



International
Labour
Organization

Employment-intensive
Investment Programme



EIIP SSTC

Inter-regional forum for Asia and the Arab States

8-10 April 2025, Savar, Bangladesh

TECHNICAL BRIEF

Thematic Area 1: What Makes Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) Relevant to our Regions?

Key points

► **Comprehensive Approach to Employment and Infrastructure:**

The Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) aligns with the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, evolving from rural development to diverse infrastructure projects. It integrates participatory and local resource-based methods, income generation, capacity-building, gender inclusion, and sustainability. Over the past decade, EIIP has implemented projects valued at over \$365 million across Asia and the Arab States, addressing employment challenges, crisis response, and climate change adaptation.

► **Impactful Projects and South-South Cooperation:**

The programme fosters South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) through peer learning, regional conferences, and workshops, promoting knowledge exchange and capacity building. This collaboration enhances the program's impact, addressing common challenges and promoting sustainable development.

Overview and History of EIIP

The EIIP aligns and directly contributes to the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

Its work has evolved from rural development to encompass a wide range of infrastructure projects, recognizing that construction activities can significantly contribute to economic and social development. The EIIP approach not only creates and maintains assets but also generates decent work opportunities. It integrates participatory and local resource-based (LRB) approaches, income generation, capacity-building, gender, inclusion and sustainability. Environmental and social safeguard policies and frameworks crosscut all activities.

Over the past decade, the EIIP has successfully implemented projects valued at over \$365 million across two regions.

The ILO Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS), established in 1976, saw EIIP begin in earnest in response to the Syrian refugee crisis in 2011. Meanwhile, the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), opened in 1966, has had EIIP active in the region since the 1980s. Throughout its five-decade history, the programme has developed a comprehensive suite of product lines addressing various thematic areas, complemented by support services in capacity development, technical assistance, policy formulation, and knowledge dissemination.

Conflict, instability, and the Syrian refugee crisis have exacerbated employment challenges in the Arab States, where high unemployment rates and low-skilled informal jobs fail to attract well-educated youth. In the Asia Pacific region, challenges include poverty, unemployment in densely populated countries and aging



International
Labour
Organization

Employment-intensive
Investment Programme



LGED



populations, compounded by climate change and natural disasters that exacerbate vulnerabilities and threaten key livelihoods.

In the Arab States EIIP contributes to HDPN by addressing immediate needs for short-term employment, supporting the most vulnerable populations, including refugees. Projects encompass housing, cultural heritage, irrigation and earthquake response, as well as rehabilitating infrastructure and public services to manage the influx of refugees. A multi-stakeholder approach fosters long-term ownership and integration of EIIP approaches into government policies. The embedded EIIP approach is crucial in fragile states, while collaboration with UN crisis frameworks remains essential.



©ILO Lebanon, 2018

EIIP projects in the Arab States typically begin with emergency employment initiatives and then transition to longer-term development efforts.

The construction of public assets and support for public works programmes contribute to sustainability, further bolstered by strengthening institutions and adopting EIIP guidelines and policies. These projects also integrate participatory approaches, social dialogue and capacity building, and aligning with national strategies and crisis response plans while enhancing self-reliance.

Asia Pacific EIIP projects address post-natural disaster situations and target the most vulnerable populations, tackling poverty through LRB approaches.

The region's shift from fragility has allowed a focus on climate change, unemployment and urbanization, with activities involving community-based works, irrigation and

key infrastructure. EIIP approaches have been institutionalised via Public Employment Programmes (PEPs) and community ownership is fostered by collaborating with non-government organizations (NGOs), government and constituents, using participatory approaches, embedding staff and providing institutional support.

EIIP approaches in the Asia Pacific have strengthened resilience to natural disasters and enhanced community stability.

The region has seen the nationalisation of EIIP approaches and the adoption of manuals and guidelines, with sustainability being a central focus. This includes utilizing local resources, local skills and green construction practices. Climate-proofing of improved infrastructure has ensured environmental sustainability, while alignment with national development strategies such as poverty reduction, has promoted social sustainability.



Post-Haiyan typhoon rehabilitation project, Busuanga, Palawan, Philippines, ©ILO Haiyan, 2015

Examples of recent EIIP projects

Projects in [Jordan](#) and [Iraq](#) support livelihoods through heritage conservation, tourism, and cultural skills. In Iraq, EIIP is creating jobs for young women and men while addressing the need for affordable green housing, promoting the EIIP approach as a model for a national Public Works Programme (PWP). In [Lebanon](#), EIIP is responding to the regional refugee crisis, by generating jobs for host communities and Syrian refugees. In [Syria](#),



International
Labour
Organization

Employment-intensive
Investment Programme



LGED



EIIP has addressed multiple earthquakes through debris removal, infrastructure rehabilitation, and training. In [Jordan](#), EIIP has expanded from cash-for-work initiatives to include agricultural, school and rural road infrastructure projects. In [Yemen](#), EIIP enhances women's access to community contracting through training and business support.

In [Afghanistan](#), EIIP operates under the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus (HDPN) framework to address both humanitarian and development needs. Since the 1990s, EIIP has been active in the [Philippines](#), recently implemented a water system project in Mindanao. In [Timor-Leste](#), EIIP started with ash-for-work initiatives, and has since collaborated with the government on the country's largest rural road development project. In [Papua New Guinea \(PNG\)](#), EIIP has recently responded to earthquakes, developed a reconstruction strategy, and supported rural entrepreneurship and trade. In [Cambodia](#), EIIP has recently aided migrant economic recovery through rural infrastructure projects, while in [Nepal](#), it has enhanced rural connectivity by upgrading and maintaining rural transport infrastructure.

Examples of South-South Collaboration

SSTC (South-South Technical Cooperation) refers to cooperation among developing countries to strengthen ties and address development challenges, while also supporting the ILO in achieving its mandate. From 2022 to 2023, the ILO conducted 28 SSTC activities and plans to carry out 14 more from 2024 to 2025. Regional EIIP conferences and forums have included a seminar in [Jordan](#) that brought together specialists from the Arab States to discuss EIIP regional strategies, regular regional seminars for labour-based practitioners, with the most recent held in [Rwanda](#) in 2023, and other regional seminars such as those in [Thailand](#) on pro-poor rural infrastructure and in [Bangladesh](#) on IRAP (Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning).

The ITCILO supports SSTC through [workshops that promote peer learning, with EIIP specialists sharing local knowledge](#). Also, it has also developed an e-learning course on green infrastructure investment. EIIP [Lebanon](#) recently supported a new project in [Syria](#), providing training in earthquake damage assessment. Members of the [Jordanian](#) government visited Green Plan farms with EIIP [Lebanon](#) to generate new concepts. [Jordanian](#) engineers have also trained local trainers from [Iraq](#),

[Jordan and Yemen](#) on cultural heritage conservation. In [Nepal](#), government members visited two EIIP [Timor-Leste](#) projects to discuss road construction and training. In the [Philippines](#), the Mindanao water supply project, participated in World Water Week, featuring a local indigenous leader.

Scope for further South-South collaboration

Modalities mechanism and opportunities for regional partnerships

The sub-modalities of the EIIP SSTC examples included in this paper focus on fragile-to-fragile cooperation and regional cooperation. However, other form of EIIP cooperation, such as city-to-city and cooperation between small island states, may have occurred over the last decade or earlier. All four SSTC mechanisms have been utilized. Despite significant differences between regions and the unique challenges faced by each country, [the similarities in the challenges and the types of EIIP activities recently implemented in both regions present an opportunity for partnership and cooperation](#).

A paper produced by the ILO in 2016 on trade and regional integration in Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States highlights the importance of implementing appropriate employment policies to ensure that regional integration leads to more inclusive outcomes. Promoting gender equality is crucial, and the differences between the two regions can also present opportunities for learning exchanges. Gender equality is a key issue in South Asia and the Arab States, as these regions have some of the highest gender gaps in labour force participation.

EIIP initiatives that could benefit from and expand the scope of other SSTC activities

EIIP has a significant presence in both regions, implementing numerous projects and accumulating decades of experience in addressing poverty, unemployment, and underemployment. This shared focus presents several opportunities for cross-regional partnerships, with [vulnerability to climate change](#) being a common issue – opening up opportunities for sharing experiences in green infrastructure. Another key issue is [access to safe water and sanitation](#). Activities in the [Philippines](#) and [Sri Lanka](#) have included the rehabilitation



International
Labour
Organization

Employment-intensive
Investment Programme



LGED



of water facilities, while in Lebanon water tanks and reservoirs have also been constructed.

EIIP and the ITCILO have decades of experience in organising regional conferences, planning technical workshops, and bringing together global expertise. These forums provide a platform for knowledge sharing. Similarly, recent EIIP technical exchange visits, training of trainers, and governmental project visits in the Arab States could be replicated both regionally and inter-

regionally. There is also potential for inter-regional exchange as part of the National Public Works Programme in Iraq, where EIIP has extensive experience with successful examples in Asia. [The ILO and EIIP recognise SSTC as a pivotal mechanism to scale up the impact of employment-intensive initiatives in the Arab States and the Asia Pacific.](#)

Contact details

International Labour Organization
Route des Morillons 4
CH-1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 799 6111
Email: ilo@ilo.org
Website: <https://www.ilo.org/topics-and-sector/employment-intensive-investment>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54394/BWPB9460>