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Labour
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Employment-intensive
Investment Programme



International Training Centre



► Thematic Area 1 : What Makes EIIP Relevant to the Regions?

EIIP SSTC

**Inter-regional forum
for Asia and the Arab States**

8-10 April 2025, Bangladesh



► **Thematic Area 1 : What Makes EIIP
Relevant to the Regions?**



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► Foreword

An inter-regional forum, in Bangladesh in April 2025, aims to foster peer-to-peer learning among stakeholders who are employing employment-intensive approaches to address several pressing issues faced by countries in the Global South. The forum will cover four thematic areas, the first one being “What makes EIIP relevant to our regions”. This paper is being prepared to frame this session, exploring good practices, similarities and differences in Asia and the Arab States, an overview on the relevance of EIIP concepts, examples of EIIP projects and scope for further South-South collaboration¹.

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This paper is based partly on a desk review of existing documents and the ILO webpages on South-South and Triangular Cooperation, but primarily on information gathered from EIIP specialists, project and programme staff in the Asia Pacific and Arab State regions. Information was gathered by sending out a data gathering form and asking specialists in each region to complete a series of questions. Follow up consultations with each specialist also took place as needed, along with reviews of source documents. The data gathering form explained why data is being gathered (referencing upcoming the EIIP SSTC Forum), what SSTC is, who is participating and how contributions can be made. The data gathering form is included in Annex 1. The author is sincerely grateful to all who played a role in this endeavour.

¹ This Input Paper was prepared by Jonathan James Price for the ILO-Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP), March 2025.

► Contents

	Page
► Foreword	3
► Acknowledgements	3
► Contents	4
1. Introduction	7
1.1. Executive summary	7
1.1.1. Introduction	7
1.1.2. Overview and history of EIIP	7
1.1.3. Examples of recent EIIP projects and programmes	8
1.1.4. Examples of South-South collaboration	8
1.1.5. Scope for further South-South collaboration	8
1.2. Background and context	10
1.2.1. Context and Bangladesh forum	10
1.2.2. Limitations	10
2. Overview and history of the EIIP	11
2.1. EIIP concept evolution	11
2.2. EIIP strategy	11
2.2.1. R205: Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience	12
2.3. EIIP experience	12
2.3.1. ILO Regional Office for Arab States	13
2.3.2. ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific	13
3. EIIP thematic areas	14
3.1. Product lines	14
4. EIIP relevance to the regions	15
4.1. Regional context	15
4.2. Relevance of EIIP to Asia-Pacific and Arab States	16
4.2.1. Challenges and needs that EIIP addresses	17
4.2.2. Types of EIIP projects and activities	18
4.2.3. Stakeholder engagement	18
4.2.4. Beneficiary targeting	20
4.2.5. Long-term impact of EIIP	20
4.2.6. How EIIP addresses sustainability	21
4.2.7. Alignment with national development goals, policies and strategies	23
5. Examples of recent EIIP projects and programmes in Asia Pacific and Arab States	25
5.1. Projects in the Arab States	25
5.1.1. Economic development and cultural heritage in Iraq and Jordan	25
5.1.2. Crisis response in Lebanon	26
5.1.3. Earthquake recovery in Aleppo, Syria	27
5.1.4. Labour-intensive infrastructure in Jordan	27
5.1.5. Decent employment for women in Yemen	28

5.2. Projects in the Asia-Pacific Region	29
5.2.1. HDPN employment-intensive investment in Afghanistan	29
5.2.2. Water supply and peace in Mindanao, Philippines	29
5.2.3. Rural access and roads in Timor-Leste	30
5.2.4. Employment-intensive earthquake recovery and support to rural entrepreneurship in PNG	31
5.2.5. Labour-based technology and socio-economic recovery in Cambodia	31
5.2.6. Rural transport connectivity in Nepal	32
6. Examples of South-South collaboration	34
6.1. Brief explanation of SSTC	34
6.1.1. ILO and SSTC	34
6.2. Regional conferences, training and forums	34
6.2.1. EIIP Arab States seminar – Jordan, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, OPT and Lebanon	34
6.2.2. 19 th Regional Seminar for Labour-based Practitioners - Rwanda	34
6.2.3. 18 th Regional Seminar for Labour-based Practitioners - Tunisia	35
6.2.4. IRAP expert's group meeting – Bangladesh and Philippines	35
6.2.5. Forum on Pro-poor Delivery of Rural Infrastructure Services - Thailand	35
6.2.6. International Training Centre of the ILO (ITCILO) courses and events	35
6.3. SSTC examples in the Arab States	36
6.3.1. Lebanon expertise supports earthquake response in Syria – February 2023	36
6.3.2. Jordanian government visits EIIP Lebanon – October 2023	37
6.3.3. Jordanian engineers train trainers in Iraq, Jordan and Yemen – November 2022	38
6.4. SSTC examples in the Asia-Pacific Region	38
6.4.1. Nepal government delegation visits EIIP Timor-Leste – November 2015	38
6.4.2. EIIP Philippines joins World Water Week – August 2021	39
7. Scope for further South-South collaboration	40
7.1. Sub-modalities and mechanisms in SSTC examples	40
7.2. Opportunities for regional partnerships	40
7.3. EIIP initiatives which could benefit from SSTC activities	41
7.4. Scope for other EIIP-focused SSTC activities	41
8. Annex 1: Data gathering form	43
8.1. Background	43
9. Annex 2: Overview of EIIP Projects over the past 12 to 15 years	46
9.1. EIIP projects in the Arab States 2016-2014	46
9.2. EIIP projects in the Asia Pacific region 2009-2024	46

1. Introduction

1.1. Executive summary

1.1.1. Introduction

The inter-regional forum in Bangladesh in April 2025, will foster peer-to-peer learning among countries using employment-intensive approaches to address climate change, natural disasters, conflicts, and economic downturns. The forum will cover four thematic areas and this Input Paper is being prepared to frame the first session (on the subject of “What makes EIIP relevant to our regions”). With a short amount of time to produce the paper, the contents are limited by the availability of information, reports and documents on the ILO and other websites and by the responses and information provided by ILO staff.

1.1.2. Overview and history of EIIP

EIIP aligns and directly contributes to the ILOs Decent Work agenda. EIIP work has evolved from rural development to include a wide range of infrastructure, recognising that construction activities can contribute to economic and social development and that construction industry employs 7.7% of the global workforce. The EIIP approach creates and maintains assets while generating decent work and integrating: Participatory and LRB approaches, income generation, capacity building, gender, inclusion and sustainability. Environmental and social safeguard policies and frameworks crosscut all activities.

EIIP has implemented more than \$365 million worth of projects in the two regions, over the last decade. The ILO ROAS office opened in 1976, but EIIP started in earnest responding to the Syrian refugee crisis in 2011. The ILO ROAP office opened in 1966 with EIIP active in the region since the 1980s. Over 5 decades, the EIIP has developed a package of product lines covering six thematic areas, alongside support services in capacity development, technical support, policy development and knowledge dissemination.

Conflict, instability and the Syrian refugee crisis have exacerbated employment challenges in the Arab States, where unemployment is high, and low-skilled informal jobs are not attractive to well-educated youth. **Asia Pacific challenges** include poverty, unemployment in highly populated countries and aging populations – alongside climate change and natural disasters which exacerbate vulnerabilities and threaten key livelihoods.

In the Arab States EIIP contributes to HDPN, addressing immediate needs for short-term jobs, where projects support the most vulnerable, including refugees. Projects cover housing, cultural heritage, irrigation and earthquake response, also rehabilitating infrastructure and public services to cope with the influx of refugees. A multi-stakeholder approach fosters long-term ownership and adoption of EIIP approaches in government policies, with the role of ILO tripartite constituents in implementation recognised as essential. The EIIP embedded approach is important in fragile states, although working with UN crisis frameworks is also key.

Arab States EIIP projects have started with emergency employment and have then transitioned to longer-term development. Public asset construction and EIIP support for public works programmes also aids sustainability, which is also addressed by strengthening institutions, adoption of EIIP guidelines and policies. Projects in the Arab States also integrate participatory approaches, social dialogue and capacity building, and align with national strategies and crisis response plans, but also enhance self-reliance.

Asia Pacific EIIP projects address post-natural disaster situations, and target the most vulnerable, addressing poverty using LRB approaches. The shift from fragility in the region has enabled a focus on climate change, unemployment and urbanization, with activities involving community-based works, irrigation and key infrastructure. EIIP approaches been institutionalised via PEPs and community ownership is fostered by working with NGOs and government, using participatory approaches, embedding staff and providing institutional support.

EIIP approaches in the Asia Pacific have helped build resilience to natural disasters and improve community stability. Nationalisation of EIIP approaches and adoption of manuals and guidelines has also occurred in the

region with sustainability being a core aspect of EIIP work, focussing on use of local resources, local skills and green construction. Climate proofing of improved infrastructure has helped ensure environmental sustainability and alignment with national development strategies such as poverty reduction helps ensure social sustainability.

1.1.3. Examples of recent EIIP projects and programmes

Projects in **Jordan and Iraq** support to livelihoods through heritage, conservation skills, tourism and culture. Also, in Iraq the EIIP is creating work for young women and men whilst addressing the need for affordable green housing, where the EIIP approach is being promoted as a model for a national Public Works programme. EIIP **Lebanon** is responding to the regional refugee crisis, generating jobs for host communities and Syrian refugees. In **Syria** EIIP has responded to multiple earthquakes, with debris removal infrastructure rehabilitation and training. In **Jordan** EIIP has expanded from cash-for-work to agricultural, school and rural road infrastructure and in **Yemen** EIIP enhances access for women to community contracting with training and business support.

In **Afghanistan** the EIIP works under the HDPN framework to address humanitarian and development needs. Working in the **Philippines** since the 1990's EIIP has recently implemented a water system project in Mindanao. In **Timor-Leste** EIIP started with cash-for-work, leading on to the working with the government on the largest rural road development project in the country. In **Papua New Guinea** EIIP has responded to earthquakes, developed a reconstruction strategy, and supports rural entrepreneurship and trade. In **Cambodia** EIIP has recently aided migrant economic recovery through rural infrastructure and in **Nepal** has helped enhanced rural connectivity by upgrading and maintaining rural transport infrastructure.

1.1.4. Examples of South-South collaboration

SSTC refers to cooperation between developing countries to strengthen ties and address development challenges, whilst it also helps the ILO achieve its mandate. The ILO carried out 28 SSTC activities from 2022-23 and plans 14 from 2024-25. Regional EIIP conferences and forums have included a seminar in Jordan bringing together specialists from the Arab States (to discuss EIIP regional strategies), regular regional seminars for labour-based practitioners (the most recent being in Rwanda in 2023), and other regional seminars such as in Thailand on pro-poor rural infrastructure and on IRAP in Bangladesh.

The ITCILO supports SSTC through workshops to promote peer learning, with EIIP specialists bringing local knowledge and 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. **Jordanian** government members also 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 have visited two EIIP **Timor-Leste** projects to discuss road construction and training and in the **Philippines** the Mindanao water supply project joined World Water Week, with a local indigenous leader.

1.1.5. Scope for further South-South collaboration

1.1.5.1. Modalities mechanism and opportunities for regional partnerships

The sub-modalities of the EIIP SSTC examples included in this paper focus on to fragile-to-fragile cooperation and regional cooperation, although other EIIP city-to-city cooperation and cooperation between small island states, may also have happened over the last decade or prior to that. All four SSTC mechanisms have been used. Although there are significant differences between the regions and all countries face unique challenges, **the similarities between challenges faced and the type of EIIP activities in the two regions (that respond to the challenges and that have recently been implemented) presents 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, notes that to ensure that regional integration will lead to more inclusive outcomes, appropriate employment policies should be put in place. 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 because these regions have some of the highest gender gaps in labour force participation.**

1.1.5.2. EIIP initiatives which could benefit and scope for other SSTC activities

EIIP has a significant presence in both regions implementing many projects and gaining decades of experience, addressing poverty, unemployment and underemployment. This shared focus presents several opportunities for cross-regional partnerships, with **vulnerability to the impacts of climate change** being one common issue – opening up opportunities for sharing of experience in green infrastructure. Another key comparable issue is **access to safe water and sanitation**. Activities in the Philippines and Sri Lanka have included the rehabilitation of water facilities, while in Lebanon water tanks and reservoirs have also been built.

EIIP and the ILOITC have decades of experience in organising regional conferences, planning and technical workshops, bringing together expertise from around the world. Such forums provide a platform for knowledge sharing and similarly recent EIIP technical exchange visits, training of trainers and governmental project visits in the Arab States, could be replicated between countries in both regions or inter-regionally. There is also potential for inter-regional exchange as part of the plan for a National Public Works Programme in Iraq. EIIP has long experience of such programmes, with good 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.**

1.2. Background and context

1.2.1. Context and Bangladesh forum

The inter-regional forum in Bangladesh in April 2025, will foster peer-to-peer learning among countries using employment-intensive approaches to address climate change, natural disasters, conflicts, and economic downturns. To build resilience it is important that they collaborate, and the establishment of South-South partnerships will facilitate more effective exchange of knowledge, experience, and approaches. The forum will put special emphasis on EIIP and its application, and it will target government officials, ILO staff, development practitioners, research and education institutions, and donor organizations that support employment-intensive work.

The forum will cover four thematic areas (1. What makes EIIP relevant to our regions; 2. EIIP for Immediate response during and immediately after crisis event; 3. EIIP recovery and reconstruction works, implementation and capacity building arrangements; and 4: How Governments lead the designing and implementation of nationwide PWP/PEP to address poverty alleviation, climate change and crises). This Input Paper is being prepared to frame the first session, focussing on SSTC, good practices and opportunities for partnerships, exploring similarities and differences between countries in Asia and the Arab States, an overview of the EIIP, the relevance of EIIP concepts to the regions, examples of EIIP projects and national programmes in the regions and examples and scope for South-South collaboration.

1.2.2. Limitations

With a short amount of time to produce the paper, the contents are limited by the availability of information, reports and documents on the ILO and other websites and by the responses and extent of information provided by ILO staff, including the amount of material on and the limited number of past EIIP SSTC activities. As such these limitations present some challenges. Limited data can result in gaps in context, make it difficult to provide a comprehensive analysis and accurate recommendations. The short time also restricted opportunities for deeper engagement, or further consultations. These constraints and a reliance on assumptions and generalisations to fill gaps, may impact on the paper's depth.

2. Overview and history of the EIIP

2.1. EIIP concept evolution

The overall strategy of the ILO is based on the Decent Work Agenda and its four strategic objectives of promoting standards and fundamental principles and rights at work, creating decent employment and income, enhancing social protection and strengthening social dialogue. EIIP aligns with and directly contributes to this strategy by practically demonstrating the application of decent work policies and International Labour Standards, through job creation, social inclusion, social protection and infrastructure that addresses immediate needs, so as to reduce poverty and build economic resilience. EIIP also fosters social dialogue and peaceful coexistence whilst addressing cross cutting themes and issues such as gender equality and environmental sustainability.

The EIIP has evolved over 50 years, linking together a series of labour-intensive infrastructure programmes, to establish a comprehensive package of integrated interventions. Early work included research on rural transport in the 1980's leading to the development of the Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning tool and the Advisory Support Information Services and Training programme in 1991. Although work was initially focused on rural roads and contractor development, the programme has since evolved to include a wide range of infrastructure, ranging from water supply and irrigation to slum upgrading and reforestation.

The programme has also become more employment-orientated, recognising that construction activities can boost local economic and social development, and contribute to reducing urban and rural poverty. An emphasis on labour-based construction leads to the creation of decent jobs, improved assets and cash income. An extensive set of activities can be applied in the public sector, employment programmes, local industry and communities, building capacity to provide productive and decent work that has economic, environmental and social impact, addressing climate change and crisis situations and contributing to improved and climate resilient infrastructure.

The EIIP recognises that the construction industry has huge potential to absorb employment in site work, technical services and the supply and manufacture of materials, with the sector employing about 7.7% of the global workforce². A large proportion of these workers are unskilled, and for many, construction work is the entry point to paid labour. At the same time around the world, millions of people lack infrastructure and access to basic services, such as potable water, healthcare, transportation and education. Thus, enhancing and maintaining infrastructure can improve living standards and have a direct impact on the quality of people's lives.

Conclusions

- EIIP aligns and directly contributes to the ILO's Decent Work agenda
- EIIP work has evolved from rural development to include a wide range of infrastructure
- EIIP recognises that the construction activities can contribute to economic and social development
- The construction industry employs 7.7% of the global workforce

2.2. EIIP strategy

Aligning with Global Development Goals, the EIIP approach is a solution to creating and maintaining assets as well as generating decent jobs and income, that promotes employment-intensive approaches and local resource-based technologies in the execution of public investments, focusing on local infrastructure. Interventions cover many sectors and sub-sectors, but includes public infrastructure such as rural roads, irrigation, water supply, forestry, soil conservation, cultural heritage, drainage, plus public service facilities. Some of the key aspects of the strategy include:

² [EIIP Technical Brief December 2022](#)

1. **Using employment-intensive and local-resource based (LRB) approaches:** While maintaining cost competitiveness and quality, optimising employment in infrastructure development by using local labour, materials and technical solutions, to create decent jobs, particularly in rural or low-income areas.
2. **Community Participation and Local Empowerment:** Engaging local communities in planning, implementing, and maintaining infrastructure assets to foster a sense of local ownership, build skills, and support sustainable economic development.
3. **Income Generation and Poverty Reduction:** By creating decent jobs, and income for vulnerable populations, supporting them in meeting their basic needs and potentially transitioning to longer-term and more stable employment.
4. **Capacity Building:** Training to develop workers, partners and government aptitudes. Building contractors capacities in employment-intensive (EI) methods and social safeguarding, improving workers employability and productivity, addressing policies, to establish an enabling environment for EI approaches.
5. **Sustainability and Social Protection:** Considering environmental sustainability by incorporating green practices, resilient and green infrastructure and integrating social protection by ensuring decent working conditions and fair wages.
6. **Gender and Social Inclusion:** Implementing an inclusive approach that provides opportunities for women, youth, and marginalized groups within the community, thereby addressing issues of inequality and social exclusion.

Cutting across all these activities is the issue of environmental and social safeguards: policies that help prevent and reduce social harm to people during projects; and the implementation of comprehensive environmental safeguards frameworks, environmental assessments and environmental management. Overall EIIP takes an integrated approach to projects, often combining all of the above strategies in a project that combines employment creation with sustainable development by addressing social, economic, and environmental priorities simultaneously - also incorporating capacity-building for workers and stakeholders, inclusive participation of marginalized groups, and alignment with national development plans.

2.2.1. R205: Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience

Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience focusses on work-related measures to help prevent and respond to the effects of crises on economies and societies and is supplemented by a strategy for action of four components. The recommendation was adopted by the ILC³ in June 2017 and replaces the 1944 recommendation No. 71 on Employment. EIIP is one of the chief strategies used by the ILO to implement this recommendation as it's methods can be leveraged to achieve the aims of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus approach, linking immediate needs to longer-term developmental objectives, contributing to stability and resilience and addressing the underlying drivers of conflict and fragility.

Conclusions

- The EIIP approach creates and maintains assets while generating decent work and integrating:
- Participatory and LRB approaches, income generation, capacity building, gender, inclusion and sustainability
- Environmental and social safeguard policies and frameworks cross-cut all activities

2.3. EIIP experience

The EIIP has more than 50 years of experience in applying employment intensive investment approaches and technologies, having worked since the 1970's in more than 70 countries in Africa, the Arab States, Asia and Latin America. Initially starting in Africa and focussing on creating jobs in rural infrastructure projects, it has

³ [Resource page on Recommendation No. 205](#) – ILO, 2018

expanded and adapted its approaches to address a broader range of development challenges, including urban infrastructure, environmental resilience, disaster recovery, and climate adaptation. Over the last 15 years, the programme has implemented about \$190 million worth of development cooperation projects in the Asia Pacific region and about \$175 million worth of development projects in the Arab States (from 2016 to 2024) – see Annex 2 for details.

2.3.1. ILO Regional Office for Arab States

The ILO established its Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS) in 1976 working to advance the ILO core values with missions in Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The EIIP started in earnest in the Arab States following the Arab Spring and the Syrian refugee crisis, which began in 2011. This crisis underscores the significance of decent employment in addressing humanitarian needs and fostering long-term development and social stability. The ILO has collaborated with host countries, development partners, international organizations, and donor agencies to enhance economic opportunities and create employment in the region.

► Construction workers at Cheey National High School

EIIP responded to super-typhoon Haiyan (which hit the Philippines in late 2013), with a programme of emergency employment, local resource-based activities, skills training and enterprise development.

- An estimated 1.5 million workers were affected by the typhoon, in 9 regions
- EIIP response focused on three industries (tourism, agriculture and construction)
- These were identified as key drivers of economic growth and stability in the municipalities affected

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



2.3.2. ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

The ILO established its Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) in 1966, with EIIP having been active in this region since the 1980s, partnering with governments and local communities, to address infrastructure gaps, promote employment and support recovery from crises and natural disasters. EIIP has rebuilt infrastructure and livelihoods in Nepal, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines after significant natural disasters and conflict (such as in Afghanistan). In Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Pacific Island nations, EIIP has promoted climate resilient infrastructure and in Cambodia, Nepal and India, has supported rural infrastructure development, also addressing urban infrastructure needs in densely populated countries like India, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Conclusions

- EIIP has implemented more than \$365 million worth of projects in the two regions, over the last decade
- The ILO ROAS office opened in 1976, but EIIP started in earnest responding to the Syrian refugee crisis in 2011
- The ILO ROAP office opened in 1966 with EIIP active in the region since the 1980s

3. EIIP thematic areas

3.1. Product lines

Over the 5 decades mentioned above, the EIIP has developed a package of product lines covering six thematic areas – provided alongside support services in capacity development, technical support, policy development and knowledge dissemination. These themes are briefly summarised in the sections below (these short summaries are based on the EIIP thematic brochures)⁴. It is important to note that the many of the themes are effectively cross cutting, in that the approaches are not applied in silos. The following diagram (extracted from the EIIP programme document) summarises the product lines showing how some are cross cutting.



⁴ [Thematic areas in Employment intensive investment](#) - ILO

4. EIIP relevance to the regions

4.1. Regional context

Countries in the Arab States⁵ face complex employment challenges exacerbated by geopolitical and security crises including armed conflict, political instability and economic downturns (particularly in non-Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] states). The Syria refugee crisis in particular was one of the most significant humanitarian crises of the modern era with millions of Syrians seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. This situation had led to high unemployment rates, particularly among youth and women, widespread internal displacement and regional migration waves and increased informality (including a pivot towards entrepreneurship and own-account workers because of lack of formal opportunities) in the labour market.

The region's unemployment rate was expected to remain high at 9.8 per cent in 2024⁶, which is higher than pre-pandemic levels. GCC economies also face challenges including the volatility of oil prices, labour market segmentation (between men and women, nationals and non-nationals etc.). Over the past decades employment creation has focussed on the public-sector or low-productivity and low-skilled informal jobs, which are often unattractive to well-educated youth. Infrastructure challenges in the region include addressing water scarcity, reducing fossil fuel dependence, upgrading urban housing, transport and waste management, and the rebuilding of essential infrastructure in post-conflict areas to support recovery efforts.

► Workers building storm water drains

Building storm water drains in the town of Mazboud in the Chouf district in the Mount Lebanon area, under the Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme in Lebanon (EIIP)

Photo: [©ILO Lebanon, 2018](#)



Countries in the Asia and Pacific region face a diverse set of challenges including natural disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and typhoon/cyclone damage) which destroy infrastructure, cause loss of life, disrupt transport and supply chains and displace millions of people. Socio-economic challenges include income inequality, poverty and lack of access to basic needs (decent jobs, education, healthcare, water and sanitation), aging populations (putting a strain on social services) and unemployment challenges in highly populated countries (especially for the youth). Additionally, some countries face political instability, internal conflict and peace issues (such as the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh, economic crises in Sri Lanka, the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, climate induced displacement in the Pacific etc.).

Climate change has exacerbated vulnerabilities, threatening agriculture, fisheries and key livelihoods in the region. Infrastructure challenges include lack of adequate transport (especially in rural areas, hindering

⁵ Also referred to as the Arab World, comprising a large group of countries, mainly located in West Asia and North Africa and mostly corresponds to the definition of Middle East and North Africa (MENA). There are about 22 countries in the Arab League and about 19 countries where Arabs make up the majority of the population.

⁶ [Arab States Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2024](#), ILO, 2024

development and access to basic services), and rapid urbanisation. These developmental challenges leave workers in informal and precarious jobs, with little access to social protection and decent work. Employment challenges⁷ vary as a result of the economic diversity of the region but include the high proportion of the population working the informal sector (without social protection, job security or decent working conditions), persistent youth unemployment, gender disparities, gaps in education and skills related to emerging industries and migrant worker vulnerabilities.

Conclusions

- Conflict, instability and the Syrian refugee crisis have exacerbated employment challenges in the Arab States
- Unemployment in Arab States is high, and low-skilled informal jobs are not attractive to well-educated youth
- Asia Pacific challenges include poverty, unemployment in highly populated countries and aging populations
- Climate change and natural disasters in the Asia Pacific exacerbate vulnerabilities and threaten key livelihoods

4.2. Relevance of EIIP to Asia-Pacific and Arab States

In the Arab States the Employment Intensive Investment Programme is relatively new, only really beginning in full following the Arab spring and to address the Syrian refugee crisis which started in 2011. In the region the evolution of EIIP has been an essential component of the HDPN (Humanitarian-Development-Peace-Nexus) with the programme being ILO's key entry point in post-conflict and fragile situations, where international response is usually dominated by humanitarian agencies. The programme addresses immediate needs for short-term employment, but the approach brings with it peacebuilding, social cohesion and sustainable infrastructure development⁸.

Similarly in the Asia-Pacific context the EIIP approach is relevant because it addresses post-disaster situations and environmental vulnerabilities, with a focus on providing sustainable public infrastructure and services addressing longer-term social and economic development. Along with responses to natural and man-made disasters, EIIP in Asia addresses challenges related to high unemployment, poverty, instilling concepts on labour-intensive methods, participatory and community-based approaches, aiming to foster inclusive growth. In countries where EIIP has a longer history of engagement (including in the Philippines where the presence of the ILO dates back to the early 1990's), EIIP approaches have been institutionalised through Public Employment Programmes (PEPs) and Public Works Programmes (PWPs), and in these cases targeted technical institutional capacity building support is more relevant and more effective (see section below on ILO national support).

⁷ [Asia-Pacific Employment and Social Outlook 2022](#) – ILO, 2022

⁸ [Factsheet: Employment-Intensive Investment Programme: Arab States lessons learnt and ways forward](#) – ILO, 2024

► **Enhancing reliability of transport connectivity for rural communities**

Two women in a RMG (Roads Maintenance Group) working in periodic road maintenance as part of the SNRTP (Strengthening the National Rural Transport Program) project in Parsa district (rural road section), Dhore Pakaha, Bankatawa, Sonbasa, Nepal

Photo: [©ILO Nepal, 2017](#)



4.2.1. Challenges and needs that EIIP addresses

The Arab states face economic crises, political instability, and relentless conflicts taking place in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, Iraq, and Libya, leading to high unemployment, especially among youth and women, and a lack of decent work. EIIP has addressed this by supporting immediate needs through employment-intensive infrastructure works. In Lebanon EIIP addresses the needs for income for the most vulnerable people, including Lebanese host community members and Syrian Refugees, including women and PWD. The programme has also included an emergency response for IDPs in current conflict.

In Iraq the BEIT project addresses the challenges of unemployment and the significant housing shortage. Iraq faces a lack of decent work opportunities and high youth unemployment rates and a significant informal employment sector. Alongside decent work the project aims to address the significant housing shortage in Iraq. UN Habitat⁹ note that 70% of the population live in cities and many people, particularly the poor, live in sub-standard housing and informal settlements.

In the Asia-Pacific region, while the EIIP has also responded to economic crises, conflicts and fragility, a shift towards peace in recent decades, has enabled a realignment to address the unique socio-economic challenges of the region, such as high unemployment, rapid urbanization, and vulnerability to natural disasters. The EIIP has worked on addressing crises in Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Afghanistan, starting with short-term humanitarian employment strategies, connecting to peace and more lasting development. In other countries labour-based infrastructure development methods have been used to create jobs, reduce poverty, and stimulate local economies.

EIIP Afghanistan addresses the high unemployment rates, infrastructure gaps, and limited access to essential services due to prolonged conflict and economic instability, compounded by a recent earthquake in Western Afghanistan. Since the transition to a new administration in August 2021 GDP shrank by 20.7% and female and youth employment both declined by 25% from 2021 to 2022. The EIIP program targets vulnerable groups, including IDPs, refugees, host community and women, aiming to create immediate job opportunities while reinforcing decent work standards.

Arab states have historically experienced more political instability (due to conflicts, civil war, political repression, sectarian tensions and foreign interventions) compared to the Asia Pacific region and EIIP has focussed on addressing this challenge. In the Asia Pacific region EIIP has naturally focused more on the challenge of climate change. Although some countries in Asia have faced political upheaval, it is recognised that climate change (which exacerbates natural disasters, worsens existing poverty and adds to political instability by creating

⁹ [Iraq](#) – UN-Habitat

resource scarcity and migration pressures), poses one of the most significant developmental challenges in the region, which is home to some of country's that are most vulnerable to extreme weather events.

4.2.2. Types of EIIP projects and activities

In the Arab states EIIP has implemented projects with a focus on the HDPN and short-term employment whilst including improvements in social cohesion, peace building and reducing grievances and sense of injustice, as key components. Work in Lebanon and Jordan has included rehabilitation and construction of infrastructure to help public services cope with the massive influx of Syrian refugees as well as address employment issues for vulnerable members of the host country population. EIIP Lebanon has completed more than 40 infrastructure projects in over 80 municipalities, including rehabilitation of public buildings (schools, cultural and social centres, roads and farms, for unsupported municipalities and public institutions. This has included water reservoirs, vegetable markets, retaining walls, agricultural roads, municipal, police and customs buildings, storm water drainage systems, waterfront development and sidewalks, public toilets and forest management works and farm infrastructure.

Similarly in Iraq¹⁰, whilst addressing the needs of refugee and IDPs, projects have created quality jobs, provided opportunities for skills acquisition, and contributed to irrigation rehabilitation, solid waste management, afforestation, and cultural heritage conservation. The BEIT project plans to support the establishment of a National Public Works Programme and construct affordable green housing. In Syria¹¹ the ILO has engaged in employment intensive work that includes rehabilitating damaged social service centres, schools, health centres and other social and economic infrastructure. Responding to the multiple earthquakes that devastated northern Syria (and Türkiye) in February 2023, the ILO has also embarked on an infrastructure and livelihood recovery programme in Aleppo¹², including clearing, sewage repair, damage assessments and school rehabilitation (see details in Section 5 below).

EIIP activities in the Asia-Pacific region are diverse and include the construction and maintenance of essential infrastructure like roads, irrigation systems, and social facilities, using labour-intensive methods, local resources and technologies, often involving community-based works, and often in response to typhoons, earthquakes, tsunamis and cyclones. At the same time EIIP has worked on employment-intensive water management in Cambodia, coastal protection in Bangladesh and Fiji, flood management in Sri Lanka and erosion control in Timor-Leste. EIIP in Afghanistan, while addressing an economic and social crisis under the HDPN banner, have managed to implement multiple infrastructure rehabilitation projects, including rural road rehabilitation and maintenance, drainage, culverts, rubble clearing, flood protection (gabion protection walls) and irrigation structures.

4.2.3. Stakeholder engagement

In both regions EIIP places a strong emphasis on engaging with various stakeholders, including governments, local authorities, workers and employers organisations and communities. A multi-stakeholder approach ensures that projects align with local needs and priorities, fostering community ownership and sustainability. Working with government partners fosters long term ownership and enables the adoption of EIIP approaches in government policies. For example, Jordan¹³, the EIIP has worked with 6 different ministries, in Iraq EIIP works with the National Public Works Programme, government partners and trade unions. In Lebanon the Programme is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Agriculture as well as the donor and other project partners.

The EIIP recognizes the essential role of ILO tripartite constituents in the implementation of projects, to ensure that workers' rights are respected, fair wages are paid, and the social and economic benefits are shared equitably among the workers and communities involved. ILO constituent partners are fully involved in the

¹⁰ The EIIP Approach, Experiences and Lessons Learned: Contributions to the Humanitarian, Development, and Peace Nexus (HDPN) in Iraq

¹¹ [Earthquake adds further financial burden to already struggling households and workers in Aleppo](#) – ILO, 2023

¹² [Factsheet – ILO in Syria](#), ILO, 2024

¹³ [Employment through Labour Intensive Infrastructure in Jordan \(Phases 1 to 5\)](#) – ILO

formulation, implementation and monitoring of EIIP works at the national and sub-national levels, as members of project steering committees, community liaison officers, implementation partners, leading/coordinating research areas, etc. Below are some specific examples where ILO constituents such as the trade unions have been involved in the implementation of EIIP activities in the regions:

- **India** – The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), aims to provide 100 days of employment to rural households, and has involved the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), and Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), in advocating for workers rights.
- **Philippines** – Typhoon Haiyan Response: The trade unions, such as the Associated Labor Union (ALU) played a key role in enhancing the skills of affected beneficiaries as part of efforts to support the livelihood recovery of impacted communities in the province of Cebu.
- **Iraq** – A collaboration model was developed together with Workers' Union to improve working conditions at each EIIP work site (where interventions include green works, building construction and conservation of heritage sites) through the following activities:
 - Organizing election rounds for each EIIP site, to select one or more representatives from the workers, and enable them to bring their voices and defend their rights.
 - Conducting weekly awareness raising sessions for all workers at the EIIP work sites, on agreed topics related to labour rights.
 - Conducting regular visits to the sites of projects to monitor and report on working conditions according to agreed-upon indicators and templates.
 - Participating at monthly technical meetings with governmental stakeholders and implementing partners to address challenges and reach acceptable decisions in regard to workers' rights.
 - Managing the complaints and grievance mechanisms (hotline) of the projects and following up on any disputes.

This model in Iraq has effectively changed the mindset of social partners on the role of workers' unions in the construction sector, moving beyond mere inspection to actively contributing to the improvement of working conditions. In collaboration with ILO projects, the EIIP team also enhanced the capacity of union members, training them to apply EIIP approaches and to promote and mainstream of decent work agenda.

In the Asia-Pacific region as well as working national and local government, the EIIP has worked closely with NGOs to implement projects. In the Philippines¹⁴ as a response to typhoon Haiyan the programme partnered with over 90 different local organizations, non-government organizations, and local government units. In Cambodia¹⁵ the EIIP has used a local level participatory planning activities to identify investment priorities in rural infrastructure and public services and in Nepal¹⁶, as well as working with Government Ministries, the EIIP has worked with the Nepal Red Cross Society, Helvetas Nepal and Practical Action Nepal on community-based infrastructure, training and climate adaptation. EIIP Afghanistan works with various stakeholders, engaging them in the planning of EIIP activities, including the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI), UN agencies (e.g., UNDP, UNOPS), and local communities including Community Development Councils (CDCs).

4.2.3.1. ILO national support and embedded approach

Wherever possible, EIIP uses an 'embedded' approach, which involves programmes working directly with national ministries and institutions and specialists working in parallel with their counterparts in their counterpart agencies. This approach fosters close collaboration with public officials, enhances local capacity and helps ensure the sustainability and replication of project methodologies, also helping establish employment-intensive policies. The approach has also proved effective in optimising capacity development and providing tailor made capacity building support. This is particularly appropriate in fragile states where national capacity may be particularly low – but in all cases should be accompanied by an exit strategy.

¹⁴ [Sustainable livelihood and recovery for Super Typhoon Haiyan-affected communities](#) – ILO, 2015

¹⁵ [EIIP activities in Cambodia](#) – ILO, 2017

¹⁶ [EIIP Guide: Developing the construction industry for employment-intensive infrastructure investments](#) – ILO, 2019

A good example of the approach can be found in the EIIP engagements in Timor Leste¹⁷, where embedding staff directly within national institutions and working through national institutional systems, has had a profound impact with strong ties forged between the ILO and national counterparts, putting the ILO in a unique position to help the government address emergency needs. Similarly in some situations the ILO provides direct institutional support, helping governments develop and implement policies and programmes that promote employment and skills development¹⁸. Good examples would include the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act (MGNREGA) scheme in India and the Expanded Public Works Programme in South Africa¹⁹.

However, in countries where there is no recognised government, or where government institutions are weak or non-existent, it is not always possible to use the embedded approach – such as in Myanmar or Afghanistan. In these situations, EIIP works closely with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Social Partners (Employer's and Worker's Organisations), if they are functional, civil society (community organisations) and in partnership with UN organisations, according to crisis response frameworks. Social partners play a key role in crisis response and recovery by helping ensure that employment recovery efforts are inclusive, fair, and sustainable, assisting communities rebuild and move toward stability.

4.2.4. Beneficiary targeting

In the Arab States EIIP targets the most vulnerable populations and given the prevalence of conflicts and the many fragile situations, there has been a focus on working with displaced persons, refugees and vulnerable host communities. Providing short term employment to these groups has met a huge need for income, has supported the rehabilitation of overloaded infrastructure, but has also helped improve social cohesion and reduced the potential for conflict.

EIIP Lebanon targets beneficiaries using an outreach mechanism, identifying the most vulnerable communities and groups near project locations, with the workforce divided equally between Lebanese and Syrians, and aiming to employ 30% women and 4% PWD. EIIP targeting also makes use of the NPTP (National Poverty Targeting Programme) of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Refugee Assistance Information System (RAIS) used by UNHCR, partners, and donors to ensure effective tracking of assistance, UNHCR Community Development Centres (CDC), Ministry of Social Affairs Social Development Centres (SDC), and Municipalities records of the most vulnerable.

In The Asia-Pacific region the EIIP has also targeted vulnerable populations, sometimes more in need because of recent major natural disasters, but also addressing poverty and issues of inequality that persists in many Asian countries. EIIP Afghanistan prioritizes vulnerable groups, including women, youth, people with disabilities, and other disadvantaged populations. Targeting involves working with ABADEI (Area-Based Approach to Development Emergency Initiatives) partners to identify households in need, based on vulnerability criteria, ensuring a balance between host communities and displaced persons. Specific criteria for targeting beneficiaries include prioritisation by local authorities and community needs, population impact and infrastructure usage, inclusiveness of vulnerable groups, safety, security and synergy with other UN and local economic programmes.

4.2.5. Long-term impact of EIIP

In the Arab States EIIP projects have contributed to economic recovery and stability and laid the groundwork for future development. In Iraq for example, the programme started with emergency employment, addressing immediate economic, social and environmental needs, but has contributed to transition and development by supporting longer-term employment outcomes in the form of transfer of technical skills to workers through on-the-job or vocational training, institutional reform, and capacity building of the public and private sectors. EIIP has also addressed the drivers of conflict related to the lack of livelihoods and access to infrastructure, encouraging working-aged adults across social groups to communicate and interact, easing tension between groups of different backgrounds.

¹⁷ [Strengthening national leadership through the Embedded Approach in Timor-Leste](#) – ILO, 2016

¹⁸ [Employment promotion in South Asia](#) – ILO

¹⁹ [Celebrating 20 years of ILO collaboration with South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme](#) - ILO, 2024

A key long-term impact of the EIIP approach is public asset construction and rehabilitation and the programme in Lebanon has completed more than 45 such projects, whilst benefiting more than 18,000 people directly, and creating 7,000 jobs. To incorporate the EIIP approach in future infrastructure works, the programme developed a technical guideline on EIIP approaches which has been endorsed by the Government and has provided training for more than 100 private companies and 50 government officials (from the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and municipalities) on the EIIP approach (covering decent work, Local Resource Based Technology). Further the programme provides on-the-job training to the most marginalised segments of the communities, with the aim of increasing their future employability potential.

In the Asia-Pacific region EIIP has been working for almost 50 years, working with government and local communities to improve rural infrastructure, and build resilience to climate related natural disasters. In Nepal, Cambodia and the Philippines the EIIP has improved access to essential rural infrastructure such as roads, water supply and sanitation. Climate adaptation and disaster recovery in Bangladesh and Indonesia have focused building climate-resilient infrastructure, such as flood-proof roads, improved water management systems, contributing to long-term disaster resilience and community stability, fostering economic development and improving livelihoods in vulnerable communities across the region.

In India the focus has been on institutional support to the Ministry of Rural Development, developing a rural road maintenance policy and strategy, providing capacity building for government officials and contractors and developing training courses for MGNREGA barefoot engineers and rural masons. In Afghanistan the EIIP project has contributed to improved access to essential services, employment generation, and strengthened community resilience. Infrastructure improvements and job creation have contributed to local stability and economic recovery.

4.2.5.1. Nationalisation of similar approaches in Asia

As mentioned above some National programmes in Asia have adopted a similar approach to EIIP, institutionalising the methodologies, sometimes with ILO technical support. As well as the MGNREGA scheme and the work in Timor Leste, mentioned above, this includes the Indian Government's Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). This has the objective of providing 'All Weather Road Connectivity' to all villages of certain population sizes in plains, hill states, desert and tribal areas. Dialogue between the government and the ILO resulted in a partnership agreement²⁰ with the National Rural Roads Development Agency (NRRDA) in 2012, focussing on technical support to promote good maintenance practices under a World Bank project.

In Bangladesh²¹ the EIIP has a long history of collaboration with the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), starting in the 1990's with technical support to map infrastructure. Since then, the partnership has included: Technical support as part of an ADB project on rural infrastructure development in 2001; An assessment of the possibilities of employment on a DFID project in 2002; Support in the rehabilitation of cyclone damaged infrastructure in 2004 and 2017; A strategic dialogue on employment opportunities in infrastructure development and maintenance with international finance institutions in December 2024²², as well as other South-South experience sharing.

4.2.6. How EIIP addresses sustainability

Sustainability is a core aspect of the EIIP, with a focus on sustainable practices, use of local resources (materials and skills), green construction methods, works addressing the need for climate resilient infrastructure and linking activities with comprehensive skills training and the Enterprise Development programme of the ILO. Measures to combat climate change and promote environmental conservation are integrated into all works and this focus on sustainability ensures the benefits of investments are long-lasting and environmentally responsible. The mission of ILO in the Arab States and the Asia-Pacific region is to promote, among other things, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This embraces all dimensions of sustainability (economic, social and

²⁰ [ILO and PMGSY – Road to ending poverty and creating prosperity](#) – ILO, 2017

²¹ [Employment-Intensive Investment in Bangladesh](#) – ILO, 2014

²² [Bangladesh: Infrastructure development and maintenance key for decent work opportunities](#) – ILO, 2024

environmental) and among the 17 SDGs the importance of decent work is highlighted in Goal 8 which aims to promote sustained inclusive economic growth with productive employment and decent work for all.



Figure 1 Examples of how EIIP addresses sustainability

Sustainability in EIIP Lebanon is addressed by strengthening institutions to enhance their technical capacity and influence policy. EIIP aims to leave behind robust institutions, who can make use of the EIIP methodology, which is well suited in times of high unemployment, lack of maintenance budget and rising fuel costs. Thus, EIIP closely engages with national and local government, as well as external agencies, to promote policy change (such as the government adopting EIP guidelines as policy), and transfers knowledge through training on Decent Work, Social Safeguards and LRBT, in private sector associations, professional institutions and government agencies.

The BEIT project in Iraq and the planned road map to establishing a National Public Works Programme is aligned to national priorities, integrates design considerations based on consultative, participatory manner integrating good practices, lessons learnt, involves consultations for sustainable financing mechanisms and integrates decent work principles, enhanced tripartite social dialogue and a capacity building approach. In Afghanistan EIIP ensures sustainability by employing local labour, utilising local resources, fostering community-based maintenance, and cultivating skills that allow beneficiaries to transition to longer-term employment. The integration of environmental and social safeguards are essential in ensuring that the project provides sustainable and decent work.

The EIIP economic recovery project in Cambodia ensured environmental sustainability by climate proofing of the constructed and improved infrastructure, such as raising embankments above the highest flood levels. Capacity building included training community stakeholders in managing the works, training for beneficiaries in green vocational skills, and training of Provincial Rural Development Committees in planning and delivering investments in basic village infrastructure using employment-intensive work methods. Using this improved capacity the project aimed to put in place a self-sustainable community-based operation and maintenance system for the village infrastructure assets.

In Papua New Guinea in recovery and reconstruction response project and the programme of support to rural entrepreneurship have addressed sustainability by targeting the establishment of strong and efficient fisheries value chains and developing a Road Transport Management Information System (RoTIMS). The latter

system, alongside technical manuals and guidelines will generate annual and multi-year prioritisation, masterplans and budgets for rehabilitation and maintenance of road transport infrastructure. Lastly the proximity of the implementing partner (the Southern Highlands Technical College) to the project site also helps ensure project sustainability.

4.2.7. Alignment with national development goals, policies and strategies

In the Arab States EIIP has aligned with national strategies and goals by supporting refugees and host communities implementing conflict-sensitive projects, under the HDPN banner in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt, within the framework of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), promoting decent work for all and building the resilience of communities. At the same time programmes aim to reduce aid dependence and support the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees, by easing pressures on host countries and enhancing refugee self-reliance.

In Lebanon EIIP aligns with the livelihoods sector of the Government-led Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LRP) 2024, the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Lebanon 2023-2026, the Humanitarian-Development Peace Nexus where it is integrated under Employment and Decent Work, and the ILO Decent Work Country Program for Lebanon. The project is an active member of the CfW working group and the livelihood sector under the LRP where it serves on the core group committee. ILO has also strengthened linkages with the Lebanese Union with Persons with Disabilities (LUPD) and organizations for persons with disabilities (OPDs) in coordination with the ILO social protection unit to enhance infrastructure design and implementation. EIIP also works closely with the World Bank to ensure alignment with their Environmental and Social Framework.

Long term objectives in Iraq include the establishment of a National Public Works Programme that incorporates an employment intensive and local resource-based approach. This will no doubt have some similarities and lessons learnt from EIIPs long experience of public works or public employment programmes (PEP), including the long established MGNREGA programme in India and South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). The project is in alignment with the National Development Policy (2024-2028), National Employment Policy and the Human Capital Development Strategy.

In the Asia-Pacific region EIIP projects align with national development strategies and goals such as poverty reduction, infrastructure development and sustainable economic growth. Partnerships with local governments and organizations has been crucial in achieving the scalability of the programme's impact and integration into national development plans. The EIIP has aligned with national goals like India's Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY)²³, which aims to improve rural road connectivity and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). In Timor-Leste EIIP has supported the National Strategic Development Plan²⁴, which emphasizes infrastructure as key to national development. In Afghanistan EIIP aligns with the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), the UN's Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, and national development priorities focused on rural infrastructure, livelihood recovery, and social cohesion.

Conclusions

- In the Arab States EIIP is an essential component of the HDPN, addressing immediate needs for short-term jobs
- Arab States EIIP projects support and target the most vulnerable, including refugees and host communities
- EIIP projects in the Arab States cover housing, cultural heritage, irrigation and earthquake response
- Projects in the Arab States also rehabilitate infrastructure and public services to cope with the influx of refugees
- A multi-stakeholder approach fosters long-term ownership and adoption of EIIP approaches in government policies
- EIIP projects in Asia Pacific address post-natural disaster situations, and target those most vulnerable to the impacts
- Projects also address poverty using LRB approaches and in some cases have been institutionalised through PEPs
- The shift from fragility in the Asia Pacific enables an EIIP focus on climate change, unemployment and urbanisation
- Activities in the Asia Pacific often involve community-based works, irrigation and essential infrastructure

²³ [ILO and PMGSY – Road to ending poverty and creating prosperity](#) – ILO, 2017

²⁴ [ILO evaluation: Roads for Development \(R4D\)](#) – ILO, 2017

- The EIIP recognizes the essential role of ILO tripartite constituents in the implementation of projects
- The EIIP embedded approach is important in fragile states, although working with UN crisis frameworks is also key
- Arab States EIIP projects have started with emergency employment but transition to longer-term development
- Public asset construction and EIIP support for public works programmes also aids sustainability
- Sustainability is addressed by strengthening institutions, adoption of EIIP guidelines and policies
- Projects in the Arab States also integrate participatory approaches, social dialogue and capacity building
- Projects in the Arab States align with national strategies and crisis response plans, but also enhance self-reliance
- To foster community ownership in Asia Pacific EIIP works with NGOs, government and participatory approaches
- Embedding staff and direct institutional support has helped governments implement pro-employment projects
- EIIP approaches in the Asia Pacific have helped build resilience to natural disasters and community stability
- Nationalisation of EIIP approaches and adoption of manuals and guidelines has also occurred in Asia
- Sustainability is a core aspect of EIIP focussing on use of local resources, local skills and green construction
- Climate proofing of improved infrastructure ensures environmental sustainability
- Projects in the Asia Pacific align with national development strategies such as poverty reduction

5. Examples of recent EIIP projects and programmes in Asia Pacific and Arab States

5.1. Projects in the Arab States

5.1.1. Economic development and cultural heritage in Iraq and Jordan

5.1.1.1. Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development

Since 2021, the ILO, UNESCO (UN Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization²⁵) and the European Union (EU) have been collaborating to support internally displaced persons, Syrian refugees and host community members to access immediate, short-term decent employment in the cultural heritage sector in Iraq. In this programme EIIP linked skills development efforts with cultural heritage site conservation, training workers in construction skills specific to historical sites (such as stone paving, historical house renovation, stone gabion construction, landscaping skills etc.). Similarly to other Middle Eastern countries Iraq has multitude of historical sites where renovation will contribute to sustainable tourism whilst creating jobs and promoting local culture.

While partners of UNESCO were responsible for the technical specifications required in archaeological site conservation, the ILO contributed through EIIP in developing local skills including upscaling of skills and skills certification through accredited technical institutions (Erbil Technical University). The partnership with Erbil University²⁶ included the development of technical manuals and guidelines for the implementation of a certification programme and capacity building of trainers. Conservation site have included the World Heritage Site of the Erbil Citadel²⁷ and Chwarsteen Cave (where training in tour guiding covering the Duhok National Museum and other important heritage sites, was included).

Under the same heading UNESCO²⁸ and ILO have been collaborating in Jordan, under an EU funded project, in partnership with Acted, the Ministry of Tourism, and Department of Antiquities, since 2020. This project, likewise, aims to safeguard and rehabilitate cultural heritage sites, applying employment-intensive approaches and supporting the creation of economic opportunities and dignified, sustainable livelihoods for host communities and Syrian refugees²⁹. As well as creating short-term employment and providing vocational training in cultural resources management, the project aims to build an enabling environment for entrepreneurial activities in the cultural heritage sector and promotes tourism in the region.

5.1.1.2. PROSPECTS

PROSPECTS Iraq³⁰ is a partnership between the ILO and other organizations (IIFC, ILO, UNHCR, UNICEF, and the World Bank), aiming to provide a unified and holistic approach to supporting the economic development of Iraq and help highly vulnerable people find jobs and improve their livelihoods. As part of this programme the EIIP approach, with different types of green interventions, was applied in one governorate, mainstreaming a unified model in terms of design and consultations with local communities, employment services and procedures, technical training for engineers, monitoring tools and reporting, and youth engagement. This EIIP model is a showcase for the shift towards a Public Works programme at the national level (see below).

²⁵ [Closing Event Marks UNESCO-EU Initiative Empowering Syrian Refugees and Host Communities through Cultural Conservation](#) – UNESCO, 2024

²⁶ [ILO and the Erbil Polytechnic University partner to develop local skills in Employment Intensive methods](#) – United Nations Iraq, 2022

²⁷ [Erbil Citadel workers certified with cultural heritage-related skills following completion of training programme](#) – ILO, 2023

²⁸ [Supporting Livelihoods Through Cultural Heritage Development](#) – UNESCO, 2023

²⁹ [Creating decent job opportunities through applying Employment Intensive Approaches at Cultural Heritage Conservation activities](#) – ILO

³⁰ [Iraq](#) – ILO

5.1.1.3. Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation (BEIT)³¹

The **BEIT project (Towards Decent Work and Affordable Housing in Iraq)** is funded by the EU and implemented by ILO in partnership with UN-HABITAT and the International Trade Centre (ITC). It aims to generate decent work opportunities for young women and men and address the urgent need for affordable housing for vulnerable people in Iraq, alongside the construction of green affordable pilot housing projects. Aims include supporting the formation of a National Public Works Programme, tackling Child Labour (focussing on the brick industry), enhancing labour governance (including OSH) within the housing sector, improving the integration of women and PWD in the labour market and advancing tripartite and social dialogue.

► Stakeholders at the Consultative Workshop on Promoting Decent Work in Public Programmes

Stakeholders deep in discussion on Essential Considerations for a Proposed National Public Works Programme, as part of the consultation process for the BEIT project in Iraq. The project seeks to:

- Help establish a National Public Works Programme
- Address child labour in the brick industry
- Enhance labour governance in the housing sector
- Enhance inclusion of women and PWD
- Improve tripartite mechanism and social dialogue

Photo: Stakeholders at Consultative workshop, Iraq, ©ILO Iraq, 2024



5.1.2. Crisis response in Lebanon

5.1.2.1. Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme (EIIP)³²

EIIP in Lebanon began in 2017 in immediate response to the regional refugee crisis. The programme has since evolved to also address the 2019 multi-layered economic, financial, social, and health crisis, the impact of COVID-19 on people's livelihoods and the dramatic explosion in Beirut port in 2020. Projects are designed based on assessments of the country's needs, emerging difficulties while building in lessons from previous phases. Interventions are selected based on priority, vulnerability assessment and labour generation potential. The programme generates employment for Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees through the construction of sustainable infrastructure, environmental works and maintenance of public assets, whilst enhancing capacity for job creation and asset management through institutional development and training.

The EIIP program is part of the government-led Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP 2022-2023) and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Lebanon (2023-2025), in alignment with the Prosperity section (and targets SDG 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11), where the goal in Lebanon is "Improved resilient and competitive productive sectors for enhanced and inclusive income-generating and livelihood opportunities". The EIIP's overall goal in Lebanon is to strengthen the resilience of local host communities by improving livelihoods for host community members and Syrian refugees through job creation and infrastructure development.

³¹ [Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation \(BEIT\): Towards Decent Work and Affordable Housing in Iraq](#) - ILO

³² [Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme in Lebanon \(EIIP\)](#) - ILO

5.1.3. Earthquake recovery in Aleppo, Syria

5.1.3.1. Employment-Intensive Infrastructure Recovery

In February 2023, in response to multiple earthquakes that devastated Northern Syria the ILO mobilised internal crisis response funds to start a two-phase employment-intensive infrastructure and livelihood recovery initiative in Aleppo. The project included debris removal, sidewalk rehabilitation, sewage network repair, enhancing community safety and mobility, which created 353 jobs and 17,013 workdays. Other components of the project have included job formalisation (work-based learning apprenticeship in partnership with local TVET institutions and the Aleppo Chamber of Industry). Total of 105 trainees were selected and matched with 16 enterprises. Furthermore, throughout the project, 24 engineers were trained on modern structural damage assessment (using advanced testing tools), 5 schools were rehabilitated which generated 7,442 workdays, and OSH training was conducted. The engineering training was done in collaboration with EIIP Lebanon (see section below on SSTC examples).

5.1.3.2. Employment-intensive labour market recovery from earthquakes

Funded by the Japanese government (JSB - Japan Supplementary Budget), the on-site work of the EIIP project, responding to the earthquakes in Aleppo, started in August 2024, in partnership with COOPI - Cooperazione Internazionale. The project was implemented in the Aleppo Governorate, and targets the Kadi Askar Sector and Ramoseh area, both heavily impacted by conflict and earthquakes. The project generated 11,223 workdays and created job opportunities for 142 individuals, including both skilled and low-skilled workers over three months. The work involved debris removal and recycling, sidewalk rehabilitation, the repair of sewage and stormwater networks, among others. Additional activities have included agricultural work, metal fence maintenance, and improvements to 47 streets.

► **Workers rehabilitating sidewalks surrounding a public park for a safer communal space**

Progress on the project has included:

- Cleaning 1,941 drainage points, maintaining 335 points, and installing 22 manhole covers
- Removing 678 m3 of debris along 13 km of sewage networks
- 718 m3 of levelling, 1,839 m of sidewalk installation, and 1,206 m2 of concrete casting
- Debris recycling produced 10,935 tiles, 8,815 blocks, and 7,308 sidewalk units

Photo: Aleppo, Syria ©ILO, 2023



5.1.4. Labour-intensive infrastructure in Jordan

5.1.4.1. Employment through Labour-Intensive Infrastructure³³

As with much of the region Jordan is fairly new to EIIP, with activities starting in May 2015 with the “Rural Infrastructure, Training and Employment” (RITE) project, which demonstrated the viability of contracting small contractors to use the EIIP approach for infrastructure improvement and led to the development of the larger scale EIIP project, in mid-2016. This came about as part of the ILOs response to the Syrian refugee crisis, with funding

³³ [Employment-Intensive Investment Programme activities in Jordan](#) – ILO, 2017

from Germany through the KfW Development Bank. The programme focused on improving livelihoods by providing cash-for-work opportunities for vulnerable Jordanian citizens and Syrian refugees.

The project's activities have been implemented with the Ministries of Public Works and Housing, Local Administration, and Agriculture, and covering seven Governorates, and have included building rainwater catchments, terracing and planting, rehabilitation and building of classrooms, improvement of tertiary roads, and municipal cleaning works. Capacity building included workers skills training, workshops for municipal staff and private contractors on employment-intensive approaches, plus awareness raising for officials on labour laws, social security, work permits and women's participation. The programme finished its fifth phase in November 2021 and from start to finish, 21,007 Syrian refugees and Jordanians benefited with the programme generating over 1 million worker-days in the process.

5.1.5. Decent employment for women in Yemen

5.1.5.1. EIIP and decent employment for women³⁴

This project, which started in 2021, aims to provide decent short-term jobs for the most vulnerable beneficiaries, with a focus on women and enhancing access for women community contractors to economic opportunities. The project integrates EIIP approaches into the existing cash-for-work interventions of the Public Works Project (PWP), providing training on business skills development and management, mentorship, customised business support and start-up capital. The PWP³⁵ is a government project (financed by international donors including the World Bank) established in 1996 offering short-term employment to unemployed Yemenis to build and rehabilitate key infrastructure (such as schools, hospitals, water and sanitation systems, and local roads) in local communities.

In 2023 the project launched its first training on gender-responsive community contracting in Sanaa with another planned in Aden. These two workshops aim to train a total of 56 women from 10 governorates, on EIIP approaches, decent work and emergency employment principles, environmental and social safeguards (ESS) and occupational safety and health (OSH). Trainees who demonstrate commitment and interested will be provided with seed funding to establish their own business and will then be given the chance to bid to implement pilot EIIP projects. The project has also produced an emergency employment manual, updated the PWP's community contracting manual and enhanced the PWP's ESS, OSH and operational manuals.

► **ILO team, the community committee, contractor and officials from PWP stand beside a channel built to control and redistribute rainwater**

ILO's support has enabled a training program for women including Engineer Kariman Atef, a 37-year-old civil engineering graduate from Aden University, who owns and manages Kariman Contracting Office.

The newly built channel serves a large segment of farmers, protecting homes and farms from flood damage, whilst ensuring that 500 farmers can irrigate their land.

Photo: Yemen ©ILO, 2024



³⁴ [Employment Intensive Investment Program \(EIIP\) and decent employment for women in Yemen](#) – ILO

³⁵ [Creating temporary job opportunities for underserved communities \(1996–2000\)](#) – Pathfinders, 2024

5.2. Projects in the Asia-Pacific Region

5.2.1. HDPN employment-intensive investment in Afghanistan

5.2.1.1. Employment-Intensive Investment Programme

The EIIP project in Afghanistan, aims to promote “employment and decent work in Afghanistan through the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus”, providing employment, decent work and income support to vulnerable groups, including host community members, IDPs, returnees, women and PWD. Through the implementation of the project operationalisation of the HDPN is supported by simultaneously addressing both humanitarian and development needs, while contributing to the realisation of peace and resilience. Activities include the construction and maintenance of priority infrastructure and community assets, using LRB approaches and building in capacity development, skills acquisition and enterprise development.

► Manufacturing Bamboo Composition Layer, Shoretepa District Road Rehabilitation

The project is funded by the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA), and [recent activities](#) include:

- Four road projects in the Shoretepa District of Balkh province
- Routine maintenance and spot-improvement works of an adjoining 8 km road
- Four other projects in Mardyan and Mangajik districts in Jawzjan province
- Development of a Guidance Note on Employment and Decent Work Social Safeguards under the HDPN

Photo: Afghanistan ©ILO, 2024



5.2.2. Water supply and peace in Mindanao, Philippines

EIIP has been working in the Philippines since the early 1990s, starting with the rural transport unit and expanding to include the nationwide application of Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning (IRAP), a local-level planning tool, and recent crisis response initiatives such as in Mindanao. The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) was created in 2018 and is home to several groups of people such as the Moros or Muslims, Lumads or non-Moro indigenous people and Christian settlers. Years of struggle and conflict have put on hold development and in 2018 the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that BARMM has the highest poverty incidence among families in the country. Clean water and sanitation have consistently been identified as priorities for the region, with COVID-19 highlighting this even further. In this light, with funding from Japan the EIIP implemented a water system project designed to alleviate poverty in communities prone to conflict, through improved access to safe and reliable water supply and sanitation services.

5.2.2.1. Improvement of Water Supply and Capacity for Peace

The “Improvement of Water Supply Equipment Management Capacity for the Establishment of Peace in Mindanao” project was implemented over two years and eleven months from April 2019, during which time eleven water systems were completed, benefitting 6,701 households and 6,115 school-aged children. A total of 1,249 people were provided with employment of whom 308 were women, 10 were persons with disability and 90 were former combatants. Due to COVID-19 the project shifted its focus to mainland areas, excluding island provinces, and repurposed funding to implement a Community Emergency Employment Programme, which

benefited 2,027 informal workers in the form of wage transfers and social protection mechanisms. Together a total of 60,891 workdays were generated and USD415,216 was paid in wages.

An impact study on Water and Gender: The Philippine Experience in Maguindanao del Sur, undertaken in October 2023, notes that the impact of the project on women has been positive because they no longer bear the burden of water collection, with tap stands strategic locations near households resulting in time savings, enabling households to have more time for skill development and income generation. The project also addressed issues of water scarcity and cleanliness (especially for mothers with young children), eliminating impurities with the integration of a chlorinator. Access to affordable water is now open to all community members without discrimination and building the capacity of community-based water associations, along with local government participation, ensures sustainability in maintenance and operations.

5.2.3. Rural access and roads in Timor-Leste

The EIIP has implemented many projects in Timor-Leste since the breakdown of law and order in 2006 and the displacement of a large number of people to camps. This began with Cash-for-Work activities with Ministry of Labour and Community Reinsertion (MLCR) and evolved into labour-based rural road works, including the “Work for the Nation” and “Work for Peace” projects, Youth Employment Promotion (YEP), the Investment Budget Execution Support for Rural Infrastructure Development and Employment Generation (TIM-Works) and eventually the Roads for Development project (R4D) and Enhancing Rural Access project (ERA) projects. The latter two were implemented as “twinning” projects closely together, with R4D assisting ERA in developing training curricula and training contractors who were awarded work contracts through competitive bidding procedures.

5.2.3.1. Enhancing Rural Access (ERA)

The ERA project, which ran over 10 years, from 2012 to 2022, was funded by the EU. With the main objective of improving the access of rural communities to services and income opportunities by improving the rehabilitation and maintenance of rural roads, it was the largest rural road development project in the country. Concentrating on the public sector, the project's main counterpart was the Ministry of Public Works (MPW). Components of the project have included 1,975km of road construction and rehabilitation, employment and income generation and capacity building, support for agro-forestry development, land and natural resources, developing a Rural Roads Master Plan, Annual Action Plans and new policies to develop the rural roads sector.

► Road construction in Timor-Leste

Noteworthy results from the EIIP interventions in Timor-Leste include:

- R4D became the key rural roads programme of the government
- The government provided much of the capital funding for R4D
- Systems, capacities and standards were improved, including social and environmental safeguards
- National minimum wages for construction were set for workers in the informal economy
- Women's participation in R4D ranged from 25-30% and ⅓ of contracts were awarded to women headed companies

Photo: ©ILO. 2024



5.2.3.2. Roads for Development (R4D)

R4D, the government's flagship programme for rural roads, was launched in parallel with ERA in 2012. It was co-funded by the Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) and the Government of Australia (GoA) with Technical Assistance provided through the EIIP. Under the project's first phase over 400 small-scale local contractors were

trained to carry out labour-based rural road works for the Government. The training programmes established were integrated into existing national training institutes and EIIP worked closely with the Don Bosco Training center to endorse a National Certificate Labour-Based Technology for Road Works. To be sure that EIIP's model could be sustained from 2023 onwards, strengthening capacities and capabilities of the government was a key approach.

5.2.4. Employment-intensive earthquake recovery and support to rural entrepreneurship in PNG

5.2.4.1. Employment-Intensive Recovery and Reconstruction Response (E3R)³⁶

In February and March 2019, a series of earthquakes hit the Highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG), affecting over half a million people, damaging infrastructure and affecting water sources. The ILO assisted in early recovery with short-term emergency employment and the restoration of damaged infrastructure to support the development of a longer-term employment-intensive reconstruction strategy. Funded under the ILO/Japan response to the earthquakes, the objective was to enable livelihood recovery of earthquake-affected communities in the Nipa-Kutupu district, generate decent jobs and income. With limited resources over 2½ months the project managed to construct two dams and install 9 water tanks, generating 60 workdays for each of 500 local community members.

5.2.4.2. Support to Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade (STREIT)³⁷

The EU funded STREIT Programme aims at improving rural livelihoods in the East and West Sepik Provinces of PNG, with a primary focus on enhancing cocoa, vanilla and fisheries value chains, implemented with the government and a UN Joint initiative led by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The ILO is responsible for the transport infrastructure component, aiming to improve market access for farmers through road maintenance and rehabilitation, restoration of community airstrips, rehabilitation of jetties and boat ramps, waterway clearance and through these activities, the creation of 390,000 person days of decent work. Other components include capacity building and the development of policy guidelines and manuals for road rehabilitation and maintenance. The project started in January 2020 and is due for completion in June 2025.

5.2.5. Labour-based technology and socio-economic recovery in Cambodia

The EIIP has been working in Cambodia since 1992³⁸, starting with promoting labour-based technology as an effective means to improve infrastructure and create jobs for returning refugees, rehabilitating roads and irrigation canals and clearing at Angkor Wat World Heritage Site. From 2002-2006 as part of an ADB funded rural development project the ILO provided technical assistance, introducing IRAP to the Ministry of Rural Development. In 2007 the ILO introduced its Local Resource-Based approach to upgrade the infrastructure of low-income settlements in Battambang and in 2008 supported a national social protection strategy, including a public works programme, designed to provide jobs and income for poor and vulnerable households while creating infrastructure assets.

5.2.5.1. COVID-19 Socio-Economic Recovery for Migrants and Host Communities

The most recent EIIP project in Cambodia started in 2021. It is titled “COVID-19 Socio-economic recovery for returning migrants and host communities in North-West Cambodia”³⁹ and is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand (MFAT). The project aims to mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing the need to create jobs and provide skills development in remittance dependent communities in Siem Reap and Battambang, and targeting returned migrants and vulnerable households. This project plans to create more than 3,250 job opportunities and 83,000 workdays, through rural infrastructure works,

³⁶ [Employment Intensive Investment Program \(EIIP\) and decent employment for women in Yemen](#) - ILO

³⁷ [Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade \(STREIT\) Programme](#) - ILO

³⁸ [EIIP activities in Cambodia](#) - ILO, 2017

³⁹ [COVID-19 Socio-economic recovery for returning migrants and host communities in North-West Cambodia](#) - ILO, 2023

combined with Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) training in construction and other sectors and support to local MSMEs, combining digital and green skills. Infrastructure works, implemented via a mix of community contracts and local competitive bidding, have included routine road maintenance, culvert construction, and rural road rehabilitation.

5.2.6. Rural transport connectivity in Nepal

5.2.6.1. Strengthening the National Rural Transport Program (SNRTP)⁴⁰

The Strengthening the National Rural Transport Program (SNRTP) for Nepal project ran from 2014 to 2019, implemented in partnership with the Department of Local Infrastructure and Agricultural Roads (DoLIDAR) and funded by the World Bank. The project aimed to enhance the availability and reliability of transport connectivity for rural communities, targeting 15 million people living in 36 districts. The project was comprised of two components, the first delivering institutional strengthening and technical assistance (including monitoring of works and an impact study) and a second supporting the implementation of civil works (upgrading and maintaining rural transport infrastructure).

The project originally targeted the generation of 3.9 million person-days of decent work in road maintenance, with a physical target of 5,500 km of routine and 1,500 km of periodic maintenance of rural roads, bridges and crossing structures. In the World Bank report in 2019⁴¹ it was noted that the project had generated 5.4 million paid work-days, including training for 1,900 construction workers, improving their skills in building dry walls, stone soling, tree planting and bio-engineering. To enhance environmental protection and road safety, bio-engineering works of 127,500m² were implemented with 85,00 trees planted. Under the first component 400 government officials were trained to use an asset management tool for rural roads, which included a mobile based monitoring system.

Conclusions

- Projects in Jordan and Iraq support to livelihoods through heritage, conservation skills, tourism and culture
- In Iraq EIIP is creating work for young women and men whilst addressing the need for affordable green housing
- The EIIP approach is also being promoted in Iraq as a model for a national Public Works programme
- EIIP Lebanon is responding to the regional refugee crisis, generating jobs for host communities and Syrian refugees
- In Syria EIIP has responded to multiple earthquakes, with debris removal infrastructure rehabilitation and training
- In Jordan EIIP has expanded from cash-for-work to agricultural, school and rural road infrastructure
- In Yemen EIIP enhances access for women to community contracting with training and business support
- EIIP in Afghanistan works under the HDPN banner and addresses humanitarian and development needs
- EIIP has worked in the Philippines since the 1990s and recently implemented a water system project in Mindanao
- In Timor-Leste EIIP has supported many projects starting with cash-for-work and rural road works
- 2 projects in Timor-Leste worked with the government on the largest rural road development project in the country
- In Papua New Guinea EIIP has responded to earthquakes and developed a longer-term reconstruction strategy
- EIIP in PNG has also supported rural entrepreneurship and trade rehabilitating roads, jetties, boat ramps and airstrips
- Active in Cambodia since 1992, EIIP has recently aided migrant economic recovery through rural infrastructure
- In Nepal EIIP has helped enhanced rural connectivity by upgrading and maintaining rural transport infrastructure

⁴⁰ [Strengthening the National Rural Transport Programme \(SNRTP\)](#) and [Employment-Intensive Investment: Strengthening the National Rural Transport Program \(SNRTP\)](#) – Nepal - ILO

⁴¹ [World Bank ILO Cooperation](#) – ILO, 2019

6. Examples of South-South collaboration

6.1. Brief explanation of SSTC

South-South Cooperation (SSC) refers to technical cooperation between developing countries in the Global South, to strengthen ties and address common development challenges and areas of opportunity. When implemented with a partner from the Global North or a multilateral organisation, it is referred to as Triangular Cooperation. The approach is guided by a series of principles, promoting inclusive development to equitably distribute resources, opportunities, and benefits. SSTC is a tool used by governments, organisations, academics, social partners, and the private sector to collaborate, exchange knowledge, experiences, good practices, skills and policies, regarding employment generation and decent work.

6.1.1. ILO and SSTC

The ILO sees SSTC as a means to achieve its mandate and mission, implement the Decent Work Agenda and promote fair, inclusive and sustainable labour practices worldwide. From 2022-2023 the ILO, PARDEV (Partnership Development) and the ITC-Turin office initiated 28 South-South and Triangular Cooperation projects across 5 regions, spanning more than 80 countries. Documented Good Practices⁴² reflect the SSTC endeavours of the ILO constituents and practitioners, with activities such as peer-learning, virtual exchanges, and joint research – all aligning with the ILO's 2022-2023 strategic framework. South-South Cooperation in the ILO has also encompassed work with key government groups such as BRICS, IBSA, G20, G77 and g7+ (group of fragile countries). For 2024-2025, the ILO has launched 14 SSTC activities⁴³.

6.2. Regional conferences, training and forums

6.2.1. EIIP Arab States seminar⁴⁴ – Jordan, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, OPT and Lebanon

From 27-29 February 2024 EIIP⁴⁵ held a successful regional workshop in Jordan, bringing together participants from Jordan, Iraq, Syria and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Yemen and Lebanon, along with technical specialists from the ILO regional office and Geneva. The event served as a platform for participants to share success stories, lessons learnt and discuss a road map for future EIIP strategies and how employment-intensive interventions have impacted on sustainable development in the Arab States region. Site visits were made to the Jordanian EIIP project with government counterparts to gain insights into the practical implementation of EIIP projects, whilst showcasing the tangible impacts of an employment-intensive endeavour.

6.2.2. 19th Regional Seminar for Labour-based Practitioners - Rwanda

From 15-19 May 2023⁴⁶ an ILO Regional Seminar for Labour-based Practitioners was hosted by the Ministry of Public Service and Labour, Rwanda. The theme of the seminar was "Promoting skills and productive (decent) jobs for our common better future" and more than 1,000 participants from 49 countries joined together to discuss and share experiences, policies and strategies on how to create resilient communities through labour-intensive approaches. Presentations were made on sub-themes including: Innovation in employment-intensive technology; Enabling policy; Skills and competencies for transformative infrastructure; and Employment intensive works in the context of fragility.

⁴² [Promoting Social Justice in the Global South: Global and regional South-South Cooperation good practices](#) – ILO, 2023

⁴³ [South-South and triangular cooperation \(SSTC\)](#) - ILO

⁴⁴ [Employment Intensive Investment Programme \(EIIP\) Arab States Seminar](#) – YouTube, ILO, 2024

⁴⁵ [EIIP regional workshop: Employment Intensive Investment Programme workshop highlights success stories and future roadmap](#) – ILO, 2024

⁴⁶ [19th Regional Seminar for Labour-based Practitioners](#) – ILO, 2023

6.2.3. 18th Regional Seminar for Labour-based Practitioners - Tunisia

From 9-13 September 2019⁴⁷, an ILO Regional Seminar for Labour-based Practitioners was hosted by the Government of Tunisia. The theme of the seminar was "towards sustainable and inclusive local development: local resource-based approaches and decent job creation." Eight sessions were held during the seminar touching on LRB approaches, promoting gender equality, employment impact assessments, EIIP in fragile situations, and alternative an innovative technology. At the close of the seminar a Ministerial Declaration was articulated around 8 commitments covering diversification, strengthening public body capacities, promoting coordination, measures to improve public procurement policies and putting in place appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems.

6.2.4. IRAP expert's group meeting – Bangladesh and Philippines

From 26-27 October 1997⁴⁸ the ILO conducted an Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning (IRAP) expert's group meeting hosted by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and organised by the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD) in Bangladesh. IRAP is a tool that was developed in the 1990's (and that has been applied successfully in the Philippines and Laos) as a means to plan interventions to improve the access of rural households to basic goods and services. The workshop brought together 21 participants, and helped clarified how IRAP has been applied, and its limitations and advantages, in rural development, rural transportation and as a participatory tool.

6.2.5. Forum on Pro-poor Delivery of Rural Infrastructure Services - Thailand

From 4-6 November 2003⁴⁹, the ILO held a forum on “pro-poor delivery of rural infrastructure services: the challenge of decentralization’ in Bangkok. The objective was to share information and knowledge on how rural infrastructure services are delivered in a decentralised system; to define key issues and to illustrate best practices from the region. Thirty-two delegates, representing 13 regional countries plus the UK and USA attended. Five sessions covered topics such as: Decentralisation in Practice; Planning, Budgeting and Finance, Capacity Building, Sustaining created assets and the impact of decentralisation. A summary based on the case studies and discussions listed a set of issues that influence the pro-poor delivery of rural infrastructure services in a decentralised system.

6.2.6. International Training Centre of the ILO (ITCILO) courses and events

The ILO ITC supports SSTC by facilitating knowledge exchange, capacity building, and partnerships among developing countries, providing training programs, workshops, and tools tailored to promote peer learning and the sharing of best practices on labour, employment, and social protection. The courses and events target a wide range of audiences, including participants from the global south. Resource persons for EIIP courses are primarily specialists actively implementing employment-intensive activities in the field, bringing valuable knowledge and experience from many countries. Courses are delivered in person and online, and some are tailored for specific audiences such as French or Arabic-speaking countries.

ILOITC events with a link to SSTC and EIIP, have included:

- A course in August 2025 on “Future Leaders in the World of Work” with the South-South University⁵⁰, equipping participants with the skills to devise integrated sustainable development approaches.
- A Virtual Skills Fair⁵¹ with the objective of developing partnerships among institutions and the aim of leading to solutions for skills development initiatives.

⁴⁷ [Summary of the 18th Regional Seminar for Labour-based Practitioners](#) – ILO, 2020

⁴⁸ [Integrated rural accessibility planning \(IRAP\) expert's group meeting 26-27 October 1997 workshop report & documentation](#) – ILO, 2007

⁴⁹ [Forum on the Pro-poor Delivery of Rural Infrastructure Services: The Challenge of Decentralisation](#) – ILO, 2003

⁵⁰ [Future Leaders in The World Of Work: South-South University](#) – ILOITC, 2025

⁵¹ [Virtual Skills Fair: South South And Triangular Cooperation](#) – ILOITC, 2021

- A seminar on Employment Policies and Strategies in Southeast Asia contributing to a human-centred recovery to achieve social justice and decent work, in July 2023.⁵²
- An e-Learning course on systemic approach to skills development through SSTC and peer learning, from October – November 2022, address the challenges facing Gulf Cooperation Council.⁵³
- An ILO-ITC/IO event on “Shifting perspectives around decent work for refugees”, in April 2021, exploring best practices and policy guidance for refugee employment (with participation from ROAP and ROAS).⁵⁴
- A course “Promoting inclusive infrastructure investments and green works among South and East African countries”, in 2023⁵⁵, exploring good practices in green and forestry works through peer learning.
- A course on “Green Works and Nature-Based Solutions to Address Climate and Nature Crises”, focussing on designing implementation adaptation measures, from March to April 2025.⁵⁶
- A course on “Decent Work Through Nature-Based Solutions”, aiming to gain understanding of decent work and NbS principles for informed decision making, from September to October 2025.⁵⁷
- An interactive e-learning opportunity on “Contracting SMEs for Labour-Based Public Works”, exploring how to engage SMEs using transparent and efficient procurement procedures, from September to October 2025.⁵⁸
- A course on “Designing Public Employment Programmes (PEPs)”, covering policy and design, with experiences from high, middle and low-income countries, in November 2025.⁵⁹
- Instructional material on “Promoting transition to formality for peace and resilience”, explaining conceptual issues of informality in conflict-affected settings with tips and questions on designing projects.⁶⁰
- Booklet on “Inclusion of refugees and other displaced persons in the labour market with a humanitarian development nexus focus”, with case studies from Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Syria Yemen and Afghanistan.⁶¹

SSTC is also an effective way of sharing knowledge on green works (which refers to an employment-intensive approach to developing, restoring and maintaining public infrastructure, community assets and landscapes that contribute to environmental goals such as climate change adaptation, nature conservation and disaster risk reduction). An SSTC approach can support peer-to-peer exchange and learning among countries of the Global South that face similar environmental challenges. In this light ITC-ILO developed an e-learning course on “Promoting Green Infrastructure Investments and Forestry Works Among South and East African Countries by Enhancing South-South and Triangular Cooperation” in 2023.⁶²

6.3. SSTC examples in the Arab States

6.3.1. Lebanon expertise supports earthquake response in Syria – February 2023

In February 2023 EIIP in Lebanon⁶³ used their experience and skills to support a new EIIP project in Syria, providing technical support for damage assessment and debris removal for the ILO in Aleppo. This included procurement and logistics support, plus in-country training for the Order of Engineers in Syria in structural

⁵² [ILO Project Launch and Seminar on Employment Policies and Strategies in Southeast Asia](#) – ILOITC, 2023

⁵³ [E-Learning Course on Skills and TVET in GCC with a South-South Approach](#) – ILO, 2023

⁵⁴ [Shifting perspectives around decent work for refugees](#) – ILO/ILOITC, 2021

⁵⁵ [Online training course “Promoting inclusive infrastructure investments and green works among South and East African countries by enhancing South-South cooperation”](#) – ILOITC, 2023

⁵⁶ [Green Works and Nature-Based Solutions to Address Climate and Nature Crises](#) – ILOITC, 2025

⁵⁷ [Decent Work Through Nature-Based Solutions - Supporting the Just Transition](#) – ILOITC, 2025

⁵⁸ [Contracting SMES for Labour-Based Public Works](#) – ILOITC, 2025

⁵⁹ [Designing Public Employment Programmes \(PEPs\)](#) – ILOITC, 2025

⁶⁰ [Promoting transition to formality for peace and resilience - Instructional material](#) – ILOITC

⁶¹ [Inclusion of refugees and other displaced persons in the labour market with a humanitarian development nexus focus - Booklet](#) – ILOITC

⁶² [Promoting Green Infrastructure Investments and Forestry Works among South and East African Countries](#) – ILO, 2023

⁶³ [Earthquake adds further financial burden to already struggling households and workers in Aleppo](#) – ILO, 2023

earthquake damage assessment techniques and equipment. This was funded by the ILO in Syria and involved ILO ROAS, ILO EIIP Lebanon and Syria and the Syrian Order of Engineers Aleppo Branch. This model provided cross-border expertise and support from staff who knew the context and could speak the same language, drawing on established staffing and resources to set up new offices and interventions.

► **EIIP activities in Aleppo (debris removal and cleaning)**

Phase 1, initiated in May 2023, included:

- Clearing of 29 sites in urban neighbourhoods
- Removal of 5,400 m³ of debris
- Creation of 114 job opportunities.

Phase 2, which started in September 2023, included:

- Creation of 239 job opportunities
- Removal of remaining debris and rubble
- Reopening of roads and sewage system maintenance
- Repair of damaged roads and sidewalks

Photo: Aleppo, Syria ©ILO, 2023



6.3.2. Jordanian government visits EIIP Lebanon – October 2023

In October 2023 members of the Jordanian Government visited the ongoing EIIP project in Lebanon. Site visits were made to Green Plan farms, and a meeting was conducted with the Ministry of Agriculture/Green Plan and with EIIP project team. The Green Plan project⁶⁴ is implemented by EIIP in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and is funded by KfW. The project generates green jobs through environmentally friendly works focusing on environmental preservation, land reclamation and improved agricultural and economic productivity. Construction activities include terracing, dry stone retaining walls, irrigation networks and concrete water tanks/reservoirs.

This exchange of knowledge between Jordanian government officials as well as EIIP staff in Jordan and in Lebanon is an important means of exchange and learning from similar projects and contexts in the region. The exchange was funded by ILO Jordan with contributions in kind from ILO EIIP Lebanon, and can be used to refresh and generate new concepts for the project's future strategy. EIIP staff in Lebanon believe that there is potential to make further exchanges with other projects in the region and beyond.

⁶⁴ [ILO EIIP's Green Plan Project: Driving Sustainable Agriculture and Economic Transformation](#) – ILO, 2024

► **Participants from the Jordanian Government visit the Green Plan farms in Lebanon with EIIP staff**

The Green Plan project supports vulnerable farmers across Lebanon. Achievements include:

- Direct assistance to 740 farmers
- Employment opportunities for 2,459 workers
- Generation of 1,627 jobs in total
- Repair of damaged roads and sidewalks

The project uses a Local Resource-Based approach, employing local expertise, knowledge and skills, thus minimising reliance on external resources.

Photo: Green Plan Farms visit ©ILO Lebanon, 2023



6.3.3. Jordanian engineers train trainers in Iraq, Jordan and Yemen – November 2022

In November 2022 for 5 days, the ILO arranged with the Jordanian Engineers Association for them to train local trainers from Iraq, Jordan and Yemen. This was conducted under the skills certification interventions component of the “Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development” project, and in preparation to implement the programme. The Training of Trainers (TOT) was based on a Technical Curriculum developed by an ILO International Consultant and included general EIIP subjects as well as customized sections on Cultural Heritage activities. After the TOT, a skills' certification programme was conducted in-person in each country through the trained trainers, which focused on skills relevant to historical sites conservation works. While The BEIT project does not have ongoing SSTC interventions, they are envisaging SSTC activities, particularly as part of the process of enabling the establishment of a National Public Works Programme with countries that have been to establish similar programmes.

6.4. SSTC examples in the Asia-Pacific Region

6.4.1. Nepal government delegation visits EIIP Timor-Leste – November 2015

From 8-15 November 2015 a twelve member technical Nepalese delegation, visited two major ILO EIIP projects and its government counterpart in Timor-Leste. The delegation was headed by the Director General of the Department of Local Infrastructure Development (DoLIDAR), under the Ministry of Federal Administration and Local Development (MoFALD), Nepal. The objective was to hold technical discussions on the construction and maintenance of rural roads, small scale contractor training and employment-intensive approaches. The study tour included meetings and briefings by the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communication (MPWTC) of Timor-Leste and ILO project staff as well as visits to ERA (Enhancing Rural Access project) and R4D (Road for Development) rural road project sites (see details of the EIIP Strengthening the National Rural Transport Program (SNRTP) for Nepal project under Section 5).

6.4.2. EIIP Philippines joins World Water Week – August 2021

► EIIP water supply project for peace in Mindanao

Project outcomes included:

- Improved access to safe and reliable water supply in target communities
- Capacity building for maintenance of water supply system.
- Organisation of a skilled pool of workers to address demands for local construction works
- About 1,800 workers benefitted from jobs created through water infrastructure projects

Photo: Screen grab from [video presented at World Water Week](#) ©ILO, 2021



From 23-27 August 2021 UN-Water organised World Water Week⁶⁵, on the theme of **Building Resilience Faster and the ILO “Improvement of Water Supply Equipment Management Capacity for the Establishment of Peace in Mindanao” project, participated⁶⁶**. The project arranged for Mr Alagan, an indigenous leader, and President of the Rifao Spring Development Organization to share his experience (as part of the session on Leading the world: Indigenous-led partnerships and governance). The session discussed the effectiveness of indigenous-driven solutions to address water crises, fostering partnership between indigenous peoples from Australia, Myanmar, New Zealand and Argentina. The presentation underscored how the project respected indigenous cultures and traditions.

Conclusions

- SSTC refers to cooperation between developing countries to strengthen ties and address development challenges
- SSTC helps the ILO achieve its mandate. It carried out 28 SSTC activities from 2022-23 and 14 from 2024-25
- EIIP held a seminar in Jordan bringing together specialists from the Arab States, to discuss EIIP regional strategies
- EIIP regularly conducts regional seminars for labour-based practitioners, the most recent being in Rwanda in 2023
- Other regional seminars have been held in Thailand on pro-poor rural infrastructure and on IRAP in Bangladesh
- ILOITC supports SSTC through workshops to promote peer learning, with EIIP specialists bringing local knowledge
- Along with numerous courses ILOITC has developed an e-learning course on green infrastructure investment
- EIIP Lebanon recently supported a new project in Syria, providing training in earthquake damage assessment
- Jordanian government members visited Green Plan farms with EIIP Lebanon, to refresh and generate new concepts
- Jordanian engineers have trained local trainers from Iraq, Jordan and Yemen on cultural heritage conservation
- Nepal government members visited 2 EIIP Timor-Leste projects to discuss road construction and training
- The water supply project in the Philippines joined World Water Week, with a local leader to sharing his experience

⁶⁵ [World Water Week in Stockholm 2021](#) – United Nations, UN Water, 2021

⁶⁶ [Indigenous Peoples: Partners for safe water, decent work and peace](#) – ILO, 2021

7. Scope for further South-South collaboration

7.1. Sub-modalities and mechanisms in SSTC examples

The sub-modalities of the EIIP SSTC examples included in this paper are limited to **fragile-to-fragile cooperation and regional cooperation**. Although there were no examples obtained of city-to-city cooperation and cooperation between small island states, that is not to say these types of SSTC experiences have not happened over the last decade or prior to that. All four SSTC mechanisms have been used: Development Cooperation (in the form of policy dialogue, workshops on strategy with governments and cost sharing for visits); Capacity Development (through study tours); Knowledge and Experience Sharing (through fielding of experts and training of trainers); and Technology Transfer (through sharing of good practices and demonstration of technologies).

7.2. Opportunities for regional partnerships

Although there are significant differences between the regions and all countries face unique challenges, the similarities between challenges faced and the type of EIIP activities in the two regions presents an **opportunity for partnership and cooperation**. Developing countries in both regions face climate challenges, natural disasters, economic crises, instability, decent work challenges, housing and urbanization issues and high unemployment rates. Despite the different weight of some these challenges, many of the problems faced are similar and EIIP addresses them in similar ways. Thus, there is an opportunity for countries, cities, institutions, key specialists to share knowledge, experience and approaches that can be used to tackle these issues.

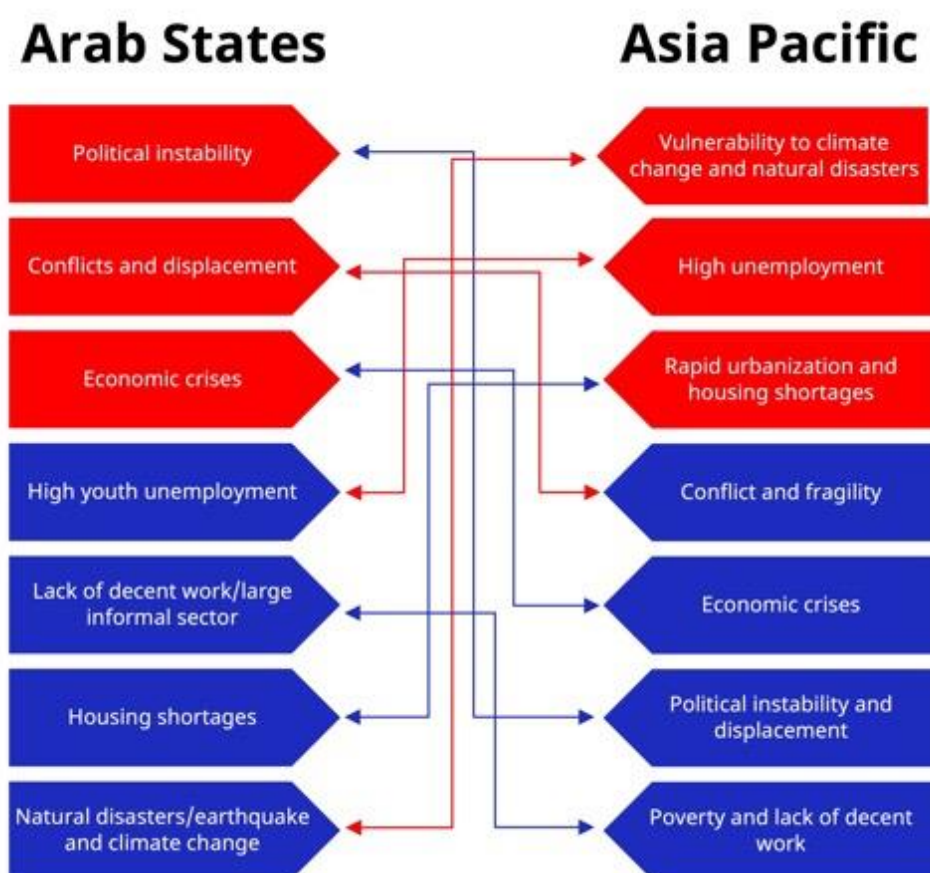


Figure 2 Comparison of some key challenges, between the two regions (this is not an exhaustive list of the challenges)

A paper produced by the ILO on trade and regional integration in Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States, (although produced in 2016⁶⁷) notes that to ensure that regional integration will lead to more inclusive outcomes, appropriate employment policies should be put in place. These should enable workers and enterprises participate in and benefit from international trade, as well as integrate labour provisions and fundamental principles and rights at work in trade agreements, continue efforts to building social protection floors and extend social security, and design appropriate policies to reduce disparities and promote gender equality.

The point about 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 because these regions have some of the highest gender gaps in labour force participation. As noted above despite some progress, the Arab States had the lowest female labour force participation rate in the world at 11.7% in 2024⁶⁸ (while it was 66.2% for men). In comparison the rate in the whole of the Asia Pacific in 2021 was 37.5%⁶⁹ (with this figure being lowered by the rate in South Asia sub-region which was 29.7% and where there is a gap between male and female labour force participation of almost 50 percentage points).

7.3. EIIP initiatives which could benefit from SSTC activities

EIIP has a significant presence in both regions having implemented numerous projects and gained decades of experience, addressing poverty, unemployment and underemployment through public investments in infrastructure. This shared focus presents several opportunities for cross-regional partnerships. To name just one, both regions are vulnerable to climate change (rising sea levels, desertification and extreme weather events to mention just a few) as well as natural disasters (such as earthquakes in Nepal and Syria). Thus, joint projects or sharing of experience in green infrastructure, renewable energy and sustainable agriculture (solar farms, agricultural water management), whilst promoting green jobs, sharing strategies for sustainable development can also contribute to achieving the SDGs.

Another key comparable issue is access to safe water and sanitation which is regarded as a fundamental human right. The ILO support global goals SDG 6 (to ensure access to safe water and sanitation) and SDG 8 (promoting economic growth, employment, and decent work), through creating decent job opportunities⁷⁰. Activities in the Philippines have included the rehabilitation of water facilities, working with indigenous tribal peoples. Likewise in Sri Lanka⁷¹ EIIP have helped overcome the economic crisis through cash-for-work rehabilitating water tanks (small reservoirs) increasing cropping intensity for farmers. Correspondingly, in Lebanon works have included the construction of green community assets such as water tanks and reservoirs to support local farmers impacted by the economic crisis, helping to reclaim unproductive land and increase yields⁷².

7.4. Scope for other EIIP-focused SSTC activities

EIIP and the ILOITC have decades of experience in organising regional conferences, strategy planning exercises and technical workshops, bringing together expertise from around the world. Recent and upcoming successful examples include strategic planning in the Arab States, the upcoming Bangladesh EIIP SSTC forum and the 20th ILO Regional Conference for Labour-based Practitioners, in May 2025 in Addis Ababa. Such forums, which for EIIP have focused on labour-based practitioners, IRAP (rural accessibility planning), strategic and regional planning and prop-poor rural infrastructure, provide a platform for knowledge sharing, capacity building and networking among policy makers, development partners and specialists.

Similarly, EIIPs recent examples of technical exchange visits, training of trainers and governmental project visits in the Arab States, can be replicated between neighbouring or nearby countries in both regions as well as

⁶⁷ [Trade and regional integration in Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States](#) – ILO, 2016

⁶⁸ [Gender equality and non-discrimination in the Arab States](#) – ILO

⁶⁹ [Where women work in Asia and the Pacific](#) – ILO, 2023

⁷⁰ [Investing in national and local capacity for water and sanitation supports global initiatives aimed at accelerating decent jobs creation, enhancing social protection, and promoting social justice](#) – UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

⁷¹ [Local Empowerment through Economic Development and Reconciliation Project \(LEED+\)](#) – DFAT, 2023

⁷² [ILO EIIP's Green Plan Project: Driving Sustainable Agriculture and Economic Transformation](#) – ILO, 2024

inter-regionally. These exchanges can enhance technical understanding of good practices, introduce innovative labour-based methods and policy updates while fostering collaboration and strengthening advocacy efforts. Certainly in the Arab States, EIIP project teams have mentioned the potential for further exchange with other projects in the region and beyond, in order to refresh ideas and plan future project strategies. No doubt similar exchanges could take place where issues and approaches are comparable in the Asia Pacific region.

Another example of where there is potential for inter-regional exchange is the plan for implementing a National Public Works Programme in Iraq. As noted in earlier sections of this report the EIIP has long experience of such Public Works Programmes and Public Employment Programmes (PEP) – with good examples in Asia (the MGNREGA in India and the Rural Access Programme (RAP) in Nepal⁷³) and in Africa (the Expanded Public Works Programme – EPWP, in South Africa), plus training courses planned in the ILOITC on designing PEPs in 2025.

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. SSTC can lead to innovative solutions tailored to local contexts and situations, whilst promoting sustainable employment and social justice. Aside from the inter-regional forum in Bangladesh the ILO is planning an initiative that targets Small Island Developing States (SIDS)⁷⁴, which face unique vulnerabilities to climate change impacts. There is substantial potential in further integrating SSTC within the EIIP framework, to enhance the effectiveness of employment-intensive projects and contribute to the goal of decent work for all.

⁷³ [Boosting Youth Employment Through Public Works](#) – ILO, 2015

⁷⁴ [South-South Cooperation in ILO's Regular Budget \(RBT\): the 2024 year in Review](#) – ILO, 2024

8. Annex 1: Data gathering form

Two data instruments were prepared to gather information from EIIP specialists on their SSTC and project experience in the Arab States and Asia Pacific regions. The first version was shortened to make completion of the form less onerous and is copied below:

8.1. Background

ILO are planning an inter-regional forum in 2025 with a focus on SSTC, EIIP and its application in Asia and Arab States to promote peer-to-peer learning between institutions, development practitioners and organisations of the global south. The forum will cover 4 thematic areas:

1. What makes EIIP relevant to our regions
2. EIIP for Immediate response during and immediately after crisis event
3. EIIP recovery and reconstruction works, implementation and capacity building
4. How Governments lead the design and implementation of PWP/PEP

Information is being gathered to prepare an input paper under thematic area 1, and a peer learning guide to introduce SSTC, with EIIP case studies, identifying and documenting good practices. SSTC (South-South Technical Cooperation) refers to cooperation between developing countries in the Global South and is a tool used by governments, organisations, and academics, to collaborate, exchange knowledge, and experiences. The focus of the forum and this exercise is the relevance and important role of SSTC in the application of EIIP in crisis response in the HDPN.

Contributions are being sought from EIIP specialists, programmes and projects in the Arab States and Asia regions. You can contribute by filling in this form. Responses can be in note form, copied from existing sources, as bullets or links to relevant documents. If you already have documentation of the SSTC activity that answers all the questions, please just share that. You can answer in respect of ongoing or recently completed EIIP projects and providing two good relevant photos would be good. Text in grey can be deleted as you respond.

► Questionnaire

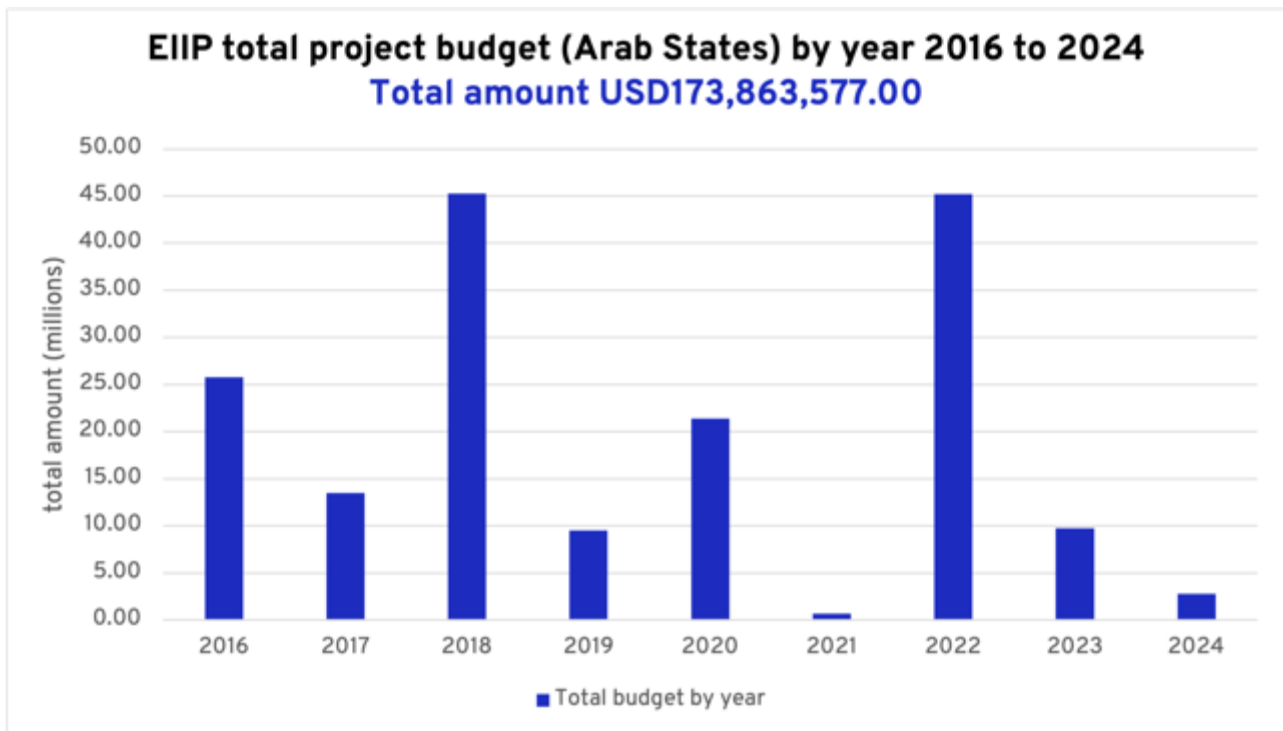
QUESTION	RESPONSE
1. What examples of EIIP focused south-south cooperation are there in your country or project? Please give details about the following	
a. When the cooperation took place?	Provide only month and year (plus approximate duration)
b. What key steps and modality were there for the SSTC activity?	Modalities include City-to-City Cooperation, Fragile-to-Fragile Cooperation, Cooperation between Small Islands and Developing States and Regional, Sub-regional, Interregional Cooperation
c. What were the forms, mechanisms and activities that took place?	This could be Development / Technical cooperation, Sharing of knowledge and experience, Education, Capacity development and Technology transfer, Fielding of experts ...using mechanisms like direct support, cost sharing, peer-learning, personnel exchange
d. How was this particular SSTC activity relevant for EIIP?	
e. The budget and other resources and who provided this?	

QUESTION	RESPONSE
f. The number of people involved in the SSTC activity?	
g. What impact was there on the project/ programme?	
h. What challenges were faced?	
i. Who were the main partners (government, UN etc.) involved?	
2. Why is EIIP focussed SSTC important for your country or project?	
3. What scope is there for other EIIP focussed SSTC activities?	
4. What potential EIIP SSTC partnerships could there be between Asia and Arab States?	
5. Can you please provide some brief information about your project that related to the SSTC activity, this could include all or some of the following information, if available:	
a. Project period:	
b. Budget:	
c. Donor(s) and project partners:	
d. No. of beneficiaries and project outputs:	
e. Main project objectives:	
f. Project activities:	
6. Can you please provide some information about the relevance of EIIP in your country? This could include:	
a. What challenges and needs does EIIP address?	
b. What type of projects or activities have been implemented?	
c. What stakeholders are involved in planning EIIP projects?	

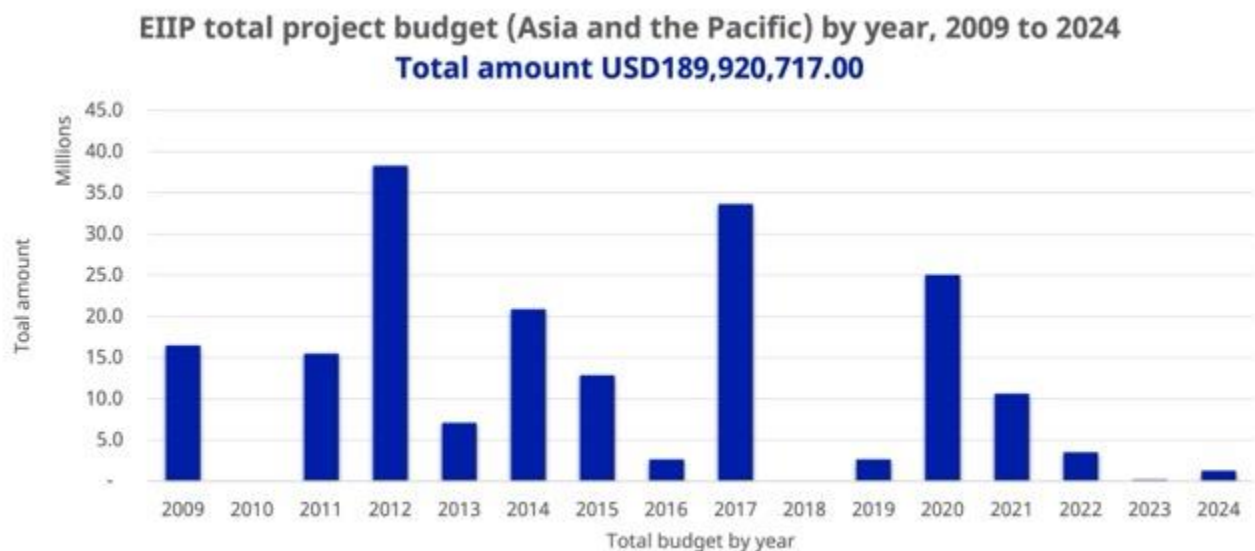
QUESTION	RESPONSE
d. How are beneficiaries targeted for EIIP projects?	
e. What long-term impact has EIIP had?	
f. How does EIIP address sustainability?	
g. What national development goals or policies does EIIP align with?	

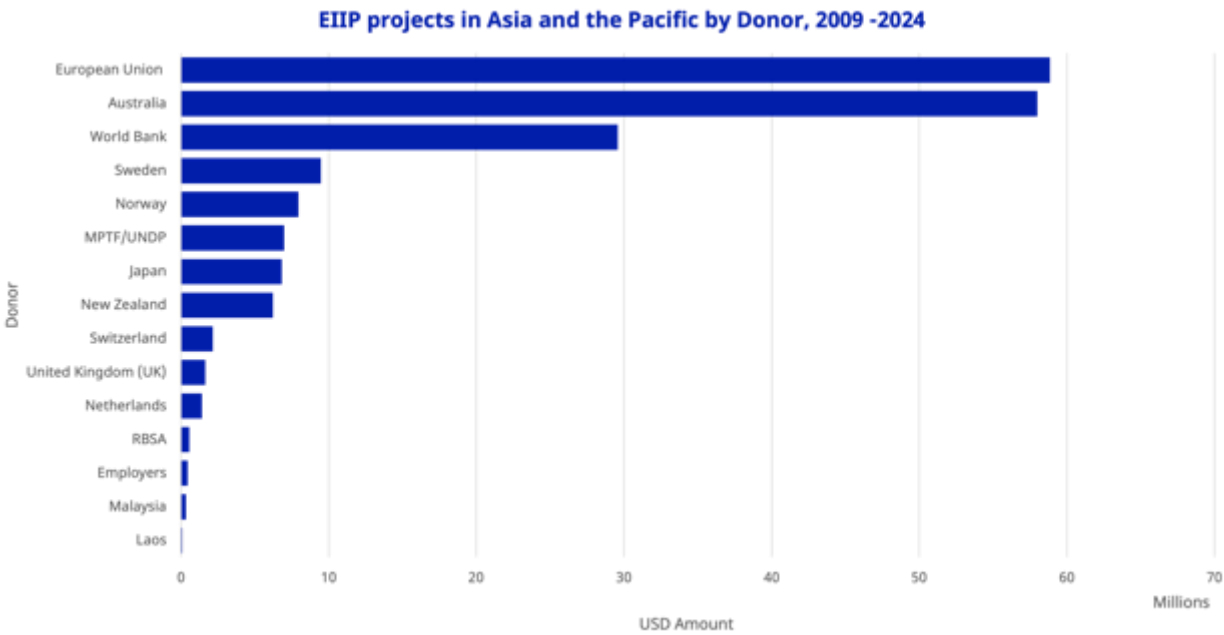
9. Annex 2: Overview of EIIP Projects over the past 12 to 15 years

9.1. EIIP projects in the Arab States 2016-2024



9.2. EIIP projects in the Asia Pacific region 2009-2024





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