

► EIIP Afghanistan News Brief



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► Welcome

to the Twelfth edition of the Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) Afghanistan News Brief. This edition highlights key developments through the end of 2025, including the conclusion of the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA)-funded Delivering as One (DaO) initiative, the rollout of the ILO Director General's (DG) Crisis Response project, and the initial implementation phase of the Social Safety Net (SSN) Japan-funded employment and livelihood initiative. The programme continues to address critical post-earthquake recovery needs in Herat, with a strong emphasis on employment generation, inclusive enterprise support, social protection awareness, and local capacity building. Human stories in this issue reflect the resilience and progress of the communities we serve.

► Project Update

The STFA-funded Delivering as One (DaO) initiative concluded successfully in Kushk district of Herat Province. A total of eight community infrastructure projects were implemented using labour-based and climate-resilient methods. These included the rehabilitation of 4.69 km of rural roads, the restoration of lined irrigation canals, kariz restoration, the renovation of a community social center and a primary school, and disaster mitigation works including 260m of gabion protection walls and 296m of stone masonry structures. The completed works benefited over 19,000 people (including 49.5% women) and employed 1,779 workers including men, women, persons with disabilities, and youth. As part of capacity building, 560 individuals were trained in local resource-based methods, Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), and decent work principles. The training enabled participants to apply EIIP standards, implement labour-based construction techniques, promote a safe working environment, and integrate social safeguards during project execution.

Following this achievement, the ILO launched a new crisis response project, **"Promoting Women-Centered Employment and Decent Work through the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus"** supported by the Director-General's Crisis Response Window. The project started in July 2025 and by the end of the year had completed stakeholder coordination and planning and had prepared for the rollout of physical works in early 2026. Key activities include

infrastructure planning, contractor training, community engagement, and preparation for physical works focused on vulnerable groups, especially women and persons with disabilities.

Simultaneously, a new SSN Japan-funded project titled **"Strengthening Employment and Livelihoods through Social Safety Net Support in Western Afghanistan"** began in October 2025. In its initial phase, the project focused on community consultations, technical assessments, and procurement preparation. Priority infrastructure interventions were identified in Kushk Robat Sangi district, with the design completed and construction scheduled to start in the first quarter of 2026.

Enterprise Development & Centre of Excellence

The enterprise component under the STFA-funded project contributed significantly to local economic recovery. In 2025, ILO supported the development of 13 MSMEs with grants, coaching, and skills development across carpet weaving, tailoring, saffron, and handicraft. This support sustained/created 384 jobs, empowered women entrepreneurs, and strengthened value chains.

Following this, the DG Crisis Response project was launched with an integrated approach combining employment-intensive infrastructure (EIIP) and enterprise development. Under the enterprise component, the ILO, in partnership with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Herat Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HWCCI), trained 190 entrepreneurs (including 150 women and 40 men) and supported 230 MSMEs through a series of trainings and advisory services. These activities included ToT programmes on OSH, child labour elimination, and non-discrimination, business skills training Improve Your Business (IYB), Business-to-Business (B2B), and digital marketing. These efforts aim to promote decent work, expand market access, and enable women-led and women-supportive MSMEs to meet compliance standards and ethical trade practices. The ILO, in partnership with UNDP and HWCCI, established a Center of Excellence (CoE) on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW). The CoE will institutionalize ethical labour practices and strengthen market access and advisory services.



Figure 1: Nesar Ahmad Zuri works on a road project in Khwaja Qasim village

Restoring Dignity Through Inclusion: Nesar's Experience with ILO-EIIP

Nesar Ahmad Zuri, a person with disability

Nesar Ahmad Zuri, a person with disability

At 35 years old, Nesar Ahmad Zuri had long believed that steady, dignified work was beyond his reach. Living with a physical disability, he had spent years doing hard labour for low pay – often just 100 to 150 Afghanis a day – simply to keep his family of six afloat after the passing of his father.

But that changed when the ILO-EIIP project funded by STFA launched a road rehabilitation project in Khwaja Qasim village of Kushk district. The project not only offered jobs but emphasized inclusiveness, making it clear that persons with disabilities were welcome to apply.

"I never thought someone like me would be hired, but when I met Ms. Soudabeh Mohammady, the Community Liaison Officer (CLO), and she told me the project welcome workers with disabilities and pay fairly and equally – 450 Afghanis a day, plus an additional 50 Afghanis per day invested in our future skill development. I was speechless."

The project also ensured that workers were matched with tasks appropriate to their abilities and were covered by workplace insurance. For Nesar, this was the first time he felt truly respected and treated equally.

"I didn't just earn money – I earned dignity. I was no longer a burden. I was contributing, I belonged."

Over the course of his one-month contract, Nesar worked alongside others with pride, using his earnings to support his family. But beyond the income, what impacted him most was the sense of being included and valued.

"I used to believe my body limited me. But this project showed me that with the right support, I can still contribute. This gave me back my self-worth."

Nesar's story is a reminder that inclusive employment is not just about wages – it's about restoring dignity, creating opportunity and enabling participation for all, regardless of physical ability.



Figure 1: ILO Afghanistan senior leadership meeting with representatives of ACCI and AWCCI Herat chapters.



Figure 2: ILO Afghanistan senior leadership visits a woman entrepreneur who started a shop with technical and financial support provided by the ILO, Kushk Robat Sangi District, Herat Province



Figure 3: Handover of the renovated community social center to the people of Gala-e-Girdak village, Kushk Robat Sangi district, Herat.



Figure 4: Handover of the lined irrigation canal project to the community of Darwish Ali village, Kushk Robat Sangi district, Herat.



Figure 5: Community Consultation and technical assessment of priority infrastructure interventions in Ayubi village, Kushk Robat Sangi district, Herat.



Figure 6: Women's engagement and consultation meeting on infrastructure planning and livelihoods, Kushk Robat Sangi district, Herat.



Figure 7: Gabion basket weaving activity carried out by womenworkers as part of ILO-supported infrastructure works in Kushk Robat Sangi District, Herat.



Figure 8: STFA donor visit to ILO-supported women-led MSMEs in Injil District, Herat.