN; Social Safeguards Guidelines developed for use by the UN system in Afghanistan;
- **Bangladesh** LGED model, i.e. labour-intensive climate resilient infrastructure and disaster response; construction skills training; LCS for off-pavement maintenance targeting vulnerable women;
- **Cambodia** can share experience of an integrated LRB/TVET project approach;
- **India** has developed advanced ICT for management of PWPs and PEPs; MGNREGA as a model for employment guarantee schemes;
- **Iraq** experience of involving trade unions in employment monitoring;
- **Jordan** model for capacitating government to accessing international funding directly; Jordan model for institutional LRB training with Engineering Association;
- **Lebanon** institutional model of involving private farmers in developing agricultural infrastructure; Lebanon model for identification and diversification of LRB to a variety of construction sectors;
- **Nepal** has developed a system of Road Maintenance Groups for labour-based maintenance; Nepal has developed extensive experience and skills in trails and mountain bridges;
- **PNG** has developed a GIS based Road Transport Information Management System (RoTIMS); LBT in value chain approach;



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Groups identified how ILO can support

- **Facilitate knowledge sharing:** develop and maintain a knowledge sharing platform, collate and disseminate good practices, organise and support knowledge sharing events, mapping of key actors and develop a community of practice, mapping digital platforms for replication and adaptation.
- **Technical:** support in undertaking studies, development of technical guidelines and manuals [e.g. use of waste plastic in roads, community contracting, key indicators for monitoring of employment and environmental impact, key essentials around PWP/PEPs including decent work and formalization, innovative applications for LBT including digitization], prepare policy advice based on best practices and lessons learned as well as encouraging and facilitating social dialogue around EIIP.
- **Training:** capacity building for government partners to take EIIP efforts forward in a sustainable manner, maintain a pool/roster of ILO consultants and experts and make available to constituents, localise existing training materials to country context and language countries, offer Training of Trainers to maximise impact.
- **Resource mobilisation,** e.g. support government partners in reaching out to international financial institutions (IFIs) and development partners (DPs) for fund raising, provide seed funding for research and training and development of concept notes.

Field Visits

On the last day participants were treated to field visits courtesy LGED, in and around Gazipur, about a 2hr drive from the venue. Four different sites had been prepared including school construction, market construction, off pavement maintenance and a visit to LGED Constructions school. The visits were informative and appreciated by the participants.



► Construction Skill Training Centre (CSTC) Local Government Engineering Department

CSTC in Rajendrapur was launched in March 2021, with the objective of empowering the workforce for resilient and sustainable infrastructure development focusing on masonry, rod binding, shuttering, and tile fitting. CSTC provides free, hands-on training to youths from remote areas with project support. CSTC has to-date trained over 500 individuals in masonry works, rod binding, and road construction.

Training is currently provided through PROVATIS Project with IFAD funding. However, institutionalizing CSTC requires experienced staff and adequate budget allocations and the establishment of a Central Training Academy with modern facilities, expansion of available trades and a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track trainees progress and impact. In terms of sustainability of training outcomes, CSTC offers nationally and internationally recognised certificate provided by BTEB/ NSDA, Job Placement regular job fairs to promote job linkages for students.

CSTC is looking to develop more advanced modules for emerging technologies and online modules for wider accessibility and to establish partnerships with industry leaders for practical training and job placements and international partners such as the ILO for research and curricula development and explore joint initiatives for job placements and labour market integration.



► Routine Maintenance (Off Pavement) through Local Construction Society (LCS)

Local Government Engineering Department

At the start of each fiscal year, from the allocation of revenue budget, one year maintenance schemes are selected on the basis of priority ranking guidelines. One particular objective of this program is to create employment opportunities, especially for destitute rural women, in line with the government's poverty alleviation strategies. In pursuit of this objective, destitute women residing in the vicinity of the maintenance-worthy roads are considered eligible for employment in this regard. The routine maintenance of off-pavement including shoulders, slopes, roadside tree plantations, surface water drainage channels and culverts is suited to labour intensive methods of working, requiring only a few basic hand-tools and limited technical expertise.

The local LGED engineer makes a primary list of female labourers (20 persons more or less) from the applicants and selects required number of labourers on the basis of verbal interview from primary list of suitable candidates. The female labourers are appointed purely on a temporary yearly contract basis for a period of maximum three years. The labourers to be working on the road are to form themselves into a group (LCS) and elect one chairperson and a secretary to represent them and sign the contract for one year on their behalf on the standard form of contract.

One Supervisor is engaged for every 15-20 maintenance labourers to supervise day-to-day works for off-pavement maintenance in the field. The Supervisor is either male or female member from the locality engaged by the local LGED Engineer. The Engineer arranges training for all LCS workers including the Supervisor, including their roles and responsibilities, work tasks and management of workers and payments etc.

Each LCS worker and the maintenance supervisor have to save a certain amount from their wage and have to open an individual saving bank account. LCS worker's daily payment is 300 Taka and the supervisor's daily payment is 375 Taka and she/he is bound to savings deposit daily 100 Taka to her/his respective bank account. Several of the beneficiaries have become self-reliant following the work and have started small businesses such as poultry business or running of a small grocery shop etc.



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► **Constructions of 2 classroom government primary school as part of the Fourth Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP4)**

The contract is executed by LGED through a local contractor, involving the local community for supply of skilled and unskilled workers, thereby also contributing to local employment generation and further skilling of workers. The total cost is around USD 54,000 and the contract duration about 1.5 years, with construction works including foundation, substructure, super structure roofing and MEP.

The Contractor is obliged to take all reasonable steps to safeguard the health and safety of all workers working on the site and take all reasonable steps to protect the environment on and off the site. The contractor must adhere to national labour laws, including wage payments and working conditions, gender inclusivity and protection against discrimination. After handing over the school building, maintenance will be the responsibility of the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE).



► **Construction of two-storey rural market building 376.48 Sqm (with four-storey Foundation) and water reservoir**

The market is constructed to technical specifications by local contractor employing skilled and unskilled labourers from the community. Decent working conditions such as labour safety, wages and working hours etc are included in the contract document, adhering to national legislation. The estimated cost is USD 176,589 and construction time one year. The new market will provide safe and hygienic shopping environment, improved livelihood and increase community resilience for rural market users. The market construction will generate both short and long-term employment opportunities and increased income-generating opportunities for the local community and local businessmen. To ensure sustainability, all building maintenance and management responsibilities will be handed over to Market Community following proper awareness-raising and training. To secure gender balance and equity, a number of market stalls will be earmarked and allocated to businesswomen.

► Analysis of Country Cases presented during the forum

Across a range of contexts, South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) initiatives have shown how employment-focused approaches can contribute to stability, inclusion, and local development. In Yemen, the Public Works Project has enabled people - particularly displaced individuals and women - to actively participate in reconstruction efforts, restoring not only infrastructure but also a sense of purpose and belonging. These labour-intensive projects have become a bridge to social cohesion in communities disrupted by conflict.

In Nepal, the Green Roads initiative and adopting labour-based approaches has played a pivotal role in bringing women into rural infrastructure work. With a majority of the road maintenance groups composed of women, the programme has supported more than just road connectivity - it has enabled women to participate more actively in public life and community governance. This approach demonstrates how inclusive employment models can shift gender norms while meeting development goals.

Afghanistan presents a different but equally instructive case. With limited public institutional capacity, local entrepreneurship supported through SSTC has become a key source of resilience. Involving chambers of commerce and business networks, employment opportunities are being created even in uncertain conditions. These examples underscore the relevance of employment as an entry point for rebuilding not only economies but also public trust and engagement.

In Cambodia, Lebanon, Jordan and Yemen, gender inclusion has emerged as a cross-cutting benefit of SSTC-supported initiatives, even when not explicitly framed as such. Cambodia's integration of green skills into vocational training has opened pathways for women into sectors like construction and renewable energy. The TVET system has enabled women to gain technical knowledge and improve their access to formal employment. Similarly, in Lebanon, reforestation and agro-ecological restoration projects have promoted women's participation in both planning and implementation, helping foster more inclusive rural development models.

In Jordan, 1.4 million workerdays have been created through labour-based work, of which 25% have been for women and 4% have been for people with disabilities. For 70% of the women this was their first job experience. Infrastructure projects have been coupled with investment in training and upskilling and beneficiaries who received training found a job, waged or self-employment within three months of completing the course. The programme has also had a positive impact of building trust amongst women and men, Jordanians and refugees, in the community.

In Yemen, where opportunities for women in public life remain limited, training and engaging women as contractors in the construction sector has challenged existing norms and offered new avenues for income and empowerment. These cases highlight how development programmes, when designed with sensitivity to context, can support gender transformation and economic inclusion without needing to carry a specific gender label.

In settings where formal governance is fragmented or weak, local systems - whether tribal, ethnic, or regional - often take the lead in shaping development outcomes. In Myanmar, organizations rooted in ethnic communities have led project implementation in conflict-affected regions. Their role in managing development activities ensures greater legitimacy and responsiveness to local dynamics. In Papua New Guinea, infrastructure initiatives have worked through tribal structures to extend services to remote communities while helping reduce tensions. Employment creation has played a dual role here - boosting incomes while reinforcing social ties.

The Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh) presents complex socio-economic challenges, but strategic interventions have enhanced livelihood opportunities for both the communities - balancing immediate humanitarian needs with long-term development. By promoting mutually beneficial employment, entrepreneurship, sustainable infrastructure, agricultural development, and community-driven programs, both communities can benefit from shared economic growth.

Timor-Leste's experience with community-led disaster resilience in rural and mountainous areas illustrates how decentralization can be shaped not only by political realities but also by geography. Local participation in infrastructure planning has helped ensure that interventions are tailored to both topographical and social conditions. These examples point to the value of aligning development with existing governance arrangements and community priorities.

Environmental restoration has also emerged as a key area where SSTC initiatives are delivering tangible results. In Sri Lanka, communities are reviving traditional irrigation systems that not only improve agricultural productivity but also reconnect people with cultural and ecological heritage. In Lebanon, land restoration efforts are generating green jobs while rehabilitating ecosystems damaged by conflict and climate change. These programmes have shown how environmental goals and economic resilience can be pursued together, particularly when women and youth are central to implementation.

Pakistan's integration of green jobs into its climate adaptation efforts further illustrates how environmental policy can support inclusive employment. Through partnerships and experience-sharing with neighbouring countries, these initiatives are creating new livelihood options while tackling urgent climate challenges.

India's large scale national rural road programme generates million of workerdays and has massive impact on economic development for rural communities as these are connected. The programme emphasises quality and environmental sustainability, developing and implementing new innovative environmentally friendly technologies. New digital technology, such as GIS mapping and real-time beneficiary feedback applications (apps) improve planning, implementation, monitoring and accountability.

India's MGNREGA impacts the lives of the poor and promotes inclusive growth in rural India. The employment guarantee scheme mandates social inclusion, and a core principle is women's empowerment. In FY24-25, the scheme generated 2.8 billion workerdays, 58% for women. The scheme has over the years transformed from a simple safety net into a powerful engine for positive change in rural India. A central focus of the scheme is on developing livelihoods through the creation of productive assets directly linked to agriculture and natural resource management. An advanced MIS has been put in place for management and accountability.

In the Philippines, the safety net interventions aim to reduce poverty and vulnerability of individuals to risks and provides safety net to the disadvantaged workers aged 18 years old and above, through engagement in short-term wage employment for a period of 10 to 90 days in various works that would contribute to disaster risk-mitigation, recovery and rehabilitation, climate change mitigation, promotion of food security, and tourism, among others.

Similarly, Indonesia is implementing a public employment programme where the labour-intensive work is meant to accelerate the elimination of extreme poverty, provide temporary income to most vulnerable who are employed in labour-intensive activities, to provide essential facilities and infrastructure and to increase the social-economic level of the community in extreme poor areas, while Iraq is developing a Road Map for the establishment and operationalization of a National Public Works Programme which aims to align, control, and direct government spending to create employment opportunities within a programme that builds capacities and channels them towards infrastructure development.

Together, these examples illustrate how SSTC, when grounded in local contexts and priorities, can deliver development outcomes that are inclusive, sustainable, and replicable. Whether through employment creation, gender inclusion, community-led governance, environmental restoration or national employment and public works programmes, the strength of SSTC lies in its ability to adapt solutions to shared challenges while promoting mutual learning among partner countries.

► **Resource Material**

All resource material has been uploaded to ITCILO eCampus, including

EIIP briefs (4), also available on [Employment-intensive Investment Programme Inter-regional forum for Asia and the Arab States | International Labour Organization](#)

Session Input Papers (4), also available on [Employment-intensive Investment Programme Inter-regional forum for Asia and the Arab States | International Labour Organization](#)

EIIP SSTC Peer Learning Guide, also available on [Employment-intensive Investment Programme Inter-regional forum for Asia and the Arab States | International Labour Organization](#)

Country Input [Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, PNG, Philippines, OPT, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Yemen]

Presentations [Mito Tsukamoto (Intro), Anowar Hossain (LGED), Martha Espano (T1), Maha Kattaa (T2), Andreas Beusch (T3), Sumar Majumder (T4), Field visit (CSTC)]

► Annex 1 Agenda

Arrival, 7 April 2025, Check in from 14.00	
18.00 – 20.00	Dinner
Day 1, 8 April 2025	
8.00 – 9.00	Registration
9.00 – 9.30	Introductory session
	Welcome by Master of Ceremony, Objectives & Housekeeping, Mr Joel Alcocer ITCILO & Ms Anastasiia Pavlova ILO PARTNERSHIPS, ILO Dhaka Country Director Introductory Remarks, Mr Tuomo Poutiainen, Workers Representative Mr Badal khan, General Secretary BJSJ & Chairman NCCWE Employers Representative Mr Tahmid Ahmed, Vice-President BEF LGED Chief Engineer Introductory Remarks Mr Abdur Rashid Miah.
9.30 – 9.45	Global socio-economic trends & ILO response through the Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) and South-South cooperation
	Ms Mito Tsukamoto ILO Geneva, EMPINVEST Branch Chief
9.45 – 10.00	Overview of LGED and current activities
	Mr Md. Anowar Hossain, Addl Chief Engineer, Monitoring, Audit, Procurement & ICT Unit LGED
10.00 – 10.30	Health Break & Group Photo
10.30 – 12.00	T1: EIIP What makes EIIP relevant to our regions, a peer learning exchange (Panel & Q&A)
	Introduction of Presenter/Moderator and Panel: Mr Joel Alcocer; Presentation – setting the scene: Ms Martha Espano & Ms Anastasiia Pavlova, ILO Geneva; Panel Discussion: Moderator, Ms Martha Espano, Panel officials from Iraq, Sri Lanka and Philippines; Questions and input from the floor; Summary, conclusion and action points: Ms Martha Espano.
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch
13.00 – 14.30	T2: Rapid crisis response through EIIP, and a Global South approach (Panel & Q&A)
	Introduction of Presenter/Moderator and Panel: Joel Alcocer; Presentation – setting the scene: Ms Maha Kattaa ILO Iraq; Panel Discussion: Moderator, Ms Maha Kattaa, Panel officials from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan; Questions and input from the floor; Summary, conclusion and action points: Ms Maha Kattaa.
14.30 – 15.00	Health Break
15.00 – 16.30	T3a: EIIP and Local resource-based technologies and approaches for recovery and development - Peer learning (Panel & Q&A)
	Introduction of Presenter/Moderator and Panel: Mr Joel Alcocer; Presentation – setting the scene: Mr Andreas Beusch ILO; Panel Discussion: Moderator, Mr Tomas Stenstrom, ILO India, Panel officials from Lebanon, Nepal, PNG and Timor-Leste; Questions and input from the floor; Summary, conclusion and action points: Mr Tomas Stenstrom.
16.30 – 17.00	Wrap up of Day 1
	Summary conclusions and action points: Mr Joel Alcocer
18.00 – 20.00	Dinner & Networking

Day 2, 9 April 2025	
8.00 – 8.30	Participant arrive to the hall
8.30 – 10.00	T3b: EIIP and Local resource-based technologies and approaches - capacity building and skills development – Global South approaches (Panel & Q&A)
	<i>Introduction of Presenter/Moderator and Panel: Mr Joel Alcocer; Presentation – setting the scene: Mr Andreas Beusch, Switzerland; Panel Discussion: Moderator, Mr Bashar Elsamarneh, ILO Iraq, Panel officials from Bangladesh, Cambodia and Jordan + ITCILO; Questions and input from the floor; Summary, conclusion and action points: Mr Bashar Elsamarneh.</i>
10.00 – 10.30	Health Break
10.30 – 12.00	T4: Government-led PWP/PEP against poverty, climate change & crisis - South-South perspectives (Panel & Q&A)
	<i>Introduction of Presenter/Moderator and Panel: Mr Joel Alcocer; Presentation – setting the scene: Mr Suman Majumdar, India; Panel Discussion: Moderator, Mr Maikel Lieuw-Kie-Song, Panel officials from India, Indonesia and the Philippines; Questions and input from the floor; Summary, conclusion and action points: Mr Maikel Lieuw-Kie-Song.</i>
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch
13.00 – 14.30	Group Work to enhance South-South cooperation – Identification of key challenges, opportunities and partnerships
	<i>Introduction to Group Work: Mr Joel Alcocer; Group 1: T1 What makes EIIP relevant to our regions Facilitators: Mr Arun Kumar, Ms Martha Espano, Ms Anastasiia Pavlova; Group 2: T2 Rapid crisis response through EIIP Facilitators: Ms Ruchika Bahl, Ms Maha Kattaa; Group 3: T3a EIIP and Local resource-based technologies Facilitators: Mr Tarek Jaber, Mr Tomas Stenstrom; Group 4: T3b EIIP Capacity building and skills development Facilitators: Mr Albert Uriyo, Mr Bashar Elsamarneh, Mr Andreas Beusch; Group 5: T4 Government-led PWP/PEP against poverty, climate change & crisis Facilitators: Ms Ruchira Chandra, Mr Maikel Lieuw-Kie-Song</i>
14.30 – 15.00	Health Break
	Presentation of Action Points by Groups (10 min per group)
	<i>Group 1, T1: Mr Arun Kumar/Participant; Group 2, T2: Ms Ruchika Bahl/Participant ; Group 3, T3a: Mr Tarek Jaber/Participant; Group 4, T3b: Mr Albert Uriyo/Participant; Group 5, T4: Ms Ruchira Chandra/Participant</i>
16.30 – 17.00	Wrap-up of Day 2 & Introduction to Field Visit
	<i>Summary, conclusions and action points: Mr Joel Alcocer & Mr Tomas Stenstrom LGED Field Visit Coordinator: Mr Alam Mahbub, LGED</i>
18.00 – 20.00	Dinner & Networking

Day 3, 10 April 2025	
8.00 – 10.00	Departure for Field Visits from BRAC Savar (4 buses)
10.00 – 16.00	Field Visits
	School Construction, Joynarionpur: <i>Md. Mahbub Alam, Superintending Engineer, PEIMU, LGED HQ</i>
	Observe LCS road maintenance on the way: <i>Md. Abdur Rahim, Superintending Engineer, Road Maintenance Section</i>
	Rural market construction, Gazipur: <i>Ms Sonia Nowrin, PD, GDRIDP</i>
	LGED Construction School (CSTC), Gazipur: <i>Md Rayhan Shiddique, Project Director, Provati & Muhammad Shafiqul Islam, Executive Engineer (Training)</i>
	Lunch at BRAC Rajendrapur
16.00 – 17.00	Closing Session – back in the Hotel
	<i>Feedback from Site Visits Selected Participants (3) Closing Remarks / Key Outcomes and Summary Action Points</i> <i>Mr Tomas Stenstrom ILO India, Ms Mito Tsukamoto, ILO Geneva, EMPINVEST Branch Chief Mr Md Sohrab Ali</i> <i>Additional Chief Engineer, LGED</i>
18.00 – 20.00	Dinner & Networking
Day 4, 11 April 2025, Departure	
Check-out before 12.00	

► Annex 2 List of Participants

International Participants

No	Country	Name	Institution	Position	Email/WhatsApp
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