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ILO Arab States' Strategic Engagement in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: Challenges & Opportunities

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01. Introduction

- In the wake of the Syria crisis in 2011, the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States adopted a cross-cutting development-focused and employment-driven strategy in neighboring countries in crisis that both supports the vulnerable citizenry of the countries as well as forcibly displaced persons in order to restore, rebuild and preserve social and economic stability and realize the rights of both to decent work and social justice. ILO's work in the Arab region further corroborated the importance of early substantive engagement of development actors in crisis settings and the centrality of sustainable development solutions in support of HDPN.
 - Fast forward to today, the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States operates in what is now commonly known as the 'triple nexus' space – humanitarian, development, and peace nexus (HDPN) - where protracted crises have increased fragility and emphasized the need for more integrated approaches in tackling seemingly intractable problems. More than 10 years on, ILO's work in the region has strategically reinforced efforts towards greater synergies between humanitarian and development action and efficiency, and towards a more explicit contribution to building social cohesion and peace.
 - Against the backdrop of several significant recent landmark events, the ILO Regional Office in the Arab region embarked upon a stock-taking of its work in the region, assessing the lessons learned and evaluation recommendations from its interventions in the HDP Nexus space and identifying best practices with a view to replicating or scaling up where relevant. As part of this reflection, the ILO office in the Arab States commissioned a consultancy to examine the ILO Regional Office's approaches within the HDPN, identify challenges and opportunities, and develop an engagement strategy to support HDPN solutions in the Arab region for the next 3 to 5 years.
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ILO's work in the Arab region has corroborated the importance of early substantive engagement of development actors in crisis settings and the centrality of sustainable development solutions in support of HDPN.

In the wake of the Syria crisis in 2011, the ILO Regional Office for the Arab states adopted a cross-cutting development-focused and employment-driven strategy in neighboring countries in crisis that both supports the vulnerable citizenry of the countries as well as forcibly displaced persons in order to restore, rebuild and preserve social and economic stability and realize the rights of both to decent work and social justice. Embedded in the principles of decent work, the ILO strategy was built on its core mandate to promote employment, social dialogue, social protection, and international labour standards. This strategy and the work in operationalizing this strategy gained momentum in the aftermath of the 2016 London conference on "Supporting Syria and the Region". The Conference highlighted the critical role of decent work in addressing the impact of large movements of refugees in Jordan and Lebanon and beyond on the labour market and in highlighting the nexus between humanitarian action and development cooperation.[1] Crucially, ILO's work showcased the contribution of a development approach to rapidly changing crisis situations in the region and corroborated the importance of substantial and early engagement of development actors in crisis settings.

Fast forward to today, the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States operates in what is now commonly known as the 'triple nexus' space – humanitarian, development, and peace nexus (HDPN) - where protracted crises have increased fragility and emphasized the need for more integrated approaches in tackling seemingly intractable problems. Although they are not a homogeneous group in terms of their contexts or the constraints they face, the countries in crisis in the Arab region have all suffered compounded crises. Whether they are under different forms of protracted and violent conflicts - Yemen, Syria, Palestine -, transitioning from violent conflict to complex processes of stabilization - Iraq - or have suffered or are suffering from growing social and governance crisis – Lebanon and Jordan -, they all bear interlinked political, financial, and economic crisis. In such contexts, Governments

often struggle to maintain legitimacy, an effective institutional apparatus, and delivery capacities, as well as to ensure an enabling business environment. As a result, the populations in these countries continuously face old and new uncertainties on top of economic shocks against which they have no or limited resilience mechanisms. Sustainable solutions to these multi-faceted and complex problems require simultaneously working on sustainable development and addressing very basic needs. As one senior ILO donor noted: “... it is more like [building] resilience...somewhere in the grey area between humanitarian and development, with a focus on building resilience towards something more sustainable and long term.”



The ILO has the responsibility to lead and support a human-centred recovery from multiple crises.

ILO DG's Programme Guidance

More than ten years on from the Syria crisis, the ILO in the Arab region has gained solid experience in designing and implementing interventions that address complex crises with humanitarian, social and economic dimensions. Its work has greatly evolved, with evidence-based programming and interventions that create employment and promote decent work conditions, social protection, and social dialogue. Moreover, ILO's work in the region has strategically reinforced efforts towards greater synergies between humanitarian and development action and efficiency, and towards a more explicit contribution to building social cohesion and peace. It is important to note that the evolution of the Regional Office's programming takes place against the backdrop of several significant recent landmark events:

- **OECD-DAC Recommendation 8 on the HDP Nexus:** Since 2019, there is an international community that has made public, high-level commitments to better collaborate across the HDPN through efforts such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) nexus recommendation[2];
- **The socioeconomic impact of COVID-19:** The fallout of the 2020-21 COVID-19 pandemic was an important litmus test for humanitarian and development coherence in the wake of primary health and secondary socio-economic impacts. Arguably, COVID-19 has been the forcing event that exposed how humanitarian and development work is so inextricably intertwined and underscored how efforts from these two communities must be strategically aligned and centred on people's lives, needs and priorities; and
- **DG's Programme Guidance for the Programme and Budget 2024-25 [3]:** Last year, a new Director-General of the ILO was elected and, as with all regime change, new directives were ushered. A Programme Guidance note was disseminated that essentially outlined the DG's vision, centered on the theme of social justice. Firmly embedded in the ILO Social Justice Declaration and 2019 Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work [4],

the Guidance Note described a world where “...*peace and stability are endangered everywhere. The number of countries facing fragility, conflict, and natural disasters aggravated by climate change has increased...*” and declared that “...*The ILO has the responsibility to lead and support a human-centred recovery from multiple crises. A recovery that is inclusive, sustainable, and resilient, as demanded by our tripartite constituents in the 2021 Global Call to Action.*” The guidance for the programme of work for 2024–25 further elaborated implications for ILO’s immediate direction and investment, including four action programmes focused on “*critical bottlenecks that are an obstacle for achieving social justice*”. Three of these action areas reflect the current realities of the crisis contexts of the Arab region: (1) transitions from the informal to the formal economy; (2) just transitions towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies; (3) decent work in crisis and post-crisis situations.

Against this background, the ILO Regional Office in the Arab region embarked upon a stock-taking of its work in the region, assessing the lessons learned and evaluation recommendations from its interventions in the HDP Nexus space and identifying best practices with a view to replicating or scaling up where relevant. As part of this reflection, the ILO office in the Arab States commissioned a consultancy to examine the ILO Regional Office’s approaches within the HDPN, identify challenges and opportunities, and develop an engagement strategy to support HDPN solutions in the Arab region for the next 3 to 5 years.

02. Methodology

- The objectives of the study were to
 - review lessons learned to date from the ILO Arab states' implementation of programmes that use triple nexus approaches and identify best practices;
 - assess the challenges and opportunities offered by further investment in operationalizing ILO's work through the HDPN approach; and
 - develop a preliminary blueprint of an engagement strategy that consolidates ILO Arab States' approach to support the HDPN operations in crisis-affected countries in the Arab region for the next 3 to 5 years.
 - An important part of the study's findings was based on the engagement in an inclusive, consultative process with ILO Regional and country-based stakeholders and with ILO external stakeholders to discuss their views on the challenges and best practices for promoting HDP coherence in crisis-affected countries in the region, as well as on how they think ILO can better support HDPN efforts. Altogether, 81 interviews were conducted remotely.
 - A desk review of available literature on policies, evaluations, and lessons learned was conducted to understand trends in the implementation of the HDPN and models used in the region.
-

The objectives of the study were three-fold: the first was to review lessons learned to date from the ILO Arab states' implementation of programmes that use triple nexus approaches and identify best practices; the second was to assess the challenges and opportunities offered by further investment in operationalizing ILO's work through the HDPN approach, including identifying the programmatic, operational, and structural changes needed to implement a coherent HDPN strategy; and the third was to develop a preliminary blueprint of an engagement strategy that consolidates ILO Arab States' approach to support the HDPN operations in crisis-affected countries in the Arab region for the next 3 to 5 years.

An important part of the assignment was the engagement in an inclusive, consultative process with ILO Regional and country-based stakeholders and with ILO external stakeholders. The latter included colleagues representing multi-mandated UN agencies that deliver a combination of humanitarian, development, and peace assistance; ILO social partners in crisis-affected countries in the Arab region; the World Bank; and donors working with the ILO in the region. The objective of the interviews was to discuss their views on the challenges and best practices for promoting HDP coherence in crisis-affected countries in the region, as well as on how they think ILO can better support HDPN efforts. The consultations revolved around iterations of the following lines of query:

HDPN Lines of Query and Limitations

Limitations included:

- securing interviews with some Government officials was challenging;
- coverage of a range of issues across 6 very different country contexts, which restricted the depth the EC could look into specific areas;
- no review of the connection and implications of HDPN work with the ILO support to the broader regional context; and
- uneven understanding of all stakeholders about what constitutes the HDPN and best practices.

01

What is the role & comparative advantage of the ILO in the HDPN? What is uniquely strategic about this role?

02

How has the collaboration between ILO Arab States & your organization evolved in the region & in support of HDPN?

03

Is the partnership with the ILO a key collaboration for your organization in the region?

04

What are the challenges and opportunities of a nexus approach for the ILO as a development actor in Fragility?

05

What are some of the Opportunities in the region in the next 5 years for working more closely in the HDPN?

Based on the ILO stakeholders' internal reflections and external consultations, a strategic engagement is outlined based on guiding principles and on the internal and external existing and future opportunities identified with current and potential partners. To that end, the guiding principles and programming considerations reflect both what has been learned in the ILO Arab States' pursuit of HDPN coherence as well as promising practices and ideas identified through the partner consultation process.

The research was primarily based on two methods, notably a literature and document review, and semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs). The study consisted of three phases: the Inception phase; the second phase consisting of a review of lessons learned and evaluations from ILO Arab States' implementation of projects and programmes applying an HDPN approach and an analysis of findings from interviews with ILO Arab States' internal stakeholders[5]; and a third and final phase consisting of a synthesis and analysis of interviews with external stakeholders and associated recommendations and way forward. This final phase included the following steps:

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted remotely with KIs which included both humanitarian, development, and peace practitioners in the region and at the global level. Altogether, 81 interviews were conducted remotely, including interviews that triangulated the findings and analysis emerging from the interviews with external stakeholders [6]. Interviews were structured as an open discussion aimed at learning, from the practitioners' experiences on the ground with their respective organizations as well as in countries in which they served or are currently serving. The interviews focused on their interpretation of the HDPN in the region; the type of challenges faced by their organizations in supporting HDPN solutions; the partnership with the ILO Arab States and their views on its strengths and possible shortcomings; and areas of future targeted investment that may warrant the ILO Regional Office's attention and possible investment. The informality of the discussions generated frank and insightful conversations that provided accurate depictions of the HDPN implementation. Wherever relevant, discussions around the implementation reverted to the standards set by the DAC recommendations to implement the HDPN in crisis-affected countries in the Arab region as a whole and in each targeted country.
- A desk review of available literature on policies, evaluations, and lessons learned was conducted to understand trends in the implementation of the HDPN and models used in the region. It also enabled the External Collaborator (EC) to draw out key learning in relation to the HDPN by different actors and to develop recommendations built upon existing best practices.

LIMITATIONS

There were several limitations encountered during the study. These included:

- securing interviews with Government officials, due to differences in time and competing priorities for national actors.
- covering a range of issues across 6 very different country contexts, which in effect restricted the degree of depth the EC was able to investigate specific areas. To address this issue, the EC focused on the issues - in terms of strengths and challenges - that were repeatedly mentioned in the interviews. These issues were then grouped under the DAC Recommendation key components to deepen the analysis and develop recommendations.
- establishing a common thread based on an uneven understanding of all internal and external stakeholders about what constitutes the HDPN and best practices. While there is a general awareness about the HDPN, there are misconceptions and different interpretations of what the Nexus is.
- reviewing the links of HDPN work to programming outside the HDPN in other Arab states. No review of these links and implications of HDPN work with the ILO support to the broader regional context was undertaken.

This report is organized as follows:

01

Background and Methodology

As noted, the Background and Methodology provide an overview of the context and objectives of the study as well as the methodology employed.

02

Unpacking the Nexus: views from the Arab region

This section provides an overview of the most recent findings on the status of operationalization of the HDPN, based on the DAC's 2022 interim review and on evaluations and reviews undertaken by UN partner organizations and INGO networks of their HDPN operations in the region..

03

Findings and Analysis from External Stakeholders' interviews

These sections present the findings from the interviews with ILO Arab States' external partners and the analysis of those findings and implications for its HDPN work.

04

Emerging HDPN Opportunities, Guiding Principles & Recommendations

This final section provides a light blueprint of emerging opportunities for the ILO Arab States' strategic engagement, Guiding Principles for its engagement, and recommendations for ILO Arab States' HDPN positioning, programming, coordination, partnerships, and internal change management process. Where possible, examples of best practice are provided.

03. Unpacking the Nexus: Views from the Region

- The DAC recommendation on operationalising the HDP Nexus has become a widely accepted standard among the humanitarian, development, and peace community, allowing for a more consistent approach and implementation.
 - HDPN solutions are actively being pursued in 5 of the crisis-affected countries of the ILO Arab States, notably, Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, OPT, and Lebanon. While Syria is not included due to donor restrictions, HDPN approaches are in the planning stages.
 - Feedback from external stakeholders on what the Nexus is “in real-life” contexts in the region includes the importance of development actors to “lead” in contexts where Governments are present but have limited capacity or lack legitimacy and where the root causes of developmental challenges are endemic; effective ‘nexusing’ in the Region is first and foremost about collaboration based on comparative advantage; fostering peace is complicated but necessary; and HDPN links to climate/disaster risk reduction topics and community remains underdeveloped.
-

Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) coherence aims to promote complementary collaboration across humanitarian, development, and peace actors in pursuit of a common agenda. Its goal is to maximize the impact and sustainability of programs across different kinds of assistance and to reduce the need for humanitarian assistance over time.

As previously noted, the international community has developed a community of policy and practice around the DAC Recommendation on the HDP Nexus and has mobilized organizations beyond the original adherents to the DAC Recommendation or to the New Way of Working (NWOW). This is the case of the ILO. The aim of this practice is to strengthen the coherence between humanitarian, development, and peace needs by “effectively reducing people’s needs, risks and vulnerabilities; supporting prevention efforts; and thus, shifting from delivering humanitarian assistance to ending needs”. [7] The DAC Recommendation was a direct outcome of the call for system-wide change in the former Secretary-General’s Report Agenda for Humanity, first presented at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.[8]

The DAC recently published and disseminated an interim progress review, three years after adoption of the DAC Recommendation and ahead of the monitoring report of its implementation, due out in 2024. Some findings[9] of that report note the steady uptake of the approach across the international assistance community:

- The DAC recommendation has become a widely accepted standard among the humanitarian, development, and peace community, allowing for a more consistent approach and implementation. This is particularly true at the country level.
- Organizations have aligned and/or adapted their internal policies, practices, and organizational structures to enable consistent delivery of HDP Nexus approaches and, in some cases, effectively become a ‘change management’ tool. The latter has in turn translated into official institutional policies and strategies; country-level “bottom-up” approaches and piloting; and targeted measures and instruments.
- There seems to be a wide acceptance that the Nexus adds value to implementation in protracted crisis settings, citing greater coherence and complementarity in the way the operational response is conducted at the country level.

UN adherents to the NWOW, the EU, and the World Bank have been actively operationalizing different nexus approaches in 25 different countries, 6 of which are in the MENA region. These 6 countries include specific thematic areas: Forced Displacement which includes refugees, migration, land rights, and housing (Iraq, Jordan); Peace and Human Security which includes social cohesion, conflict prevention, documentation, protection, and gender-based violence (Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon); Food Security and Economic Resilience that encompasses food security, access to livelihoods, agriculture, multi-dimensional poverty reduction, cash, and social protection (Jordan, Lebanon, and Yemen); Strengthening Local Capacities that refers to the strengthening of institutions and community resilience (Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen); and Basic Social Services which includes WASH[10], nutrition, health and education (Jordan)[11]. Noticeably absent from the nexus programming themes in the MENA/Arab region is emergency preparedness against climate hazards, and disaster risk reduction.

Figure 1: The HDPN in the Middle East & North Africa

COUNTRY	FRAMEWORK	YEAR STARTED	THEMATIC AREAS OF THE PILOT
IRAQ	NWOW, EU	2021	     
JORDAN	NWOW	2016	     
LEBANON	NWOW, EU	2017	     
LIBYA	NWOW	2019	     
WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP*	NWOW	2020	     
YEMEN	NWOW, EU	2016	     

Source: OECD (2022), The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Interim Progress Review, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/2f620ca5-en>.

The sense of ‘positive’ change noted at the global level has been confirmed by the external stakeholders interviewed for this study. Additionally, all interviewees working in the region underscored the importance of development actors to “lead” in contexts where Governments are present but have limited capacity or lack legitimacy and where the root causes of developmental challenges are endemic.

Further to the above, external stakeholders based in the region interviewed expressed different views of what the Nexus is “in real-life” contexts, sometimes in contrast to their respective institution’s positions. These are summarized as follows:

- **1. HDP Nexus builds on resilience practice, with a twist:** Interviewees noted that HDPN operations build on the long-standing practice of linking humanitarian and development actions, with the added dimension of peace/social cohesion and significant emphasis on ‘coordination’ with others. How these added dimensions play out is context-specific and highly dependent on individual initiatives and, in some rarer cases, on financial incentives to ‘work together or collaborate more systematically’.

Defining how different actors in a specific context can contribute to solving a specific problem is key.

- 2. **Context is everything:** The Arab region has issues that are common across and specific to the region. In several countries, there is a need for development solutions based on a 'whole-of-government/society' approach. Most interviewees noted that central to work in the HDPN solutions for the countries in the region is the need for a deep understanding of contextual dynamics (*"an analysis of the political economy or in some cases conflict analysis"*) and the associated capacity of organizations working in the region to respond rapidly to sudden changes in these contexts. The latter is particularly relevant to the Arab region, where the vulnerabilities and needs vary significantly from country to country and within each of the countries themselves.
- 3. **Effective 'nexusing' in the Region is first and foremost about collaboration based on comparative advantage:** All interviews, revealed consensus on the need for those involved in working on HDPN solutions in the region to be "on the same page" regarding the analysis of the issues and, on the basis of this, agreeing on a division of labour based on comparative strengths (*"...defining how different actors in a specific context can contribute to solving a specific problem is key"*). For many interviewees – particularly the donor partners - this is the strength of the HDPN. The focus should be on changing structures and ways of working in order to produce more cohesive and joined-up interventions.
- 4. **The concept of the HDPN suffers 'identity' issues linked to its humanitarian origins, limiting buy-in by a larger community of actors:** The relevance of the Nexus is no longer in dispute. However, while there is more uptake by different actors working on Nexus issues beyond the adherents of the DAC Recommendation (including the ILO), the concept and coordination of HDPN suffer from 'identify' issues, likely because the origin of the HDPN was formally launched at the World Humanitarian Summit. Participating organizations in discussions on the Nexus have strong humanitarian mandates (even when dual-mandated) and continued funding for Nexus operations has been predominantly from humanitarian sources in donor organizations. In the region, this 'humanitarian' footprint has extended to the formation of HDPN Working Groups at the country level that is dominated by humanitarian organizations and INGOs and planning and coordination linked to the humanitarian architecture (cluster system). Even terminology fluctuates between the humanitarian lexicon and development concepts, which compounds the conceptual uncertainty – for instance between discussions labeled "nexus" versus "integration" (see Box 1 – HDPN terminology). This prevailing humanitarian discourse is in direct opposition to the objectives of the HDPN which calls for discussions, exchanges, coordination, and actions focused on both responding to short-term needs and addressing long-term systemic change. It also limits the buy-in of the wider international development community - including internally to organizations like the ILO – to embrace the crucial role development actors play in supporting countries in crisis. For government and local actors in the region, the distinction between humanitarian, development, and peace actors is practically non-existent, although the default preference for most countries in the region is to work on sustainable development despite the humanitarian needs of each country. This preference for development work and actors is prevalent among national authorities except when more sensitive issues such as the issue of forced displacement arise. In this case, Governments in the region have been willing to accept parallel systems operated by the humanitarian system to deal with an issue that should ideally be mainstreamed into national development planning.

- **5. Fostering peace is complicated but necessary:** The added dimension of fostering peace and addressing conflict drivers is a very relevant and legitimate claim since conflict – next to climate change – is among the main drivers for the region's large-scale crises, hunger, and protection issues. Yet the peace part of the HDPN remains the less developed dimension of the three pillars. In the region, national actors are particularly sensitive to any narrative that alludes to peace, given that the achievement of sustainable peace is ultimately a political and legal obligation of governments. Notwithstanding, all HDPN partners in the region, particularly donors, subscribe to the need for peace-responsive and conflict-sensitive programming.
- **6. HDPN links to climate/disaster risk reduction topics and community remains underdeveloped:** The nexus between climate change, migration, and conflict has been garnering more attention from the international community. UNHCR estimates that the total number of people likely to be displaced by climate change between now and 2050 varies from 250 million to a billion people. In the case of the Arab region, the changing climate includes not only significant environmental and economic impacts but also potentially negative implications for the region's political stability and security. Sawsan Bou Fakhreddine, an adviser at the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Unit at the Washington-based think tank, the Wilson Centre notes that *"...to understand the shape of conflict in the 21st century, geopolitical borders must be considered in conjunction with meteorological borders"*[12]. All actors interviewed for this study noted the importance of the topic. In some cases, there are ongoing programmes and initiatives focused on climate mitigation and greening the economy of the countries in the region. Still, while the complexity of the issues would be a natural fit for HDPN solutions, these conversations are not yet happening.

To understand the shape of conflict [in the MENA region] in the 21st century, geopolitical borders must be considered in conjunction with meteorological borders.

Box 1: HDPN Terminology: The Nexus Academy

During the interviews, there was an overwhelming consensus that much of the misconceptions around the HDPN is about the terminology used in discussing the Nexus. There is general agreement that policy conversations are still too abstract and disjointed, and that there is a need to pivot toward a less vocabulary-focused, less dispersed, more concrete discussion around what works and what does not. There also continues to be notable fragmentation of nexus discussions, which compounds the conceptual uncertainty – for instance between discussions labeled “nexus” versus “integration”. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) spearheaded a “trilingualism” workstream in January 2022 under the DAC-UN Dialogue on operationalizing the OECD-DAC Recommendations 8 aiming to *“ensure that the right people are deployed in the right place and at the right time and are doing the right things to support more joined-up complementary nexus approaches to tackling the drivers of fragility”*. According to the (unpublished) “offer document”, the workstream focused its work on supporting a ‘step change’ in the capacity of staff at all levels to understand how to engage with stakeholders from the humanitarian, development, and peace communities, as well as to ensure mutual understanding of opportunities to strengthen coherence and complementarity in working the HDPN space. Much of the work to minimize different terminology is now embedded in the Nexus Academy, a virtual systems-wide learning platform to scale up understanding, capacities, and programming to advance nexus approaches and translate the principles of the DAC Recommendation on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus into concrete actions on the ground.

Source: OECD (2022), The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Interim Progress Review, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/2f620ca5-en>.

When asked about the larger question around whether adopting an HDPN approach leads to or has resulted in positive impacts and in a reduction of humanitarian need, most stakeholders noted that it was too soon to call HDPN interventions ‘successful’. The fact is that, among the many evaluations on the HDPN that have been published thus far, only a handful have been able to outline an institutional definition of the HDPN.[13].

Against this background, the ILO Arab States has leveraged its long-standing presence and credibility with governments, social partners, and UN partners to address some of the sources of instability linked to forced displacement, COVID aftermath, and protracted crisis and propose HDPN-like solutions. Some donors have said that the ILO’s amplified engagement in the region is in itself a concrete example of the “nexus”, highlighting both the successes and the challenges of creating coherence between humanitarian and development approaches in practice. But these contexts also pose considerable challenges to the ILO’s traditional operating model. Collapsed or fragile governments, chaotic security environments, and constantly changing local dynamics have demanded a very different approach and mindset change to the more stable contexts where the ILO has traditionally worked.

04. Findings from External Stakeholders' Interviews

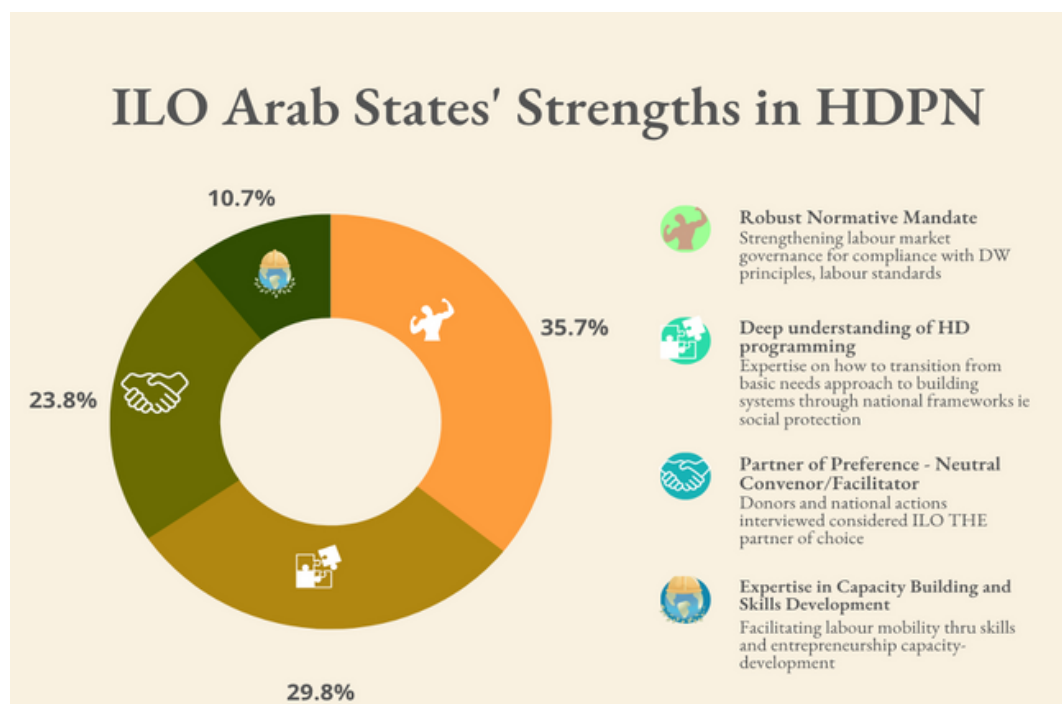
- The ILO Arab States has enabled comprehensive and coherent responses to the region's widespread challenges regarding resilient labour markets and access to decent work for the most vulnerable. External stakeholders greatly appreciate ILO's deep understanding of how to graduate or transition from a basic needs approach to building systems through existing national institutions which is what the nexus is about. This capacity to “build bridges” in protracted fragile environments has effectively made the ILO in the region a partner of preference and in some cases, THE partner of choice.
 - Notwithstanding, the most vocal criticisms of the ILO's work in the region came from its own social partners and implementing partners. While making a distinction of the excellent quality of ILO's mandate and work compared to other international agencies, ILO's social and implementing partners in the region noted the lack of attention to the “bigger picture” and to the quality of the partnership that translated into missed opportunities to work more strategically and efficiently. External stakeholders also observed a disconnect among the many ILO projects and programmes in different countries in the region. This was further underscored when ILO colleagues could not present a complete and coherent picture of the country portfolio. The lack of 'connectedness' is also manifested in a lack of policy articulation across different programmes and projects at the country level.
 - While ILO is involved in promoting social cohesion and positive peace efforts in theory, their involvement in practice remains limited and piecemeal. This is particularly striking in a region where Arab countries affected by crises have among the highest economic cost of violence as a percentage of GDP worldwide.
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The following section provides an important ‘temperature’ check on the ILO Arab States’ work as perceived by its partners – Government affiliated, social partners, donors, UN agencies, and INGOs - in terms of strengths (comparative advantage), and challenges, the quality of the partnerships and future opportunities for its positioning regarding its work in support of HDPN operations.

THE STRENGTHS

Irrespective of the institutional home of the external stakeholders interviewed, there was almost universal consensus that the ILO Arab States’ comparative advantage lies in its robust normative mandate as it relates to strengthening and/or support to building labour market governance for compliance with Decent Work principles and international labour standards, including on child protection. As one UN senior HDPN advisor noted, “... *they [the ILO Arab States] work differently from the rest of the UN in that they work on legal and governance issues as well as decent work and social protection – all of these are key elements that we actually need to trigger the shift [from humanitarian to development] ...*”. Interviewees repeatedly noted that the global rights-based labour and Decent work standards that ILO has developed are seen as directly relevant to the humanitarian-development nexus in that their adoption and uptake by national actors signals transition towards a trajectory of sustainable development. Whether it be in providing integrated solutions to address protracted forced displacement situations, or in transitioning social assistance to nationally led social protection systems, the ILO in the region has enabled a comprehensive and coherent set of responses to the region’s widespread challenges regarding resilient labour markets and access to decent work for the most vulnerable.

Figure 2



Apart from social partners in the region that make no distinction regarding humanitarian and development assistance, there was significant consensus among the stakeholders interviewed that the ILO's work is both implicitly and explicitly relevant to the Nexus work in the region. This is particularly relevant with regard to the humanitarian-development nexus. The ILO Arab states' programming, according to one senior donor partner, *"... links these contingent but recurrent resources to the construction, in fragile and challenging contexts, of bridges towards long-term sustainable systems to address systemic risks, while counterbalancing the humanitarian needs-based approach that is targeted at a subsection of society and leads to short term interventions promoting parallel systems, dependency, and inequality"*. ILO's deep understanding of how to graduate or transition from a basic needs approach to building systems through existing national institutions is ultimately what the nexus is about. This capacity to "build bridges" in protracted fragile environments has effectively made the ILO in the region a partner of preference and in some cases, THE partner of preference.

Figure 3

ILO Strengths Perceived by Percentage of Stakeholder Grouping				
PARTNER GROUPS	NORMATIVE MANDATE	HD PROGRAMMING	PARTNER OF PREFERENCE	CAPACITY BUILDING
UN partners & World Bank	100	73	87	46
Donors	90	100	100	10
Social Partners/Local actors	100	0	100	100
Implementing Partners	66	66	33	100
HDPN Experts/Think Tanks	100	75	N/A	25

For different stakeholder groupings, the preference for the ILO Arab states translates into different roles and meanings:

- For some of the UN agencies, the complementarity of mandates among humanitarian agencies and the ILO (as a development organization) has been 'natural'. With other organizations, there is complementarity in terms of a division of labour on skills development, and social protection, respectively. A UNHCR senior officer noted that *"ILO's role as development actor is not service delivery like the humanitarians and not substituting government but actually holding hands of government in order to rebuild the social contract, which is fundamental to building social cohesion"*. For entities like the World Bank, there is recognition of ILO's role as a source of important data and diagnostics regarding the labour market (including social protection), even if each institution arrives at different solutions.

- For donors and some HDPN advisors attached to the Resident Coordinator offices, the ILO is seen as “... *the main implementing partner [with] a clear coordinating and facilitating role among all stakeholders.... ILO enjoys high levels of legitimacy and respect among the main counterparts while being perceived as a facilitator/coordinator among all humanitarian and development actors*”. This role of technical diplomacy at the regional level, using ILO’s technical mandate as an entry point to build relationships to address common challenges, was noted several times by HDPN advisors but the significance of this role is not fully recognized or understood by the ILO Arab States itself. For most donors interviewed, the ILO is a trusted partner (“*the smart kid in the room*”) with whom there are frank exchanges and with whom there are substantive programmatic discussions on topics that are within the mandate of the Organization. In specific cases, the ILO is seen as the development partner to donors’ respective humanitarian or stabilization sections and interventions e.g. Germany (the “D” in the HDPN).
- For social partners, the ILO remains the partner of choice given its mandate and the persistent issues of job growth and access to decent work for marginalized populations such as forcibly displaced populations and host communities. Importantly, the ILO Arab States has been an important partner to Governments in the region prior to the Syria crisis and remains relevant in the aftermath of the conflict. The work of the ILO has more recently demonstrated the relevance and importance of the world of work solutions in the socioeconomic fallout post-COVID.

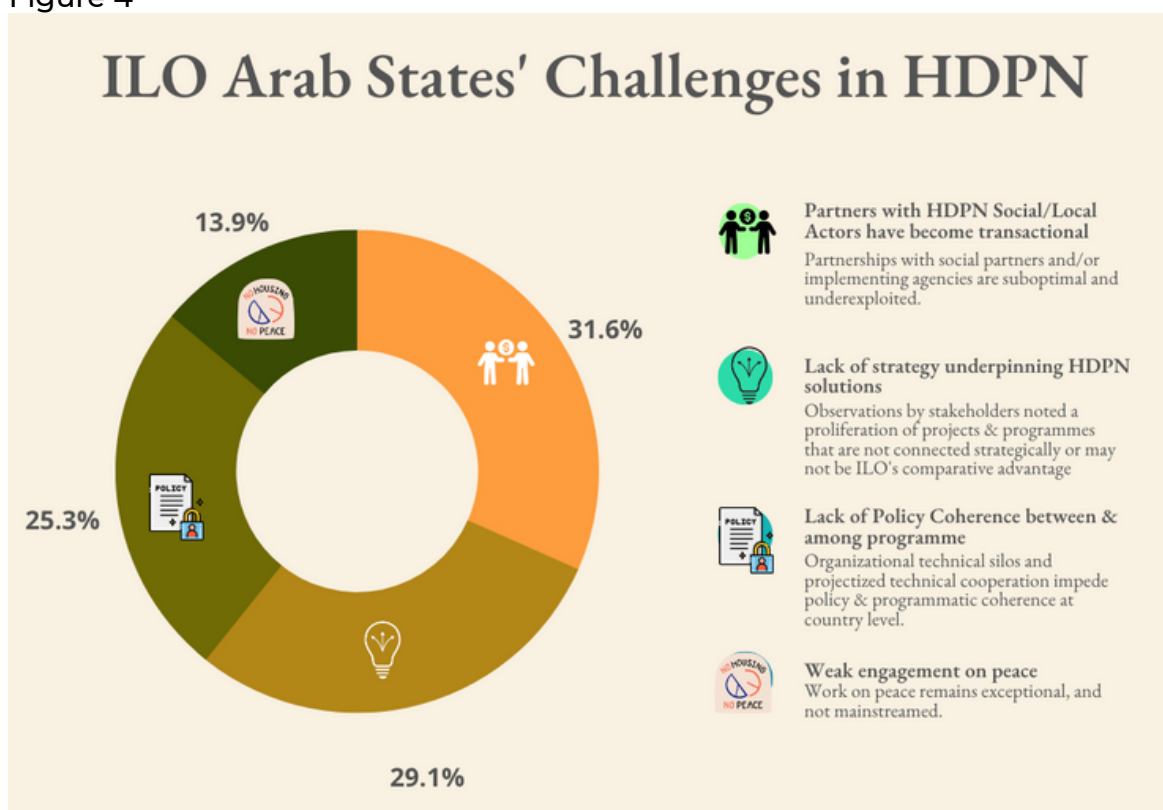
In contrast to other stakeholder groupings, ILO’s implementing partners – which identify as either humanitarian NGOs or development NGOs – remain divided regarding the quality of partnership proposed by the ILO whom they overwhelmingly see as a donor. Humanitarian NGOs characterize their subcontracting relationship with the ILO as transactional in nature, with a focus on compliance with donor requirements. Indeed, ILO stakeholders expressed more concern about the lack of capacity of their counterparts regarding their limited knowledge of fiduciary and compliance matters. The development NGOs in contrast embrace the partnership with the ILO, particularly regarding the transparency by which contracts are rewarded and the flexibility with which the ILO manages contractual arrangements, given the rapid changes in operating environments. Both implementing partners and social partners expressed positive experiences regarding ILO’s capacity-development role and all training modules and activities related to building skills and entrepreneurial development, allowing the recipients of the training, in turn, to deliver training through their own programmes and networks and providing much needed transferable skills for so many disenfranchised populations in the region.

The ILO [in the region] enjoys high levels of legitimacy and respect among the main counterparts while being perceived as a facilitator or coordinator among all humanitarian and development actors.

THE CHALLENGES

Paradoxically, but perhaps not surprisingly, the most vocal criticisms of the ILO's work in the region came from its own social partners and implementing partners. While those partners interviewed made a distinction of the excellent quality of ILO's mandate and work compared to other international agencies (*"...we are dealing with international labour standards....ILO capacity-building modules and training have had positive catalytic effects that are felt to this day..."*), social partners noted that there had been a shift in assistance towards shorter timelines in their engagement with ILO and proliferation of many projects that sometimes addressed the same objectives and had no linkages between them. This lack of attention to the "bigger picture" and to the quality of the partnership (*"it is not enough to launch a project with any partner..."*) translated into missed opportunities to work more strategically and efficiently with social partners (*"it seems like ILO is not investing more in programmes that have roots in the future generations"*). Implementing partners echoed similar frustrations. In some cases, the quality of the partnership is seen as inadequate, with current approaches described as top-down with the ILO as the donor and implementing partners as entities that need to comply with stipulated arrangements in contractual agreements. One head of programme for a leading humanitarian NGO noted that *"it is not [a relationship] with equal standing.... we're really trying to engage more in programmatic discussions but there seems to be little interest....[what we would like is to] implement the project but let's see what we can learn together"*.

Figure 4



It was further noted that:

1. The ILO Arab States has little discussion around closer coordination with humanitarian actors, which is seen as a missed opportunity to harmonize activities or ensure complementarity in strategies so as to ensure the transition, where possible;
2. The lack of conflict sensitivity in the ILO Arab States' programming in situations that are full of tension (Lebanon) also translated into some rigidity in adapting programmes to account for changing community dynamics.

Figure 5

ILO Challenges Perceived by Percentage of Stakeholder Grouping				
PARTNER GROUPS	LACK OF POLICY COHERENCE	LACK OF PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGY	TRANSACTIONAL PARTNERSHIP	WEAK ENGAGEMENT ON PEACE
UN partners & World Bank	66	73	66	46
Donors	N/A	50	50	10
Social Partners/Local actors	100	100	100	N/A
Implementing Partners	66	66	66	N/A
HDPN Experts/Think Tanks	25	N/A	50	25

Further to the above, all stakeholders interviewed observed a disconnect among the many ILO projects and programmes in different countries in the region. This disconnect was particularly noticeable when ILO country representatives attended UNCT meetings and could not provide the full picture of the country portfolio. The lack of strategy is also manifested in a lack of policy articulation and coherence across different programmes and projects at the country level. A few external stakeholders noted that ILO's projectized field programme likely impeded policy coherence. The Decent Work Country Programmes should ideally identify and connect the different threads of ILO technical areas at the country level. Donors seemed to be less aware of this lack of coherence, likely because their engagement with the ILO Arab states starts and ends with programmes and projects that they fund. However, two donors noted that it was important that the ILO focus on their comparative advantage and work to adapt their expertise and human capacity to work in fragile contexts.

Finally, some stakeholders noted ILO's lack of engagement on peace, despite more recent efforts by the ILO Arab States to document country-level work and impact on building social cohesion. The latter efforts remain relatively unknown to external stakeholders. It should be noted, however, that the absence of formal and consistent engagement with actors involved in peacebuilding or peace responsiveness is an overall observation applicable to most UN agencies in the region.

05. Analysis & Implications

The analysis of the findings from the internal and external stakeholders' interviews points to key lessons emerging around the HDPN dimensions, notably:

- **Harnessing the ILO's comparative advantages as a development actor in fragile settings:** While the overwhelming value addition of work with the ILO Arab states was and continues to be on identifying pathways to transition from a humanitarian to a development trajectory, there is still little consensus among ILO's partners including its own constituents of the depth and breadth of ILO's work in the fragile contexts of the Arab region. The ILO Arab states need to plan, strategize, and act and speak with one voice, articulating its value add whenever possible.
 - **Driving and supporting robust HDPN programming:** Lessons from past ILO Arab States' programming points to the need for the establishment of a robust strategic planning process that prioritises learning and mainstreaming of lessons learned and recommendations from the 10+ years of working in HDPN contexts
 - **Strengthening and facilitating HDPN coordination, including by deepening and mobilizing current and new partnerships, respectively, in support of HDPN solutions:** Greater efforts are needed to create the space to define shared outcomes, targets, and indicators with partners and share diagnostics and analyses on the needs and vulnerabilities of crisis-affected populations. Similarly, a deepened engagement with social partners and implementing partners is required to strengthen localization in terms of capacity development and involvement of local actors in the design, programming and implementation of HDPN strategies and solutions.
 - **Using HDPN engagement as an opportunity for change:** As the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States faces a new generation of challenges and responsibilities in the region, it is essential that the Regional Office address issues related to the lack of interdisciplinarity in programming; the limited capacity at the country and regional level, both in terms of the type of profiles needed to work in HDPN contexts and in the number of staff needed to grow the Office's engagement in the HDPN.; and the lack of quality funding currently available to the Regional Office.
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Reflection on the past 10+ years reveals important considerations for the ILO Arab States regional office as it continues to develop its portfolio in HDPN settings and contends with a new generation of challenges. The results from the interviews with both internal and external stakeholders have been consolidated and summarized [14]. Using the dimensions of the HDPN Recommendation (programming, coordination, and partnership)[15], the tables identify the key strengths and challenges, also seen as opportunities for improvement and joint learning. A deeper analysis of the findings points to key lessons emerging around the HDPN dimensions, notably:

- Positioning: Harnessing the ILO's comparative advantages as a development actor in fragile settings
- Programming: Driving and supporting robust HDPN programming
- Coordination & Partnerships: Strengthening and facilitating HDPN coordination, including by deepening and mobilizing current and new partnerships, respectively, in support of HDPN solutions.
- HDPN as an opportunity for change

Figure 6



A. Harnessing the ILO Arab States' comparative advantages in HDPN settings

The results from the interviews with both internal and external stakeholders in the region confirm what the ILO Director-General's Guidance note affirms, notably that the ILO can and should “.... lead and support a human-centered recovery from the multiple crises”. ILO Arab states' partners in the region assert that the ILO has the expertise and convening power to drive the nexus forward in a sustainable way. As one HDPN senior advisor observed, “...they (ILO) are a bit multipurpose. They know how to shift from humanitarian to development programming, focusing on capacity building and creating this kind of resilience element to prepare the ground [for recovery], working with the private sector as well as Government entities. They are experts on “jointness”.”

The ILO holds unique influence with Governments and national authorities due to its technical and analytical credibility, and its experience with building capacities and national systems. This has put the Organization in a unique position to advance policy reforms that ultimately support access to decent work and promote social justice. At the same time, in the context of the HDPN work in the Arab region, the Regional Office has been able to anchor its core development work in humanitarian settings by identifying opportunities for short-term employment creation that sets the foundation for more sustainable solutions linked to decent work and social protection. There are numerous examples of the positive impact of ILO Arab states' work in the HDPN context and of leadership roles taken on by Regional Office staff in OpT and in Iraq, using the voice of the neutral technical facilitator to broker solutions with Government and other UN partners. In designing solutions for forced displacement in Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq, the ILO has taken on ‘the advocacy role as the voice for those being left behind, paradoxically playing the voice of humanitarian and without compromising its mandate as a development actor’ as one senior development donor noted.

Yet, there is still little understanding among ILO's partners including its own constituents of the depth and breadth of ILO's work in the fragile contexts of the Arab region. There is criticism levied at ILO Arab States in terms of its lack of strategic positioning and coherence (“...we don't see the full picture and there are times that the person representing [the ILO] is unaware of what the other parts of the ILO are doing...”), and in terms of what seems to be a proliferation of projects that are largely short-term in nature (relative to development projects and programmes) and are not always accompanied immediately by critical policy work that address the more structural labour and decent work issues. These criticisms may be attributable to a lack of external knowledge of what the ILO offers in the HDPN space and to internal technical silos that seem to characterize the ILO, both centrally and at the regional level. More importantly, there is a fundamental;

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misconception of the HDPN due in part to its humanitarian origins and the prevalence of humanitarian actors and therefore reluctance on the part of some Regional Office staff to embrace ILO's role in the HDPN. This reluctance limits the coherence and visible impact of the ILO's efforts in the region, as well as its leadership potential role as a neutral convenor among the HDPN community of actors. Going forward, the ILO Arab states need to plan, strategize, and act and speak with one voice, articulating its value add whenever possible. This is even more critical now than ever when countries in the region struggle with the fallout of the COVID pandemic and the Ukraine crisis, and where dialogue with Governments can be highly complex and sensitive.

Box 2: Work Permits for Syrian Refugees in Jordan: A success story?

Arguably, the 2016 Jordan Compact has been a game-changer regarding how host countries and the international community respond to protracted refugee situations and a successful example of the HD nexus (with some indirect positive spinoffs on peace). The refugee-hosting compacts systematically gather humanitarian and development expertise under the umbrella of host-country leadership and a set of shared outcomes focused on finding long-term solutions for refugees, a population that does not fit within the traditional state-citizen relationship.

One of the ground-breaking commitments in the Jordan Compact made by the Government of Jordan (GoJ) was in relation to the issuance of work permits to Syrian refugees. The most important and urgent need for refugees has been to access work and achieve self-reliance (whether formally or informally). Since 2016 the yearly total of work permits issued went from 5000 in 2016 to 62,457 in 2022. Altogether from January 2016 to January 2023, 344,471 work permits have been issued, surpassing the original goal of issuing 200,000 work permits. Moreover, there is evidence that work formalization yields additional benefits. The ILO's qualitative research on this topic suggests that holding a work permit is associated with socio-economic benefits (a sense of safety and stability, earning more than those without permits, increased participation of women in the workforce, and building social cohesion among and between refugees and host communities)[16] and with successful policy advocacy offer improved legal protection (less risk of deportation, exploitation, and abuse; more mobility for those living in camps).[17]

Despite the obvious success, ILO's involvement in supporting GoJ's commitment to issuing work permits has been both praised and criticized. While the access to permits has de facto had a transformative effect on Syrians' labour market integration, there are still criticisms levied at the initiative and the Organisation's involvement, based on the fact that "....a work permit alone.....cannot itself guarantee decent working environments and wages for either refugees or members of the host communities." [iii] This was particularly evident in the aftermath of COVID-19 when the lack of protections for vulnerable groups like the Syrian refugees exacerbated their plight. However, critics of ILO's work need to be reminded that achieving optimal decent work protections for the citizenry of any country is a multilayered long-term process, that begins and is sustained with Government leadership and commitment. Securing access to decent work conditions for refugees and other forcibly displaced people is a policy decision that even in the best of political environments remains tenuous and sensitive. ILO's involvement and contribution to the GOJ's commitment has been and continues to be important and necessary if only because ILO's role is indeed to secure social justice and decent work for the populations in danger of being left behind. In fragile contexts, access to work permits for refugees represents a modicum of stability and decent work. It is also worth noting that the ultimate goal of incorporating forced displacement populations into national development planning requires long-term sustained multi-scalar support involving the consolidation of gains, broadening socio-economic integration and self-reliance whilst simultaneously targeting the most vulnerable that still remain below the poverty level

B. Driving and supporting robust HDPN programming

There is a great deal of variation among the Arab states that have protracted fragility, and therefore no-one-size fits all. The narrative and funding in two of the HDPN countries – Jordan and Iraq – are shifting towards development despite the substantial humanitarian caseloads remaining in the respective countries. The HDPN work and funding in OPT, Yemen, Lebanon, and Syria remain largely humanitarian. There are also varying degrees of Government engagement with the international community, including the ILO. These country “profiles” all have implications for HDPN planning and programming as well as the subsequent interplay of factors related to outcome goals, timeframes, requisite organizational expertise, HDPN partnerships and mandates, and donor requirements.

As a development actor, it is crucial that capacity development is seen as more than a technical fix and to capture its non-technical elements such as human relations, trust, and legitimacy not only at the level of individuals but also organizations and states..

As the ILO Arab states look towards the next 3 to 5 years, it is imperative that some futures scoping and strategic planning be undertaken. At a minimum, lessons from past ILO Arab States programming point to the need for the establishment of a robust strategic planning process that prioritises learning and mainstreaming of lessons learned and recommendations from the 10+years of working in HDPN contexts into current and future HDPN programming. In discussions with external stakeholders, it was noted that

- The overwhelming value addition of work with the ILO Arab states was and continues to be on identifying pathways to transition from a humanitarian to a development trajectory. Where possible, the ILO Arab States should take the most effective programming approaches for building resilience, based on best practices and existing initiatives, and scale up through national frameworks (e.g. on safety nets, local governance, shock-responsive social protection) for greater reach, impact, and sustainable outcomes.
- A significant part of the ILO programming toolbox in HDPN contexts is the capacity-building work on, among others, skills development, financial literacy, TVET training, and business start-ups. While the capacity-development toolbox deployed in the region regarding technical and vocational training, upskilling and reskilling, apprenticeships, and the development of SMEs have all been praised and appreciated by HDPN actors, and in particular by ILO's social partners and affected populations, there has also been concerns that these interventions – seminal to laying the foundations for sustainability – are becoming “less strategic”. Indeed, given the time-bound nature of most of these capacity-building interventions in the region, the intended longer-term impact of this work is often thwarted and much of what is being delivered is often considered a “one-off” event. It is crucial that as a development actor working in fragile contexts, “...*capacity development is seen as more than a technical fix and to capture its non-technical elements such as human relations, trust, and legitimacy not only at the level of individuals but also organizations and states.*” Notwithstanding the demand for these tools and learning, some of these partners felt that there was a need for the ILO to further adapt and apply these capacity-building modalities including coaching and mentoring, on-the-job training, and possible long side term educational upgrading which would better reflect the demand for more medium to long term engagement on capacity development in the region.

- The ILO Arab States did not seek programming and coordination with peacebuilding actors and the larger peace-affiliated community and vice-versa. There are however ongoing efforts to mainstream work on building social cohesion in some of its programmes and projects, mostly through promising but limited investments in capacity-building. There are also ongoing efforts to monitor the impact of explicit conflict-sensitive programming to document the impact of this programming and build the evidence base of the links between employment and decent work and social cohesion.
- The lack of contextual analysis in ILO Arab States programming often resulted in the revision of project design and implementation. Recommendations from the ILO Arab States' project and programme lessons learned, and evaluations repeatedly confirmed this point. The need to incorporate systematic contextual analysis is also crucially tied to informing conflict-sensitive programming and efforts to mainstream peace responsiveness and cross-cutting issues such as gender, youth, populations with disabilities, and environmental sustainability. However, as was noted previously, there is no systematic uptake for ensuring consideration of conflict dynamics and/or conflict sensitivity. Importantly, there is still noticeable internal resistance to the ILO's work to promote peace, within the HDPN (see Box 3: Building Social Cohesion in the Arab region).

Box 3: Building Social Cohesion in the Arab Region

The ILO Arab States recently published a study on 'How ILO Programmes Contribute to Social Cohesion between Refugees/IDPs and Host Communities in the Arab States Region'. It is conceivably the most thorough documentation of how the ILO has explicitly and implicitly contributed to building social cohesion in the Arab region, noting that much of ILO's programming and its promotion of decent work is, by its very nature, inextricably linked to building resilient societies and long-term socio-economic development. For example, access to employment opportunities and decent work conditions contributes to the easing of social tensions between refugees and host communities. The study documents emerging best practices from 4 country contexts (Yemen, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq) and recommends a deepening of these practices by mainstreaming social cohesion in ILO programming and implementation and by systematically monitoring the impacts of its work.

Early in the report, it is noted that building social cohesion is a long-term process that requires sustained efforts and investment. Importantly, it requires a mindset change about the meaning of peace linked to the element of 'positive peace' that refers to the "sustained presence of factors, behaviours, and institutions within and between societies that prevent further outbreaks of violence and enable effective co-existence".^[18] While the study accurately identifies some of the specific programming interventions that are conducive to building social cohesion, it is important to note that there are significant challenges at the overall institutional level around ILO's work on building peace, notably:

1. Most contributions to social cohesion were not explicitly planned as such, and in several cases, the positive peace created was a byproduct of the planned and implemented activity, with building peace as an afterthought.
2. ILO's results framework does not have any specific indicator or measurement of peace. Currently, the approach to building social cohesion is piecemeal. Indeed, there is no thought or process to see how the disparate parts of a project or programme correlate to build social cohesion.
3. Since there is no systematic baseline assessment (the conflict analysis), much of the feedback on work is anecdotal and based on qualitative statements. Similarly, data collection on building social cohesion in ILO work in the region lacks the wider perceptions of the surrounding communities or populations. As is often the case, populations that were involved as beneficiaries in the project or programme were often surveyed, but the wider community was not. This piecemeal approach may create a false narrative around the efficacy of ILO's contribution to building social cohesion.

The ILO work in the Arab region has made strides towards the elusive work of building social cohesion and defining what works and what does not. It is however important that the Regional Office continues to shift its work on building social cohesion towards a more comprehensive and integrated approach to positive peace programming based on a shared understanding of what peace looks like in practice and recognizing that building peace is a long-term process.

C. Strengthening and facilitating HDPN coordination, including by deepening and mobilizing current and new partnerships, respectively, in support of HDPN solutions

Perhaps the most transformational part of the HDPN is on working differently and coordinating with partners, the UN, the multilateral development banks, Governments, national and local actors, and in the specific case of the ILO, its social partners. As noted above, the ILO Arab States has expanded its network of partnerships beyond its counterpart Government actors, and social partners to include partners in the humanitarian realm. The most noteworthy of these humanitarian-development partnerships and a model of best practice is the partnership with UNHCR. An MoU was launched at the Headquarters level in 2014 with a shared work plan and clear milestones. A similar MOU on the HDPN was also launched with UNDP. While there is an explicit pillar on operationalizing the HDPN in the latter, joint activities between UNDP and the ILO occur primarily at the Headquarters level.

Donors noted that when the ILO and the World Bank spoke with one voice, governments listened, and when there is disagreement, it is important that there is an open agreement to disagree.

Interviewees noted that the locus of most HDPN discussions and coordination at the country level in the region is with the humanitarian community, often led by the UNHCR and a donor partner. In addition, the architecture of HDPN coordination is based chiefly on the humanitarian cluster system. In general, the UN is the center of gravity on the humanitarian side but does not always have equal footing on the development side, as the World Bank has become a competitor of sorts in the region. For the most part, the ILO Arab states do not take part in these discussions or coordination meetings, unless explicitly invited. Involvement in these country-level HDPN working groups is desirable, as continued involvement will contribute to closing the coordination gaps in case of instability or sudden disasters. However, coordination for coordination is not a panacea, and participation in coordination meetings has a cost in terms of time in bridging mandates and harmonizing objectives, approaches, focus areas, and timeframes.

There has been deepened coordination and complementarity with other actors, with emerging best practices on defining collective outcomes on protracted forced displacement in Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon in the context of PROSPECTS and on transitioning social assistance to nationally led social protection programmes in OPT, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. However, in both these cases coordination has been incentivized by the donor. As mentioned, the ongoing operationalization of the MoU with UNHCR has become a 'best practice' model of partnership. The UNHCR's global policy on refugee inclusion into national development plans has translated into pursuing and prioritizing development partnerships like the World Bank and ILO as 'non-transactional' partners. This term basically means that there is no fundraising objective linked to these partnerships.

In speaking to the UNHCR colleagues for this study, it was clear that the partnership is highly valued and that the work in the region will continue to be important. Despite differences in business models, structure, and even language (“...by mapping out humanitarian-development terminology, you can actually identify entry points for joint work...”), there are numerous areas of work that the UNHCR wish to further explore and exploit with the ILO in the region. For example, Several UNHCR colleagues noted that collaboration in Iraq has been 'solid', particularly regarding the systematic inclusion of refugees and Internally displaced persons (IDPs). There are opportunities to expand that collaboration by strengthening coordination and information-sharing which is the baseline for joint advocacy. This is particularly important in Kurdistan where there is a favourable environment. All UNHCR members noted that despite structured consultations at the country, regional, and Headquarters levels, discussions and consultations on project and programme development – before, during, and after design and implementation – were still lacking and merited more dedicated time by the ILO in the region. In particular, UNHCR colleagues would like to see more synergies between PROSPECTS and ILO social protection interventions and other ILO projects and programmes in the region.

The need to have more systematic consultations with partners is equally important in the case of the World Bank. Arguably the most important development actor in the region, and the counterweight to the UNHCR, it is important to organize a more structured and predictable partnership with the World Bank in the region. The World Bank has become a “competitor” of sorts and the ILO relationship with the Bank varies from country to country, and on thematic issues such as social protection and gender. External stakeholders observed that the ILO and the World Bank have some important ‘ideological differences’, particularly regarding the area of social protection. More efforts are needed to create the space to define shared outcomes, targets, and indicators with partners and share diagnostics and analyses on the needs and vulnerabilities of crisis-affected populations.

Box 4: The ILO partnership with the World Bank

The relationship with the World Bank came up repeatedly during the discussion with external stakeholders. There is recognition that past partnerships with the UN in general and with the ILO specifically depended much on the individuals (‘very fluid relationships’). Interviewees noted that in the region, the UN-Bank partnership has generally worked well. There were however concerns about whether the UN may be evolving towards becoming an ‘implementing partner’ of the Bank versus a real partner. The World Bank’s specific work on the Nexus in the region is somewhat narrow in that their work in countries like Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon in support of the Nexus is primarily the concessional lending instrument that was created as part of the Syria response plan, and directly in response to the forced displacement crisis in the region. The World Bank colleagues see their work in the Nexus as ensuring the alignment of humanitarian work and operations with Government systems.

Most of the donors acknowledged the importance and timeliness of a strong ILO-WB partnership. The WB regional office voiced a strong commitment to sharing information, joint coordination, and where possible, joint advocacy. Donors noted that when the ILO and the WB spoke with one voice, governments listened, and when there is disagreement, it is important that there is an open agreement to disagree. This gives Governments the opportunity to have options, no matter how divergent the positions are. Ultimately Governments are the clients of both organizations, and a strong development partnership signals an important counterweight to the prevailing humanitarian community, and in regard to advocating on more sensitive issues, such as those related to forced displacement.

Social Partners, Implementing Partners, and Localization

Beyond the partnerships with HDPN UN partners and the World Bank, interviewees noted that the ILO was sought as a partner because of its strategic collaboration with social partners, and national and local governments. In non-contested settings, ILO's role in helping public sector institutions to build capacity and to take ownership of the transition to sustainable development, both within/across ministries and between the government and international partners, has been highlighted. In contested settings, there is an expectation on the part of some INGOs that the ILO can still be a neutral broker between the international community and the government in question. This may not be the case (e.g. Lebanon) so expectations in this regard need to be clearly addressed and clarified.

The social partners interviewed during the study shared their perspectives on their experience with the ILO Arab states' work. While reaffirming that ILO is indeed the partner of preference and sharing very positive anecdotes on past and current collaboration, much of the focus of the discussion was on their perception of ILO's expanded role in the region. While welcoming the bigger 'footprint', they observed that ILO's programmes lacked strategic direction, that ILO interventions were increasingly piecemeal, and that what is part of ILO's comparative advantage – capacity-building – has become interventions focused on the transfer of techniques and knowledge in the short term and are not linked to the longer-term business of building sustainable development. This piece-meal approach may be because ILO programme managers are under pressure from both country partners and donors to achieve specific goals, usually formulated in terms of relatively short-term tangible results. They also may not have a clear idea of what they are expected to do in terms of capacity development, except to transfer technical knowledge and provide assessments focused on task accomplishment.

As was previously noted, capacity development is one of the cornerstones of development actors' work in fragile contexts, in that there is an expectation that through CD initiatives, the international development community is laying the ground for sustainability in contexts that are rife with instability and weak governance. For the ILO Arab States, a deepened engagement in capacity development in crisis settings implies a higher level of contextual analysis, more direct monitoring and supervision for learning purposes, more experimentation, more attention to coordination and facilitation, and more time for crafting strategies.[19] This change requires significant investment in indirect support and involvement, such as coaching and mentoring.

Local actors - social partners and implementing partners - repeatedly called for their involvement in strategic discussions on planning and programming, especially around what works and what does not work in each context.

Perhaps a more telling concern regarding the ILO Arab Region's partnerships with social partners, national and local actors, and implementing partners is a repeated call for their involvement in strategic discussions on project and programme planning particularly before and after implementation, and especially around what works and what does not work in each context, as most local actors have a deeper knowledge of local/community dynamics. Across all discussions, external interviewees repeatedly commended ILO's efforts to "show up consistently" to monitor project and programme implementation. However, at the moment of programme and/or project design, there were little to no discussions around ex-post lessons learned on implementation or possible discussions around future collaboration. The relationship is often characterized as little strategic and with minimal knowledge about what the ILO is doing at a more strategic level ("*How does this [programme] fit into the bigger picture?*"). Importantly, some donor partners have also observed "no real change" in ILO's approach to working with local partners, whether they be Government affiliated actors, social partners, or implementing agencies.

This constructive criticism comes at a time when the theme of localization has been revitalized through the launch of the Grand Bargain I and now the second chapter of the Grand Bargain. Both processes and delivering on Agenda 2030 have put the empowerment of local actors and accountability to affected populations at the top of both humanitarian and development agendas. In addition, like the development world, locally-led peacebuilding has become a crucial pillar in building social cohesion, requiring that the people and communities most affected by conflict have the principal authority and influence over the strategy, implementation, evaluation, and resource allocation in peacebuilding interventions. Finally, the operationalization of the Call to Action for Migrants and Refugees under the forced displacement agenda has been translated into local and regional action that include, among other things, priority areas such as realizing social inclusion and minimizing drivers of forced migration and displacement and local actions that expand employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for migrants and refugees. The theme of localization is particularly important in the Arab region where, while there is limited capacity at the level of public sector actors, the private sector – employers and workers – remain remarkably resilient despite the multiple crises that have plagued the region.

Box 5: Strengthening Localized Action in the Arab Region

Calls for localization have long been made in various guises in humanitarian response, development, and peacebuilding, yet in recent years, the spread of intractable conflict and failed interventions has led to a coalescing around the search for effective local responses to crisis. This is even more pressing in the Arab region, which is home to a disproportionate number of current conflicts and crises. The region faces a major challenge in both translating global responses into local solutions and in identifying existing grassroots, community-level capacities for responding to crises and dealing with their aftermath. In short, considering the scale and nature of conflict in the Arab world, localization has been transformed from a policy choice to a necessary, default option – which calls for a critical interrogation of its meanings, potentialities, and shortcomings.

There are significant disparities across the Arab region in terms of understanding, definitions, approaches, and expected outcomes of localization. In countries such as Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, and OPT, there have been significant efforts by the respective Governments to “localize” Agenda 2030, by aligning national development plans and setting up working groups at the level of central Government ministries to mobilize local action to achieve the SDGs. However, in the more fragile settings in these countries and in countries such as Yemen and Syria, localization is perceived as a “luxury” problem with limited relevance. In addition to the lack of political and administrative prioritization of localization in crisis settings [20], these countries suffer from a lack of technical and financial capacity and coordination mechanisms in the public sector, an absence of quality data to set baselines and monitor progress, as well as aggravated gender equality issues and considerable challenges impacting marginalised groups, socio-economic vulnerability to external shocks such as COVID-19, fragmentation among civil society groups and unpredictable funding.[21]

Unbeknownst to them, the ILO in the Arab region has made changes to its model of engagement with local actors in incremental and different ways, particularly in the context of protracted forced displacement. Under the multi-country programme PROSPECTS, there has been a concerted process of moving towards promoting outcomes from international commitments linked to refugee caseloads in the Arab region to understanding how, when and with whom at the local level can best be positioned to make change happen. This is amid a range of ongoing national and sub-national agendas in each country that are playing out at the same time. For the ILO Arab region, it has been essential to engage with local actors, including those who are being excluded from mainstream programming, to unpack where opportunities exist and to recognise where there are plausible pathways to change. For example, in targeting interventions for forcibly displaced populations and marginalized host communities in some of these countries, it has become clear the importance of ensuring solid links between humanitarian protection and social protection efforts when nexus programming brings these two together.[22] Still, strengthening localization will require that the ILO Arab States undertake some deeper ‘soul searching’ regarding the current modus operandi with local actors, especially the social partners. Meaningful localization underscores the importance of combining contextual knowledge with awareness of the ‘other bargains’ in each country that are driving various forms of assistance amid chronic conflict and vulnerability. Importantly, localisation will never become meaningful if local civil society organizations are not allowed to assume leading roles in programme design.

D. HDPN as an opportunity for change

All the emerging analysis points to some critical decisions around the type of future investments that the ILO Arab States is required to make around HDPN planning, programming, and partnerships. The Regional Office's planning and programming are highly dependent on the alignment and harmonization with country priorities. However, these dimensions are difficult when some of these countries cannot or do not offer a clear vision of where it wants to go, as is often the case in fragile and post-conflict countries. In the short run, the immediate task should be to develop a joint understanding among ILO Arab states stakeholders of the opportunities and constraints in each of the individual country situations and subsequently to work with select partners to develop that common understanding of the way forward. At the time of the redaction of this report, the latter exercise is being or has been undertaken under the aegis of the Resident Coordinator within the framework of the development of country-based Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in several countries, whereas it remains unclear what the status of ILO Arab states' strategic planning and programming process is in support of their HDPN work in these countries.

As the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States faces a new generation of challenges and responsibilities in the region, there is confirmation that ILO's work in these contexts remains very relevant and key to some of the most intractable problems in the region. Assuming that there is a basic agreement within the ILO Arab States that a coherent approach to and engagement in humanitarian, development, and peace activities offers more potential benefits than risks or drawbacks, there are important organizational issues evident to both external and internal stakeholders that require review and reengineering. These issues are listed below and further elaborated in the following section.

01 Lack of Interdisciplinarity in Programming

ILO Arab States' internal work, at regional and country level, needs a higher degree of interdisciplinarity in their approach to HDPN planning and programming. Currently, siloed approaches to programming prevail.

02 Limited Regional & Country Capacity

The Arab States Regional office suffers from insufficient capacity to effectively support the HDPN work (*"we are always putting out fires and have little time for strategic discussions"*)

03 Lack of Quality Funding

ILO's 'projectized' technical cooperation weakens the coherence of its country programme and is not conducive to identifying, building, and enhancing synergies in ILO's HDPN work in the region.

Lack of Interdisciplinary Programming

The Arab region - particularly the 6 crisis-affected countries - suffers from multiple stressors and a series of compounded crisis. Whether it be providing service delivery or policy advice, the international community must adopt a nexus approach to solutions. Along the same vein, ILO Arab States' internal work, at regional and country levels, needs a higher degree of interdisciplinarity in their approach to HDPN planning and programming. This is particularly important in countries such as Jordan and Iraq where the prevailing narrative and focus (from both the Government and donors) is on sustainable development work but where the context remains overwhelmingly fragile and in need of humanitarian support.

Limited Capacity to Increase (meaningful) Engagement in HDPN

Several external stakeholders shared the impression that ILO colleagues wore "multiple hats", and that because of this, their presence and participation in key discussions was not always reliable. Indeed, the Arab States Regional office suffers from insufficient capacity to effectively support the HDPN work (*"We are always putting out fires and have little time for strategic discussions"*). In addition, there is a lack of horizontal knowledge of how all the different pieces of technical cooperation work fit together. This lack of knowledge about the "big picture" and the ability to have anticipatory strategic discussions with external stakeholders is critically important if the Regional Office wishes to remain relevant in the HDPN space. The ILO needs to expand in-house knowledge and capacities by taking on board new staff that are familiar with humanitarian, resilience, and peace strategies in the region, and with expertise in conflict analysis and adaptive management that can help explore, operationalize, and engage with the HDPN agenda in the region

Lack of Quality (flexible) Funding [23]

One of the motivating factors for DAC Recommendation 8 on the operationalization of the HDPN was the sense that crises and humanitarian needs – and funding requests – are ballooning, with limited financing and programming strategies in place to resolve the issues driving this suffering. HDPN funding instruments have been increasing but not with the same pace or urgency required to meet the demand for increased HDPN operations.[24] In the region, three HDPN financing tools targeted at protracted forced displacement caseloads were launched at the time of the first Global Compact for Refugees. The ILO Arab States is the recipient of funds from two of the three funding instruments, notably the German Special Initiative on Forced Displacement and the Netherlands' PROSPECTS Partnerships budgetary instruments (2019-2023) [25]. In the case of the German funding, the ILO Arab States has invested in adapting and refining the Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme, which has become a tried and tested methodology in jumpstarting the business of recovery and laying the foundation for more sustainable outcomes. In the case of the Netherlands-funded PROSPECTS, ILO Arab states have been able to build an integrated programme of work around the world of work solutions for forcibly displaced populations and host communities. In both cases, the funding has supported (and continues to support) ILO's programme of work in these countries in a flexible and predictable manner. The ILO Arab states would need more of this type of funding. Adequate and quality funding are important enabling factors for several dimensions of the HDPN, such as capacity and partnership.

Lack of Quality Funding (cont'd)

According to internal stakeholders, ILO's work has been funded with a mix of resources, the majority coming from institutional grants and from ILO's RBSA funding. The ILO Arab States has managed to allocate funding sources to support individual country programmes to fill gaps and meet needs, while at the same time, being able to pilot approaches. But the proliferation of institutional grants has become administratively burdensome and expensive. In addition, while not fully analyzed, these contexts do not fit neatly either the humanitarian or development label but require flexible multiyear funding to generate sustained change. The onus is therefore put on the ILO to determine how they can sequence and blend funding from different sources. Because funding of ILO's HDPN work in the region is made up of many projects and is characteristically donor-driven, there is a proliferation of 'a la carte' projects ('projectization') that characterize ILO's technical cooperation work. This 'projectization' not only weakens the coherence of its country programmes, but it also perpetuates technical silos, impedes building synergies in ILO's work in the region, and focuses on short-term results and reporting. Externally, the projectization of the technical cooperation projects also makes it difficult for the ILO as an HDPN partner to engage meaningfully and plan predictably with other partners in the region.

06. Emerging HDPN Opportunities & Principles of Engagement

- The challenges facing the crisis-affected Arab states clearly require an HDPN approach and equally effective HDPN partnerships for supporting the development of integrated solutions to address dynamics and root causes of poverty and social injustice, intermingled with those of conflict and climate change. For the ILO Arab States, the success of its work in the region has created expectations that need to be carefully gauged in terms of its future engagement in the HDPN including leadership, strategic programming, coordination including adaptive management, and partnerships.
 - As part of the ILO Arab States' strategic engagement in the HDPN space for the next 3 to 5 years, a number of principles for this engagement are proposed. These principles are guided by the contents of the OECD-DAC's Recommendation 8 on the operationalization of the Triple Nexus, and based on the emerging principles of action as outlined in the September 2016 Joint Statement endorsed by the ILO, the World Bank, UNDP, and PBSO on an analytical framework and emerging principles for action, and the next steps on Employment Programmes and Peace. The ILO Arab States' project and programme managers are strongly suggested to use these principles in project design and implementation.
 - The proposed principles are: Stay & Deliver; People-centred, especially forcibly displaced populations, women & youth; Conflict-sensitive & Peace Responsive; Context-specific & Risk-informed; Strengthened National & Local ownership; Focus on systems & capacity building, when and wherever possible; and Engage meaningfully in Global Advocacy.
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06. EMERGING HDPN OPPORTUNITIES & PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

Against this background, the ILO Arab States finds itself at an important juncture regarding its capacity to engage in HDPN operations addressing the current and future crisis and post-crisis contexts. The status quo in the Arab region and specifically HDPN countries in the region remains critical. Arab countries affected by crises have among the highest economic cost of violence as a percentage of GDP worldwide[26], with Syria estimated at 59 percent of its GDP in 2019, and an average of 27% in other Arab states. Moreover, the dual shock - COVID-19 and oil price crises – have further affected the region's already difficult macroeconomic landscape, impact on employment, inflation, and GDP growth. The “social contract” between some of the region's governments and their citizens had already been broken. Social media, the shifting perceptions and needs of a burgeoning youth population, and a growing global interest in justice and inclusivity have ushered in a new means of tackling pressing domestic and international challenges, and governments in the region are struggling to keep up let alone address the challenges. This, with the failure to provide jobs and security to citizens as well as their most basic needs, constitutes a significant threat to fragile regional peace.

Another looming challenge includes the ability of governments in the region to adapt to and mitigate, climate change hazards. As was concluded in a January 2022 European Humanitarian Forum Regional Consultation in the MENA region and European Neighborhood [27], climate change-related crises compound existing emergencies (including armed conflict and poverty) in the MENA and European Neighbourhood regions. Additional important facts include:

- Across the regions, the scale, duration, and frequency of drought are increasing. Humanitarian emergency appeals are launched frequently due to drought severity, and as a result, they cannot be anticipated or managed in a sustainable manner. Scarcity of water, including falling water levels, is the main challenge affecting livelihoods, agriculture, food, and health of the populations and leading to internal displacement or migration. There has been an increased risk of forest fires because of the region's rising heat levels and drought is becoming endemic to the already-dry region. Importantly, disaster preparedness and climate change are not prioritized by most governments of the region, despite that the consequences are already visible in many areas. There is a lack of integrated Emergency Warning Systems (EWS) at the regional level and when in place and functional, national EWS are disconnected from sub-national levels and local communities. Forecast and anticipatory models are not sufficiently functional to effectively prevent disasters.
- The region's rising heat levels are a direct threat to agriculture and agrarian economies in the region face a slow exodus to the cities, with all the accompanying pressures of urbanization.
- Climate events and natural disasters are also driven by politics and are very sensitive to non-natural impacts. For example, water access can be reliant upon geopolitics, particularly in areas with low supplies of potable water. In addition to the immediate impact on livelihoods and displacement, climate change-related crises are leading to increased social tensions between communities (displaced and host) over often scarce and scattered resources.

These trends are likely to exacerbate one of the region's biggest challenges, its burgeoning youth population growth. The Arab states have had the world's highest youth unemployment for over a quarter of a century and that goes double (almost literally) for women. The situation is even worse for those with disabilities. Finally, additional systemic trends threatening the region such as food insecurity, and public health crises could go from coexisting to exacerbating one another's harmful effects. If trends are treated as vectors — having both direction and magnitude — an increasing magnitude of any of these troubling trends could shift their combined force in a new direction, toward widespread humanitarian crises.

There is no doubt that the challenges facing the Arab states clearly require an HDPN approach and equally effective HDPN partnerships for supporting the development of integrated solutions to seemingly insurmountable problems. The dynamics and root causes of poverty and social injustice are intermingled with those of conflict and climate change. Integrated solutions need to combine humanitarian efforts with a development offer that should include conflict prevention, mitigation, and responsiveness. Whenever possible, governance and peacebuilding opportunities need to be leveraged in all aspects of recovery. To ensure an HDPN approach is adopted, senior UN HDPN advisers have been deployed to various Resident Coordinator's offices throughout the region "to make sure that everyone wants to work together in a coordinated, coherent way, make sure that we have an overall strategy with same goals". In this regard, the HDPN advisers have repeatedly noted the importance of the ILO in offering the bridge to development, even if articulated in its most basic form.

The ILO Regional Office for the Arab States and the country teams in the crisis-afflicted settings have laid a solid foundation on which it can continue to build as a development actor in the HDPN. However, the success of its work in the region has created expectations that need to be carefully gauged in terms of its future engagement in the HDPN including leadership, strategic programming, coordination including adaptive management, and partnerships. As one ILO programme officer noted, "*The convergence of the issues in the region is forcing the ILO Arab States to be more reflective than reactionary*". These dimensions need to be reviewed both in terms of internal capacity, possible reengineering of the current modus operandi, and some urgently needed strategic investments regarding internal resources and vis-à-vis external partners with which the Regional Office can deepen collaboration.

The following section is a proposal for ILO's Strategic Engagement in support of the HDPN solutions in the Arab region in the next 3 to 5 years, including principles by which the ILO Arab States can guide their programming and associated recommendations for their consideration. It is important to note that the report's proposals and recommendations are generic in nature, reflecting the broad scope of this report. Each ILO country team should review the recommendations with a view to developing a prioritised and context-specific subset of recommendations. Where possible, ILO colleagues at the Headquarters level should also identify areas where they can provide support for their counterparts in the region.

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The convergence of the [humanitarian and development] issues in the region is forcing the ILO Arab States to be more reflective than reactionary.

A. Emerging HDPN Opportunities & Challenges

One of the lines of query put forward to ILO Arab Region's external partners was "Going forward, what are some of the opportunities in the next 3 to 5 years for working more closely in the HDPN in the region?" The interviews with external stakeholders – particularly the donor community and within this community, the EU – revealed consensus around the themes and sector where the ILO in the region has already demonstrated value addition and leadership. The following opportunities (in terms of themes and 'nexus' issues[i] emerged:

Figure 7



1. **Social Protection in the Arab region.** Social protection schemes in Arab countries tend to suffer from limited coverage in terms of people, risks, and compensation levels. They tend to redistribute bottom-up rather than progressively. They tend to be segmented and thereby replicate the existing social stratification. In many cases, they tend to neglect the impoverished, the self-employed, or the informal sector workers. The EU representatives interviewed during this study were particularly vocal about the expanded and much-needed participation of the ILO in the realm of all aspects of social protection work in the region. This critically important sector has ramifications for many sensitive topics (i.e. forcibly displaced populations) and for future threats such as the looming climate crisis in these fragile countries. Links to social cohesion also remain critically underexplored. Donors and UN partners alike expressed the need for more ILO involvement, including anticipatory adaptive social protection to respond to and cope with recurring shocks.

2. Climate change and implications for conflict and forced displacement: As was previously noted, the climate profile of the region is dire. All external stakeholders noted most of the international community in the region had some form of climate change mitigation in their portfolio of work, with plans to scale up efforts. Some conveyed the importance of acting urgently to stem the tide. Two of the interviewees spoke about the nexus between climate change and repercussions on human security in the region, even terrorism. The negative trends impacting the Arab region more than any other region in the world are also acting as a threat multiplier across all natural resources and human security issues. The opportunity to use positive climate action to create employment opportunities and intentionally build social cohesion requires an integrated approach. The ILO in the region needs to be an integral part of this multi-scalar effort.

3. Forced displacement (including internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, and refugees): The combined forecasts for the 26 countries covered by the Foresight model in the Danish Refugee's 2023 Global Displacement Forecast Report suggests that the total number of people displaced will have increased by 5.4 million in 2024 from an estimated 95 million at the end of 2022. [i] Displacement and hosting are expected to increase in East and West Africa by 3 million at the end of 2024, with 20 percent of these populations to be hoisted in the Arab region. By all accounts, the focus of international development partners will have to accelerate and deepen to include solutions that target the intersection of conflict and climate change. All external actors in the region interviewed has some form of displacement focus in their pipeline, as it relates to conflict, climate change, or both.

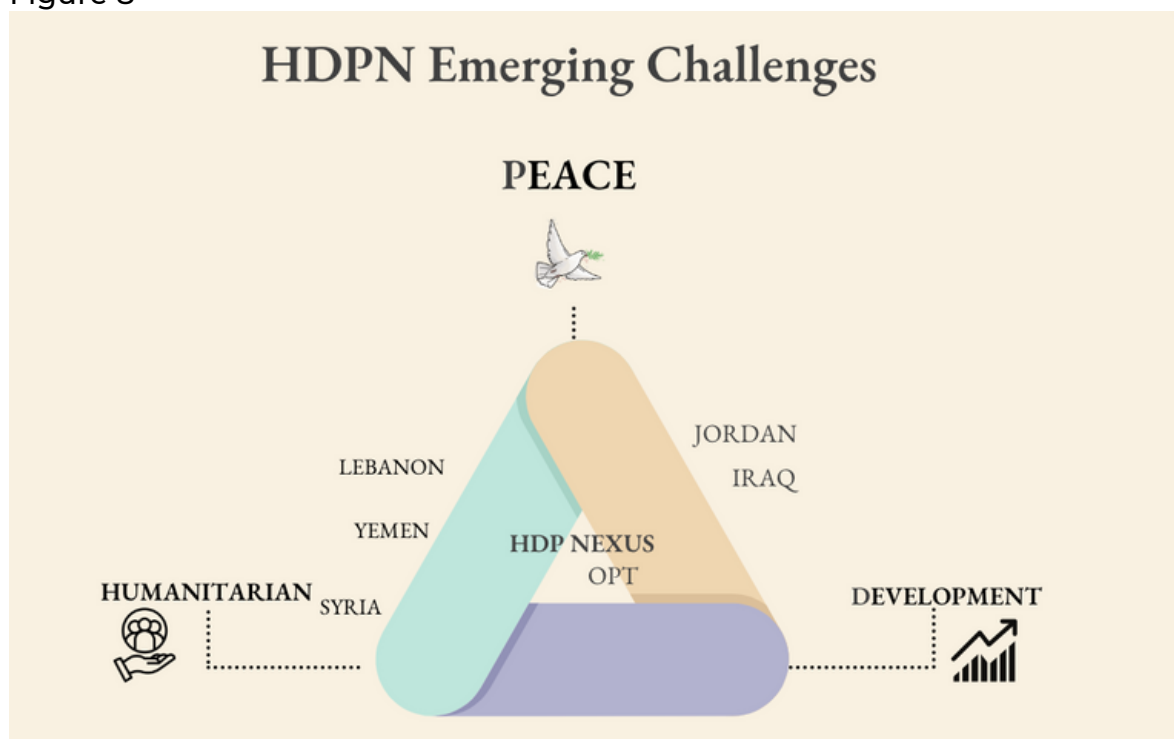
4. Youth unemployment, social justice, and conflict prevention: The youth unemployment rate in the Arab world has never been below 25 percent and COVID-19 only exacerbated this condition. There have been many studies undertaken on the correlation between the rise of violence and social unrest to the situation of youth in the Arab region, particularly in the ILO Arab States subset of countries affected by crisis. In addition, while the youth unemployment rate is an important labor market indicator, some studies have started using the concept of Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET): the percentage of youth who do not currently have a job and are not enrolled in human capital investment activities such as education or training. NEET focuses on youth who are at risk as they lack access to both jobs and learning opportunities. The MENA region has a high share of young people experiencing NEET with an average of 29% across the region and as high as 45% in Iraq in 2020 [28]. The importance of good governance and sound policies in creating good education and training systems, alongside that of providing an environment conducive to business formation and job creation, has been an integral part of the ILO efforts in the region. External stakeholders noted that addressing the youth unemployment issue is inextricably tied to guaranteeing stability and security in the region. For the ILO, the current efforts to address youth unemployment must be revisited with a conflict-sensitive lens and stepped up, ideally with HDPN partners in tow.

5. Women's participation in employment opportunities: Several stakeholders mentioned the need for the ILO together with partners to see how local women groups have worked to safeguard against regressions in gains already made and to keep pushing for gender equality and women's empowerment during transitions. The countries in the Arab world have the most gender-restrictive policies when it comes to women in the workforce. More than two-thirds of women in the region work in agriculture, education, health care, or public administration.

However, employment in several of these sectors has plummeted after COVID-19 and the financial fallout of the oil crisis. Employment in the paid care industries is dominated by women but they are typically devalued in society, rendering them more likely to offer lower pay, less generous benefits, and lower societal standing.[29] It is also important to note that some of the Arab region's worst humanitarian crises are in the areas deemed most gender unequal, like the Gaza Strip, Yemen, and Syria. ILO programming in the Arab States must prioritize women's meaningful participation in the labour market.

Against these priorities, there are the challenges of programming in very diverse and highly difficult contexts. Below is a snapshot of the current state of HDPN profiles for each of the ILO Arab states experiencing crisis and/or recovery. It is important to note that, because of the degree of fragility experienced by all these countries, this snapshot can change quite quickly, with corresponding implications on programming.

Figure 8



As was previously noted, the dominant narrative from within the respective Governments and among the international donor community is that Jordan and Iraq are on a sustainable development trajectory. Humanitarian funding is therefore being phased out. The OPT continues to be an intractable humanitarian situation, with periods of what the ICRC consider to be more sustainable humanitarian outcomes. Lebanon is dysfunctionally functional, with both the IMF and the World Bank calling for urgent reforms. Development funding that is channelled through government systems will likely not be forthcoming until changes are adopted. Syria and Yemen both have humanitarian response plans for 2023, as does OPT and Lebanon. More details on the implications of programming are provided under "Recommendations for HDPN Engagement".

B. Proposed Principles of Engagement

As part of the ILO Arab States' strategic engagement in the HDPN space for the next 3 to 5 years, a number of principles for this engagement are outlined in this next section. The principles below are based on the emerging principles of action as outlined in the September 2016 Joint Statement endorsed by the ILO, the World Bank, UNDP, and PBSO on an analytical framework, emerging principles for action, and next steps on Employment Programmes and Peace. As noted in the publication, the joint statement embodies the “collective efforts to strengthen the peacebuilding impact of [our] employment programmes in conflict-affected countries”.^[30] The analytical framework and principles of action were developed before the OECD Recommendation 8 on the operationalization of the HDPN and provide the “offer and vision” that development actors bring to countries in crisis. Given that the focus of this study is on countries in crisis in the Arab region, with profiles with varying mixes and degrees of HDPN dimensions, the principles from the 2016 Joint Statement have been adapted to reflect the ILO's HDPN work in the region.

Figure 9



Overarching Proposed ILO Arab States' Engagement & Principles in the HDPN

Guided by the principles contained in the OECD-DAC's Recommendation 8 on the operationalization of the Triple Nexus, the ILO Arab States will continue to operationalize the HDPN by designing and implementing employment and social protection programmes that aim to foster peace and stability in conflict-affected countries in the Arab region. The ILO Arab States is committed to bringing its skills and capabilities to bear in responding to crisis and pursuing integrated, sequenced, and layered short-term and long-term activities that lay the foundations for resilient, sustainable, and inclusive recovery. The involvement of HDPN partners will be informed by areas of comparative advantages and mandates and will be defined by the substantive nature of the project or programme. When possible, integrated strategic planning should involve the participation of all relevant stakeholders and should be grounded in local realities by using immediate and root causes analysis, mapping and understanding local partners, and Nexus solutions that use local responses to local challenges. As with the Principles for Action on Employment Programmes and Peace, project and programme managers in the region are strongly suggested to use these principles in project design and implementation.



Principle 1 - Stay & Deliver

In situations of the occurrence of sudden onset crisis, the ILO Arab States will coordinate closely with ILO units involved in crisis response at Headquarters, with the respective UN Country Team and with humanitarian organizations in the country to determine whether and how the ILO should engage. As part of the UN collective response, the ILO will seek to respond to different types of crises in the Arab region as appropriate (intensifying conflict, pandemics, financial or refugee crisis, natural disasters, etc.) and as early as possible in the crisis.



Principle 2 - People-centred, especially forcibly displaced populations, women & youth

The ILO Arab States will put people, including those most at risk of being left behind (e.g., women, persons with disabilities, youth, forcibly displaced persons and host communities and those with multiple, intersecting needs) at the centre of programme design and operational response, prioritizing those in the most vulnerable situations and promoting inclusion. With limited resources, the goal is to positively affect those most at risk of engaging in violence (e.g. youth), or those most vulnerable to the impacts of violence (e.g. women and children). Adopting a people-centred approach includes ensuring that communities and people have decision making power and, through appropriate and accessible mechanisms, can express the risks and challenges that they face and be a part of defining the solutions.



Principle 3 – Conflict-sensitive & Peace Responsive

At a minimum, the ILO Arab States seeks to avoid aggravating a conflict when operating in conflict-prone and affected environments (do no harm). Where needed and possible, the ILO Arab States will seek to contribute to conflict prevention, recovery, and peace-building efforts (do good). Adopting conflict-sensitive programming and implementation helps staff manage the project's exposure to conflict-related risks and identify interventions to exploit potential peace-amplifying opportunities. Exclusion, inequalities, and perceptions of injustice are among the main root causes driving fragility and conflict. The ILO Arab states will seek to programme interventions that will deliberately and cohesively build social cohesion as part of a longer-term strategic approach, rather than applying it to discreet activities and project interventions.



Principle 4 - Context-specific & Risk-informed

As part of the ILO Arab states efforts to build social cohesion and implement programmes that are peace responsive, the Regional Office will follow a context-specific approach to fragility and conflict. In partnership with other HDPN partners and where possible, using HDPN partners' political economy analysis, the ILO Arab States will aim to strengthen its understanding of the context to inform the design of differentiated responses to specific drivers of fragility and conflict. This analysis will also ensure that project and programme design and interventions are best suited to country- and community-specific circumstances.



Principle 5 - Strengthened National & Local Ownership

To ensure sustainable peace, national and local leadership and ownership must be secured. National and local institutions and communities should lead employment initiatives and, where possible, be empowered to participate throughout the cycle of programme design, implementation, and evaluation. Across its activities, the ILO Arab States will leverage knowledge from national and local actors, including ILO's social partners and the private sector, and strengthen their leadership and capacity to make assistance more localized and sustainable. The optimal mix of activities for a particular context will be defined in consultation with national and local actors to align with national priorities, cooperation frameworks and humanitarian response plans, as and when appropriate, and with HDPN partners working in those same contexts.



Principle 6 – Focus on systems & capacity building, when and wherever possible

The ILO Arab States will seek to create synergies that optimize the use of limited financial resources for early response and income security in the short term, while simultaneously addressing structural poverty and unemployment issues in the long term through the development of opportunities for sustained and productive work. The creation of sustainable employment and livelihoods and a robust social protection system will have an impact on the long-term sustainability of peacebuilding. However, even short-term employment programmes and safety nets can build conditions for long-term sustainable outcomes, for the beneficiary, for local economic activity, for the implementing governmental agency, or for a wider planning process. Whether or not the programme is expected to continue, longer-term outcomes should be anticipated and supported from the design phase. Wherever possible, employment and social protection programmes should aim to empower and enhance the capacity of institutions at local and national levels.



Principle 7 – Engage meaningfully in Global Advocacy

Whenever possible, the ILO Arab States will act as a Global Advocate for more equitable and inclusive growth, decent work, and social protection, especially for those in danger of being left behind. That advocacy will be aimed primarily at policy and legislative reforms that can positively transform the social contract between governments and their citizenry. When feasible, the ILO Arab States should endeavour to create a coalition of like-minded HDPN partners, including social partners and donors, to form a regional social justice coalition focused on supporting the resilient and just transition towards sustainable social and economic development in the Arab region.

07. Recommendations for HDPN Engagement

Based on the findings from interviews with both internal and external stakeholders and the analysis of those findings, and building on the lessons learned from the ILO's past and more recent engagement in the HDPN, a set of recommendations are put forward for the ILO Arab States' consideration:

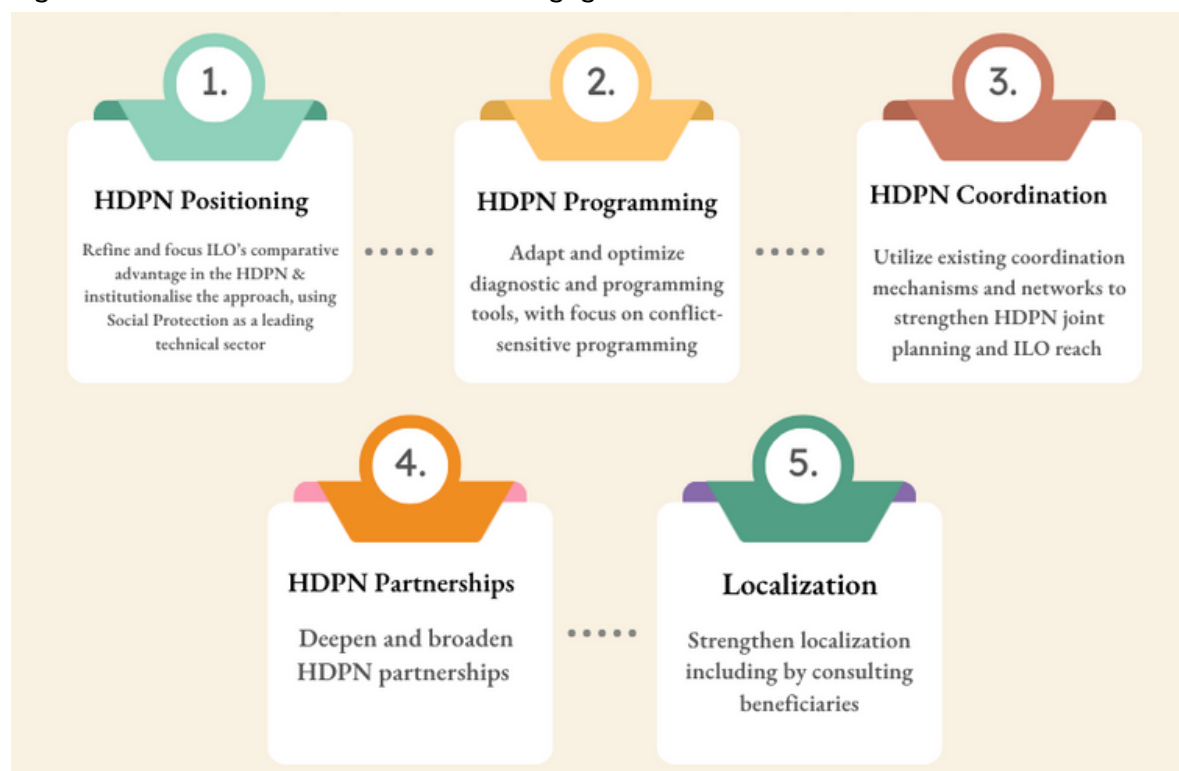
- Refine and focus ILO's comparative advantage in the HDPN and institutionalise the approach using Social Protection as a leading technical sector in the HDPN
- Adapt and optimize diagnostic and programming tools, based on Interdisciplinarity and conflict-sensitive approaches
- Utilize existing coordination mechanisms and networks to strengthen HDPN joint planning and ILO reach
- Expand, deepen, and formalize HDPN partnerships
- Strengthen and empower national and local actors, including crisis-affected populations
- Use HDPN to instigate change management and focus on the 'enablers'

For each of the recommendations, a set of sub-recommendations is put forward and, where appropriate and relevant, best practice is highlighted.

It is suggested that the ILO Arab States leverage its experience of 10 + years working towards implicit and explicit HDP solutions and the opportunity afforded by the PCA to pilot conflict-sensitive programming in all of ILO's work in Yemen.

Based on the findings from interviews with both internal and external stakeholders and the analysis of those findings, and building on the lessons learned from the ILO's past and more recent engagement in the HDPN, the following section puts forward recommendations that aim to focus on and optimize the efforts of the ILO Arab States working towards HDPN solutions in crisis-affected countries in the region. The recommendations are articulated around 5 basic dimensions of the operationalization of the HDPN in different country contexts.

Figure 10 - Recommendations for HDPN Engagement

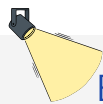


This section also puts forward recommendations at the organizational level that addresses, among other things, the enabling environment for HDPN programming and that would allow for more context-led and adaptive decision-making as well as (calculated) risk-taking.

1. Positioning - Refine and focus ILO's comparative advantage in the HDPN and institutionalise the approach using Social Protection as a leading technical sector in the HDPN

The ILO Regional Office for the Arab states should continue to deploy its expertise in the world of work solutions and lay the ground for the critical task of bridging humanitarian work to longer-term work building sustainable development. It should seek to deepen its engagement where it has a strong comparative advantage – such as rigorous labour market diagnostics and analysis, policy dialogue with Government actors and social partners, and strengthening national systems, where possible. It should seek to further refine and focus its operational work by linking short-term entry points and interventions to more sustainable longer-term actions that lay the ground for decent work conditions, particularly social protection. Wherever possible, the ILO Arab states needs to complement its work with the actions of other partners, including peace and security actors, local civil society actors, donors, and NGOs, with a view to defining collective outcomes and a division of labour based on comparative advantage whilst maximizing efficiency and impact. This is particularly relevant in countries where the dialogue with Government actors is minimal. In addition, whenever possible, the ILO Arab States should seek to clarify to external audiences the spectrum of activities in various sectors that are offered by the ILO in the region and define multi-year objectives for its work, including where the ILO will fill important gaps or contribute to transitional measures. This includes articulating how the ILO Arab States sees itself as delivering short-term employment and safety nets solutions as part of early recovery efforts and how issues such as social protection and green economy are also part of nexus solutions.

Part of the task of refining and focusing ILO's work in the region includes an internal collective understanding of the HDPN, how ILO HDPN interventions in the individual crisis-affected countries complement ongoing ILO (and possibly other partners) work in other sectors in the country and how these collective actions lead to a coherent and cohesive programme of support to the country. Using the opportunity afforded by the ILO's Director-General's Programme Guidance, the ILO Arab states should consider articulating its HDPN work through the creation of a Regional Social Justice Coalition buttressed by three of the four action programmes [31] that target critical bottlenecks to achieving decent work and social justice. Initiatives in the region that fall under three of the four action programmes could be operationalized by adopting an HDPN approach.



Box 6: Spotlight: Social Protection

Social protection schemes in Arab countries tend to suffer from limited coverage in terms of people, risks, and compensation levels. They tend to redistribute bottom-up rather than progressively, and be segmented and thereby replicate the existing social stratification. They tend to care mainly for the politically influential public sector and formal workers rather than the poor, the self-employed, or informal economy workers. ILO's work on social protection schemes has had a triple function: a social function, in that the schemes are built to prevent and reduce poverty and inequality - including by articulating the critical link between contributory and non-contributory approaches to cover the "missing middle"; an economic function to reduce risk and thereby encourage people to become economically active, invest, and generate employment and growth, and a political function to promote social inclusion and cohesion and thereby stabilize the state and society.[32]

ILO's social protection work in the region spans four of the six crisis-affected countries (Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and OPT) that include an array of social protection activities from different donor funding sources. The ILO has increasingly moved towards adopting a nexus approach to its work in social protection at the policy and programming level, on the extension of social insurance (Jordan), social assistance (Lebanon, OPT, and Iraq), and support to sector-wide approaches (OPT, Lebanon, Jordan). In Syria, ILO's work is in the planning phase including shadow alignment social protection strategies that are compatible with existing or future state structures, and where possible, working with relevant line ministries and local government. In Yemen, the ILO has initiated engagement with UNDP and UNICEF to join an UN-wide effort to promote the development of a social protection framework.

The ILO Arab States' role in the crowded field of social protection is well-recognized and partners - UN and especially donors - would like to see more of ILO's leadership throughout the full transition from emergency relief to development. ECHO senior social protection advisers note that they "need the ILO" as a way to work as a counterweight to the World Bank and would like to see ILO involvement in the development of integrated social protection approaches in response to the climate crisis. They see ILO's role as being technically pragmatic about whom to work with and trying to find the right balance between building up state capacity and maintaining access to basic services. There is also recognition that the ILO has been able to identify principled ways of engaging with states to alleviate immediate social protection gaps and move gradually towards longer-term support for state-led social protection.

2. Programming - Adapt and optimize diagnostic and programming tools, with a focus on Interdisciplinarity and conflict-sensitivity

There are many examples of explicit and implicit nexus programming already happening in the Arab states afflicted by crisis. In these contexts, the ILO Arab states has been leveraging opportunities to introduce and/or strengthen social protection and employment solutions that build social capital and social cohesion and engage local actors – including the private sector – to achieve both humanitarian and development outcomes.

A significant part of the ILO Arab states' work in the HDPN is around protracted forced displacement. Indeed, the initial catalytic funding from the Syria Response was to address the Syrian refugee crisis in neighbouring countries. Much of the ILO Arab states' success in HDPN programming is undeniably around the holistic approaches adopted by the ILO itself or with other partners in addressing complex crisis situations, particularly around forcibly displaced populations and host communities that are equally marginalized and vulnerable; building the resilience of and providing short-term opportunities for employment to forcibly displaced persons and host communities while addressing the environment for socio-economic inclusion, facilitating access to nationally led social protection and providing entrepreneurship support through capacity development and value chain creation. **These efforts need to be sustained, further adapted, optimized, and where possible, scaled up.** With the growing forced displacement caseloads in the region due to climate vagaries, concerted efforts will be needed to have analyses related to the nexus between the impact of accelerated climate change in the crisis-affected countries in the region, the increased risk of conflicts over resource use between economic sectors and people, and overall repercussions on forced displacement as a result of both climate change and conflict. The ILO in the region must create the space and capacity for these strategic reflections, around prevention and preparedness on these topics and what this means programmatically for world-of-work solutions in these contexts.

The ILO in the region also brings a level of depth and rigor to labour market analysis that is used by and benefits the international community at large. However, **lessons from ILO Arab States' work in the region point to the urgent need for the systematic inclusion of analysis on the overall political and socioeconomic environment in country and to the fact that programmes must be strongly rooted in local contexts.** The political economy analyses aim to situate development interventions within an understanding of the prevailing political and economic processes in each context, provide a dimension of “reality-check” on the development of specific and time-bound targets and reliable indicators to guide decisions about programming, and inform on conflict-sensitive tools and interventions that would, at the very least, “do no harm”. This ground-level analysis need not be undertaken by the ILO, as much of this type of analysis is undertaken by the UNDP and/or the World Bank.

As was noted above, for ILO's social constituents, national and local authorities as well as implementing agencies the ILO's programming in building their capacities is one of the most important dimensions of ILO's value added in the nexus. These capacity-building tools bring an opportunity to deliver services at a greater scale than any traditional humanitarian programme can do and set the foundation for sustainable solutions. **The ILO Arab States needs to continue adaptation and optimization of these training tools and modules.** Capacity development focal points in the ILO Arab states need to adapt the mode of their delivery and consider radically different entry points for their work in these crisis contexts. Optimization of training tools using digitalization is important. In addition, identifying national centres of excellence in crisis-affected countries in the region and seeking closer collaboration with these entities is often a better way of supporting capacity.

Moving forward, and as a basic part of future investment in HDPN work, **the ILO Regional Office needs to exploit existing synergies in programming between and among HDPN partners (including peace actors),** as it is doing in social protection interventions with OXFAM and UNICEF in OPT and with WFP and UNICEF in Jordan or in solutions to protracted displacement, as is being done with UNHCR and UNICEF within PROSPECTS, with a view to strengthening coherence, developing a common approach based on an agreed-upon division of labour and undertake joint advocacy on sensitive policy positions.

As was mentioned previously, the next wave of programmatic complexity in the region **requires that the ILO Arab States adopt some form of scenario planning or phased planning to classify different interventions depending on the contexts in individual countries.** While the ILO Arab has developed a toolbox of best practices, lessons learned show that the Organization critically lacks coherent actionable mechanisms for distinguishing between technical and adaptive problems during implementation, and the corresponding strategies for anticipating and responding seriously to problems as and when they occur. HDPN programmatic design must be based on a conceptual framework that foresees the work as non-linear and programmes as adapting and moving between more development-focused or emergency-focused phases and interdisciplinary approaches and solutions. (More on this topic is discussed under Point 6 below). Importantly, the region would benefit from incorporating a system of ongoing analysis, learning, and feedback loop in order to incorporate course correction and lessons learned in real-time.



Box 7: Spotlight: PROSPECTS in Iraq, Jordan & Lebanon

ILO's programming in the region had been and continues to implicitly encompass an HD approach, even before the OECD Nexus policies and tools were developed. It is nevertheless important to note that ILO's first formal HD Nexus work (as the Organization is accountable for delivering on HDPN outcomes) was and is with the multicountry programme PROSPECTS. Now finalizing its first phase, PROSPECTS has demonstrated ILO's ability to work across the nexus with an interdisciplinary approach and adopt adaptive practices focused on achieving outcomes through iteration and continuous learning of what works for protracted forced displacement contexts. In the region, ILO PROSPECTS has been hailed by both donors and partners as what development actors bring to the table in the context of HDPN, notably development assistance doubly purposed to both strengthen human capital, infrastructure, service delivery, state core functions, and the economy, while also responding to and managing against major unforeseen crisis and their root, in the context of protected forced displacement. Additionally, ILO PROSPECTS has created a more effective ecosystem for collective action, bringing together participating Organizations' comparative strengths to maximize impact and work holistically. PROSPECTS Interventions in the region have also confirmed that working across the Nexus does not require implementing activities from all sectors in one project simultaneously. Instead, thinking ahead and planning is enabled to anticipate needs, respond where possible, and bring in additional support as needed.

Moving forward, the ILO PROSPECTS and the ILO Arab States need to seek closer programming and operational synergies with a view to embedding the best practices and lessons learned emerging from ILO PROSPECTS' work in support of HDPN solutions to forced displacement contexts in the region.



Box 8: Spotlight: Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme

The ILO's Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme (EIIP) is a tried and tested programme addressing the immediate need for employment creation while laying the ground for longer-term sustainable recovery. In more ways than one, the EIIP has become ILO's entry point in post-conflict and post-disaster situations, laying the ground for an ILO presence and operational footprint in situations that are typically dominated by humanitarian agencies.

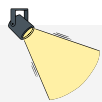
The evolution of the EIIP in the region and in each country has been well-documented and described as being "at the heart of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus since it additionally aims at providing public infrastructure and services that support longer-term social, environmental, and economic development, including secondary employment effects [33]". In Jordan and Lebanon, there have been several iterations of the EIIP, and with every iteration, there have been additional layers of programmatic interventions aimed at building links to longer-term sustainability. A recent study[34] of the EIIP in Iraq documents the evolution of the programme and suggests that there is still significant scope for transforming the EIIP into a sophisticated programme that can potentially build stronger links to skills training, social protection, social cohesion, and the area of disaster risk reduction and greening the economy. Importantly, there is significant scope to design interventions that offer sequential pathways between ILO's programmes and services in the country and build ILO's network in the country through strengthened collaboration with private sector actors, ILO's social partners, and relevant Government departments. Regarding the latter, it is essential to note that the involvement of local actors needs to be buttressed and developed in the context of EIIPs to ensure the meaningful participation of local actors and affected populations in EIIP design and implementation.

As the ILO Arab States' work advances and EIIP programmes are rolled out, a diversified donor base is required to facilitate experimentation and piloting as well as scaling up, where appropriate and possible. The ILO Arab States should consider the creation of a Multi-Partner Trust Fund at the regional level for this purpose and diversify the funding base for the EIIP, which has to date been primarily from Germany and ILO RBSA funds.

3. Coordination - Utilize existing coordination mechanisms and networks to strengthen HDPN joint planning and ILO reach

Participation in coordination mechanisms is at times a 'necessary evil', as these fora are crucial to information flow among the myriad of UN actors, the donor community, the World Bank and NGOs. Coordination fora are also important mechanisms through which donors and the multilateral system can agree on priorities and engage in joint planning. Each of the crisis-affected countries in the Arab region has a myriad of working groups co-led by different UN agencies and sometimes donors in response to humanitarian needs (e.g. forced displacement and migration) and in alignment with the SDGs and relevant sectors in each country (e.g. digital economy). As was previously noted, when there is an HDPN working group, it is usually led by a humanitarian agency and a donor, and the prevailing coordination architecture emulates the humanitarian cluster system. The ILO in the region is not a part of the humanitarian WGs nor does it systematically participate in the development of humanitarian response plans [35], although recently the ILO exceptionally participated in the recovery response to the earthquake-affected northwestern part of Syria. Whenever possible, the ILO Arab States should ensure its early engagement at the onset of a crisis, as this increases the likelihood that it will be included in a subsequent coordinated humanitarian-development-peace response.

Coordination has a cost, and the ILO regional office and respective country offices have limited capacities. **Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the different fora in each country be mapped out, and participation in these fora be evaluated for their value addition - especially as they relate to joint HDPN planning and sharing of information and analyses.** It is also worth noting that numerous external stakeholders interviewed for the study – particularly donors – see the ILO as a neutral broker and a natural lead coordinator in highly contested situations. This is especially the case when dealing with sensitive issues such as the integration of refugees into the labour market or the extension of protections to otherwise marginalized groups. **Whenever feasible, the ILO Arab States can and should take up the mantle as the lead technical agency and coordinate responses focused on the effective transition towards more sustainable humanitarian responses (as in the case of OPT) or sustainable development trajectory (as in Iraq).**



Box 9: Spotlight: Leadership & Contributing to Global Advocacy - the cases of OPT and Iraq

Donors and UN partners repeatedly noted the importance of the ILO Arab States' technical leadership in highly sensitive contexts. Where it has shown leadership, the Regional Office has done so by using a solid understanding of the political economy of a particular context, building support for the right interventions or policy positions and bringing together coalitions to support certain innovations or interventions.

In Iraq, the ILO and UN partners successfully negotiated that the Government of Iraq include Internally Displaced Persons and returnees in the Government-led Social Safety Nets, as part of the country's transition from humanitarian assistance to sustainable development. In OPT, a recent evaluation noted ILO's role as a neutral broker and "has the required trust and legitimacy among all actors to act as facilitators of an unprecedented dialogue around the humanitarian-development nexus in the OPT". [36]

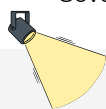
Given the challenges of connecting such diverse and divergent actors in these highly contested contexts, effective nexus leadership is essential to making progress, ensuring accountability, and leading difficult decision-making. On the flip side, the leadership required to advance nexus solutions also demands investments in staff both in terms of numbers and wider capacity. The senior managers of the ILO Arab States need to carefully weigh the possibility of investing in leading inter-agency coordination. And in all cases, it is highly recommended that such experiences be documented as lessons learned and shared for future learning and replication. In the same vein, it is also recommended these experiences be shared with a larger global audience in international fora whenever possible, as a way to inform nexus discussions around leadership and (development) capacity in fragile contexts.

4. Partnerships - Expand, deepen and formalize HDPN partnerships

The ILO Arab States has significantly broadened its outreach and visibility in the HDPN space through its partnerships with UN agencies, national and local actors (including the private sector) and INGOs. In several cases, where the dialogue with the country is off-limits or curtailed, working at subnational levels or with the representatives from the chambers of commerce as is the case in Yemen offers opportunities for collaboration where the ILO would otherwise not be able to operate.

Still, at this critical juncture, the ILO in the region will need to deepen and, where appropriate, formalize the existing partnerships, particularly with UN agencies, and expand its relationship with other actors, including humanitarian and peace actors and local NGOs (see below Point 5 below 'Localization'). To this end, the ILO Arab states should conduct a robust partner-mapping exercise to identify current and potential HDPN partners in each country, and at the regional level with whom it can partner in a more predictable manner. HDPN partnerships should be seen through the parameters of context, comparative advantage and capacity and categorized in terms of primary function (fundraising; advocacy; implementing partner; policy, etc).

Going forward, the Regional Office needs to strategically replicate those HDP Nexus partnerships to achieve sustainable, relevant and context-specific impact. As was previously noted, the World Bank is a formidable player in the region. At a minimum, the ILO Arab States and the World Bank need to forge a relationship in which information and analyses are shared, with a view to presenting a 'united' front for Governments in the region, even if positions on issues may significantly differ.



Box 10: Spotlight - HDPN Partnerships: UNHCR & UNICEF

If development actors like the ILO are going to help fragile states exit fragility, they must work within a more effective ecosystem for collective action that replaces the current paradigm of short-term, uncoordinated, and one-off projects and stovepiped technical assistance. UN partners working closely with the ILO Arab States - specifically UNHCR and UNICEF - labeled the collaboration with the ILO 'a success'. In broad terms, UN partners in these two organizations attributed the success to the following elements:

- the existence of a unifying framework or work plan that spells out concrete steps toward building resilience in a fragile state and introduces strategies and adaptive methods and interventions for mobilizing development capacities to build resilience;
- mutual understanding of the respective organizations' internal structures and policy areas; and
- subsequent mapping of capacities; and defining opportunities for joint advocacy.

Examples of successful collaboration are UNHCR-ILO activities on Community Development Centers and referrals between UNICEF and the ILO on entrepreneurship development in Lebanon; designing an integrated model for youth referral pathways with UNICEF in Iraq and working on durable solutions for IDPs in Yemen and in Iraq.

For the ILO, the engagement with the HDPN has prompted a greater focus on coordination with partners. ILO's work in the region is largely bilateral, with most aid coordination – under national development plans – taking place at the strategic, but not operational, level. With a focus on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, coordination has become a *sine qua non*. Additionally, there is a myriad of in-country coordination structures, such as with the UN Country Team (UNCT) and the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator to discuss options for engaging on longer-term, integrated goals that straddle the HDP nexus. As was noted, much of these efforts build on humanitarian and development systems and structures, such as national-level emergency response mechanisms, the UN cluster system, or established technical working groups. These do not include the nationally led working groups. All actors including operational giants such as UNICEF and UNHCR lament the persistent issue of limited capacity in covering and meaningfully participating in these coordination fora. For the ILO, this is even more difficult, given its smaller operational footprint. Nevertheless, it remains incumbent upon the ILO Arab States to have a comprehensive discussion around HDPN coordination. If the ILO is to engage strategically in the HDPN, the expectation then would be to participate in the relevant HDPN discussions, as HDPN solutions are first and foremost about shared data and information and shared analysis and understanding of what is needed in different contexts of fragility.

5. Localization - Strengthen and empower national local actors, including crisis-affected populations

The HDPN work in the Arab region has been supported by an important network of local actors ranging from Government ministries of social development or labour and ILO social partners, when possible, and with humanitarian and development INGOs with important operational footprints in each country. From the discussions with ILO Arab states' internal and external stakeholders, a mixed picture of collaboration with different partners emerged. As was previously noted, relationships with national and local actors, and social partners are foundational in the Regional office work in these contexts. Despite the volatility of changing government positions on sensitive issues such as forced displacement or references to peace or social cohesion, the ILO Arab States has been able to navigate these relations with dexterity, and a high degree of diplomacy, but with challenges ("it is a push-pull, with one step forward, two steps back"). ILO's entry points with Government have brought about positive breakthroughs as in the cases of Iraq and OPT.

Similarly, in spite of limited capacities and mixed expectations, the collaboration with social partners has been the basis for important HDPN work (e.g. in Jordan, work with the Jordanian Chambers of Commerce resulted in enhanced productivity and employment of small and medium-sized enterprises in the agri-food sector). Despite complex dynamics in the region and in the specific subset of crisis-affected countries, there is a manifest level of comfort and ease regarding the work with national and local actors, anchoring much of the country-based work with these actors as part of ILO's natural *modus operandi* as a development actor. Notwithstanding, **efforts must be widened and deepened to serve better the institutions and practices of national and local actors and organizations who are ultimately the shareholders and stewards of change in their respective countries.** The ILO Arab States needs to **urgently revisit its *modus operandi* with local actors including social partners, crisis-affected populations national NGOs, and international NGOs alike.** An essential part of this review includes an honest assessment of the ongoing capacity-development initiatives in HDPN programmes and projects and how these serve the goal of empowering local actors, particularly the youth and vulnerable populations that have been disproportionately affected by crisis. Regarding the latter, the ILO needs to **engage more consistently and directly with the populations affected by crisis. Particularly in the Arab region, these populations are best placed to communicate their needs and the barriers they face in accessing decent work.** These local partnerships provide significant opportunities for influencing design, programming and implementation. Local actors – particularly local social partners – may also be in the position to identify policy levers that can better equip the ILO to navigate sensitive policy issues that prevail in crisis settings.



Box 11: Spotlight: The need for Clarity around Localization

Depending on an organization's position on the HDPN, localization takes on different dimensions and measurements for success. Humanitarians have elaborated accountability frameworks with specific indicators, particularly around funding to measure progress towards strengthening localization. In contrast, development actors have focused much of the discourse and work around localizing the global sustainable development goals but have been less vocal in defining what successful localization means in fragile contexts.

National and local actors interviewed for this study underscored the difference between UN aid agencies such as WFP, UNICEF, and UNHCR and the ILO. As the ILO Arab States' external partners noted, the outcome of development assistance ultimately should be policies and programmes that are still in place after development assistance ends, and that means that locally led and locally implemented development sets the foundation for sustainability. This is particularly true in countries experiencing crisis. While the latter seems obvious to the ILO, the different business models between humanitarian and development actors regarding localization make it such that the ILO in general and the ILO Arab States specifically, would benefit from establishing clear definitions for ensuring success and meaningful metrics to measure that success, rather than metrics such as x amount of workshops delivered or x number of beneficiaries trained. Defining localization needs to be part of the ILO Arab States' engagement in the HDPN, as a means of clarifying its contribution to and *modus operandi* within the HDPN. Indeed, this is what makes ILO's partnership so appealing: ILO's development assistance is smarter, more cost-effective and more impactful.

6. Organizational changes: Use HDPN to instigate change management and focus on the 'enablers'

The ILO Regional Office for the Arab States has spearheaded much of the ILO organizational work on the HDPN and should continue to do so. However, if ILO's pipeline of work is to increase and programmatically shift gears towards more development work in these contexts – and all predictions are that this is the case – it will be essential to consider the following steps to re-engineer some of the current practices:



Mindset change

Breach silos and work as 'one', with a common understanding of the HDPN and ILO Arab States' work in the HDPN context

'Own' programming

Engage in genuine internal programming process to incentivize cross-fertilization of ideas and lessons learned and ensure transparency of operations and funding.



Create multi-technical teams

Form multi-technical teams at regional level to support each country in crisis and reinforce interdisciplinarity.

Seek quality funding

Seek quality funding in terms of flexibility, increased timeframes and support for country and regional positions that can support ILO's increased participation in the HDPN.



- Mindset Change: ILO Arab States programme teams must think holistically about context and work beyond the limits of traditional sectors. Programme teams should also think differently about how to respond to sudden changes in context, adapt operations accordingly, and define what successful programming looks like, given the significant political and operational constraints prevalent in many of these countries.
- Own' Programming: The ILO Arab States needs to establish a genuine programming and reporting process to stimulate thinking "outside of the box", to incentivize cross-fertilization of ideas and lessons learned and to promote transparency in funding for HDPN work with a view to optimizing resources from a variety of sources. This process will also help bridge the gap between solid diagnostics, analysis, and reflection, on the one hand, and programmatic action on the other and ultimately build ownership and accountability for what is programmed and reported.
- Create multi-technical (or interdisciplinary) teams: It is strongly advised that multi-technical teams be formed to support each country in crisis and reinforce interdisciplinarity and coherence in programming solutions. ILO core technical specialists continue to work in their sector silos. Working in HDPN contexts towards integrated solutions requires increased dialogue among ILO specialists to develop flexible programming options and where relevant adapt and replicate best practices. In this regard, ILO Arab States management may wish to encourage staff changes, job shadowing and exchange formats among staff to foster changes of perspective. Whenever possible, technical specialists should draw from learning from HDPN expertise, whether formally through participation in the Nexus academy or by engaging in debates on the HDPN.
- Seek quality funding: It is highly recommended that the ILO Arab States advocate for and seek more quality funding in terms of flexibility and increased timeframes to support strategic programming responses rather than piecemeal interventions and country and regional positions that can support ILO's meaningful participation in the HDPN. The flexibility of ILO programming in the region is heavily dependent on external donor requirements. To date, the ILO colleagues have been astutely juggling generous donor funding with internal ILO funding. Internal funding is paradoxically more flexible than grant funding which is often tied to specific sectors and tightly linked to a set of target beneficiaries, certain indicators and predefined outcomes. Negotiations around funding requirements of the ILO Arab States require a rethink around the type of funding, prioritizing unearmarked funding and program-based approaches that can be used more strategically and flexibly.



Box 12: Spotlight: Piloting ILO-led conflict-sensitive HDPN approaches in Yemen

Despite considerable achievements in addressing the food insecurity in the country, there is widespread consensus that the humanitarian response to Yemen's ongoing crisis has fallen woefully short, with issues of "quality, oversight, robust data collection and analysis, balancing the long-term and short-term competing priorities and preserving humanitarian principles". (37) Indeed, there have been a number of academic and non academic reviews of the geopolitical situation in Yemen and the failure of the multilateral system to adequately support the Yemeni population. Importantly, there have been numerous questions about the "narrative" of the ongoing humanitarian situation, and whether the country would be better served by a more nuanced approach. Fragmentation also prevails at the level of donors, who have no common vision or objectives, except in the case of strategies to build women's rights.

The idea of adopting the HDNexus approach was already discussed in 2015, and, in 2016, the UN, the World Bank and the European Union established the "Yemen Humanitarian-Development-Peace Platform". However, work on "nexus-like" solutions only started in 2018. In fact, the UN Strategic Framework for Yemen (2017–2019) emphasized the importance of collaboration between existing humanitarian and what it referred to as "humanitarian plus" operations, defined as activities that focus on enhancing the impact of humanitarian response while building a stronger foundation for sustainable solutions. (38) Last year, a senior HDPN adviser was deployed to Resident Coordinator's office to "reinforce collaboration with accountabilities". At the time of the redaction of this study, the country team had undertaken a massive mapping of almost 400 disparate projects and programs onto a joint work plan that was articulated under several collective outcomes. As one senior policy adviser noted: the objective is to work on building stability on "quicksand" in reference to an extremely difficult operating environment.

The ILO has been a resident agency in Yemen since 1965. During the crisis, the Organization "stayed and delivered" in the country - with difficulty - working primarily on building resilience and social cohesion, through apprenticeship training and capacity building. The ILO Arab States is likely considered a niche player, doing at smallscale what it does best, namely skills development targetting government officials, the private sector and women, technical assistance to the employers' and business membership associations and working with government and constituents in strengthening labour governance, including adherence to international labour standards. More recently, the strategy set out by the ILO (2022-24) aligns with the UN Common Sustainable Framework and arguably is at the centre of what is needed in the country, namely securing decent work and social protection, particularly for women and building social cohesion. A Peace and Conflict Analysis (PCVA) was recently conducted with Interpeace in the country, with the objective of "undertaking a rapid assessment of peace and conflict dynamics related to the world of work, focusing on identifying entry points to promote gender transformative, conflict-sensitivity, peacebuilding and social cohesion through the pillars of ILO's Decent Work Agenda in the framework of the HDPN." The analysis will inform ILO's current strategy for Yemen and possibly other HDPN partners' strategies and initiatives in Yemen.

Against this background, it is recommended that the ILO leverage the work around the PCA in Yemen to convene partners and donors around the results of the PCA and its implications for a different model of support towards a nexus approach that prioritises efforts and actions to build social cohesion and positive peace. For the ILO Arab States, this implies investments in wider staff capacity, as well as the deployment of dedicated personnel to operationalise the action plan set forth in the 2022-24 strategy. It also implies engaging with Government and social constituents in "soft" diplomacy and advocacy around transitioning towards a different model of assistance, one based on resilient and self-reliant communities, and away from humanitarian support. Concomitantly, and on the basis of the results emerging from PCA, the ILO Arab States should consider convening discussions with donors and partners to further reframe the current basis of support and identify gaps and overlaps, with a view to supporting the transition towards sustainable development and developing joint planning based on some components of ILO Arab States' action plan for Yemen.

Final Reflections

The logic of the triple nexus is in its recognition that organizations are increasingly attempting to bridge humanitarian and development processes and goals to respond to needs and that a narrow focus on humanitarian needs alone is not enough to tend to the needs of affected communities. The approach is intended to capitalize on the complementary nature of the three aspects of intervention and ensure coordination among actors working within these pillars. With ever-present challenges around financing international assistance, it also attempts to look at ways to fund interventions from a longer-term, more flexible perspective.

The ILO Arab States has a long-standing experience working in fragile contexts and by extension in HDPN contexts.. Indeed, the ILO has built up an arsenal of world-of-work interventions that combine both long- and short-term approaches to address both emergency needs and chronic structural vulnerabilities. It is hard to know either how far these have been a result of new nexus thinking and working or collectively represent a real shift in tackling protracted crisis situations. ILO's technical work, based on norms and standards, has established the Organization's reputation as an honest broker in the region. Together with its organizing principles of social dialogue, social cohesion, and greater inclusivity, ILO's role as a rights-based neutral coordinator, bridges communities with formal institutions and focuses efforts on facilitating access to information, skills development, financial resources, labour markets and social protection has been and continues to be a crucial part in rebuilding the much needed social capital and social contract that is frequently lost or eroded in situations of prolonged crisis. It is this 'development offer' - the 'D' in the HDPN - that is recognised by external HDPN stakeholders as being transformative in working with the ILO Arab States.

Still, the relative success of the ILO in the region in regard to its work in the HDPN space can also become its Achilles' heel. Partners in the region have expectations that the ILO can deliver as an HDPN player in the region. However, as some of the countries in the region transition to sustainable development, while others are entrenched in protracted situations of conflict, it becomes ever more crucial that the ILO Arab States adopt a differentiated layered and conflict-sensitive approach to planning, programming, and implementation, ideally coordinating with social partners, local actors and UN HDPN partners, and supported by much-needed quality funding to flexibly adapt programming and partnering as the situation and context dictate. The ILO Regional Office is not there yet. However, the Regional Office's openness and initiative to review, reassess and course-correct some of the key aspects of the HDPN components - and in particular some of the internal organizational 'enablers' - confirms the Office's commitment to avoid simply trying to 'do development in humanitarian time-frames' and repeating programmatic solutions that resemble more sustainable emergency interventions and fall short of the depth and breadth of ILO's expertise.

More broadly, much of the lessons learned and best practices emerging from the Region should be used to inform future programming and implementation in the HDPN space, not only in the Arab region but in other regions and countries experiencing protracted fragility. The work of the Arab States Regional Office should be embedded into the HDPN work at ILO central level and inform ILO's policy work in fragility, particularly in light of the Director-General's Action Programme on Crisis and Post Crises. While the ILO has long understood that the solution to humanitarian problems requires longer-term support to prevent and end crises, there are still significant differences in the understanding of the HDPN at the ILO at the central level, and particularly regarding the "P" dimension of the HDPN. In this regard, the important work of ILO's Coordination Support for Peace and Resilience (CSPR) in its central function of supporting regions and countries in the implementation of HDPN solutions be strengthened by a closer connectedness with the ILO Arab States Regional Office and vice-versa.

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- [20] The identification of the "local" is often conceived as an untainted, pure category, and as a binary relationship reduced to two levels, international versus national. However, this is far from reality and in the Arab region, elite capture of locally driven processes and the hybridisation of the "local"—whether governance, customs, or actors—with subnational, national, or international influences complicates the process of localization. A more typological approach to identifying local actors is important to "distinguish between community-based women groups, religious associations, or traditional authorities on the one hand, and formalised, capital-based civil-society organisations on the other". To this, municipal authorities and other forms of local-level governance are often missing in analyses of local-level crisis response.
- [21] Localization of SDGs in the Middle East. UNDP
- [22] PROSPECTS – Non-Paper on Localization in the Context of Protracted Forced Displacement, 2023. Forthcoming
- [23] Quality funding is defined as financing that has a strategic role in enabling and incentivizing behaviour and outcomes across the nexus and not just as a source of funding for projects and programmes. Among other things, quality funding is characterized as predictable, multi-year, and flexible and made available at the programme level. It should ideally match collective outcomes and financial requirements in humanitarian and development plans. See Grand Bargain discussions, conclusions and commitments around quality funding. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/grand-bargain-quality-funding-caucus-concludes-new-funding-commitments>
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Endnotes (cont'd.)

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Annexes

Annex I - Report of First Phase: ILO Arab States' Implementation of the HDPN

Annex II - List of Internal & External Stakeholders Interviewed

Annex III - Bibliography

**Annex I: Report of First Phase: ILO Arab States’
Implementation of the HDPN**



**ILO Arab States’ Implementation of the HDPN
Summary of Lessons Learned and Stakeholder Perceptions of
HDPN Engagement**

November 2022

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ILO Arab States' Implementation of the HDPN: Summary of Lessons Learned and Stakeholder Perceptions of HDPN Engagement

I. Introduction

During the last 10+ years, the ILO in the Arab region has gained solid experience in designing and implementing evidence-based interventions in addressing complex crises with humanitarian, social and economic dimensions. ILO's Decent work elements have become an important facet of many interventions meaningfully linking humanitarian imperatives to more sustainable development actions. Moreover, in the region, the ILO has become an essential partner whose interventions involving employment creation, decent work conditions, social protection and social dialogue have contributed to peace, social cohesion, and resilience in the region's most fragile contexts.

This role as a trusted partner in addressing complex crises is not to be underestimated. The Arab region is a very challenged region, and even with the best of efforts, those challenges are difficult to overcome. Even without the COVID-19 pandemic, instability and insecurity have been and continue to be the norm across the region — from humanitarian crises in Syria, Palestine, Yemen, and Iraq to economic collapse in Lebanon and an eroded social compact between the Government of Jordan and its citizenry. These 'crises' continue to be felt throughout the region, thwarting efforts at sustaining already-scant systems of social protection, basic services, and support. In times of insecurity, pre-existing vulnerabilities are magnified, and the rights of people are the first to be stripped and the hardest to revive.

The situation in the MENA region is emblematic of a growing number of crises around the world: increasing numbers of displaced and protracted displaced populations, caused by the increasing number of prolonged conflicts and crises, has brought on renewed focus on comprehensive responses that respond to immediate needs while initiating longer-term solutions and addressing the root causes of conflict and crises. Fragility is no longer the exclusive purview and responsibility of humanitarian community and new approaches and partnerships across the humanitarian-development-peace spectrum need to be brokered to address the root causes of displacement, violence, and instability, and impede social, economic, political, and developmental progress.

The Humanitarian-Development-Peace (triple) Nexus (HDPN) is the term used to capture the interlinkages between the humanitarian, development, and peace sectors. It specifically refers to attempts by these communities of actors to work together to meet peoples' needs more effectively, mitigate risks and vulnerabilities, and move toward sustainable peace. The approach calls for a New Way of Working (NWOW) that transcends the humanitarian-development-peace divide, reinforces (not replaces) national and local systems, and anticipates crises by working toward:

- (i) collective outcomes
- (ii) over multi-year timeframes
- (iii) based on leveraging respective comparative advantage.

Since committing to the operationalization of the triple nexus and the NWOW at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), the UN as well as national governments and donors have begun to slowly make progress on its uptake and implementation. Among the UN engaged in that space is the ILO's Regional Office for the Arab States.

Against this background, the ILO Arab States Office commissioned a paper that investigates the ILO approaches within the HDPN, with the objectives of:

1. Presenting the range of approaches and models of intervention that put the ILO mandate of promoting decent work at the heart of the HDPN.
2. Identifying good practices that were successful across the crisis affected countries, to be used and potential for their replication where necessary and appropriate.
3. Identifying lessons learned observed in case studies countries that have started to work towards operationalisation of HDPN through collective outcomes as the main mechanism for closer humanitarian-development-peace collaboration; and
4. Identifying opportunities for expansion of HDPN engagement with development, humanitarian, and peace partners such as other UN agencies, multilateral financing institutions and donors.

It is expected that the report will represent the ILO Arab States narrative around its engagement in the HDPN. It is also expected that the report findings will inform the ILO about the current direction of the operationalization of the HDPN in the Arab states and inform the direction of ILO Arab States'8 future programming.

Further to the above, the process of the consultancy involves three phases.

- 1 Phase 1: Scoping and lesson learning** - Phase 1 draws upon an exhaustive review of internal and external evaluations and lessons learned of the work of ILO Arab States in crisis contexts and a series of semi-structured interviews with ILO stakeholders in the Regional and country offices and at ILO Headquarters to develop a synthesis of key issues, experiences, and lessons relevant to ILO's work in the Arab states as it relates to crisis response and intervention through the HDPN.
- 2 Phase 2: Developing recommendations through consultation** – On the basis of the preliminary findings from the first phase, a presentation of the report findings will be provided to seek and incorporate feedback and validation from ILO Arab States stakeholders on the findings. The validation of the report findings from this initial phase will form the basis for consultation with external stakeholders working on the HDPN in the region and for the development of recommendations in the final report.
- 3 Phase 3: Consultation with external stakeholders** – In this third and final phase, remote semi-structured interviews with current and potential partners among the humanitarian, development (including climate and disaster reduction actors), and peace communities will be conducted. Together with the findings from the first phase, the findings from these consultations will form the basis of ILO Arab States narrative regarding its work and engagement with the HDPN in the past, present, and future.

As indicated above, the following report was produced. The first section provides a retrospective snapshot of ILO Arab States' work since the global agreements on the HDPN were put in place, and the lessons learned from both its implicit and explicit engagement in the HDPN space. It takes a preliminary list of effective Nexus elements and uses these as 'benchmarks' by which ILO Arab States work – as documented in evaluations and lessons learned – are analyzed and measured as effective Nexus work undertaken by the ILO.

The second section of the report discusses the current stage of engagement with the HDPN in selected countries throughout the region, as documented through the reflections and perceptions from ILO Arab States stakeholders. The lessons learned and stakeholder reflections and perceptions are organized along some of the core tenets of the DAC Recommendation 8 on the operationalization of the HDPN. As noted above, the findings from this report are to be presented at a validation meeting with the ILO stakeholders. The outcome of the validation exercise will identify and/or validate how the Regional office's work can be better integrated

and operationalized in the Arab region through an HDPN approach. In addition, some of the findings will also be discussed with key external partners in the second phase of the work to obtain their feedback on challenges and opportunities of working with the ILO Arab States in the HDPN.

II. The ILO Arab States and the Triple Nexus: Lessons Learned and their applicability to ‘Nexus effectiveness’

The purpose of this section is to review the learnings from ILO Arab States’ implicit and explicit engagement and work implementing a triple nexus approach. The findings are based on a review of the documentation on the projects and programmes implemented in crisis affected countries, notably Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, and OPT.¹ The documentation includes project documents, external and internal evaluations and lessons learned. The section is presented in the form of a ‘traffic-light’ coding, wherein green showcases those ILO projects and programmes that have exhibited HDPN parameters/elements and that have been critical to their success; orange denotes uneven application of other HDPN criteria in some of the ILO projects and programmes; and red highlights project and programme components that signal programmatic and/or operational weaknesses and pose challenges specific to the successful implementation of the HDPN. The elements are based on the criteria from DAC-UN Dialogue on operationalizing the Nexus. The DAC-UN dialogue documented a preliminary ‘checklist’ on “how do you know you are effectively *nexus-ing*?”, presented in the following section.²

Status of operationalization of the HDPN globally

The revival of the Triple Nexus was borne from the increased frequency and protracted nature of multiple, overlapping crises that are undermining progress across all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In some cases, progress on development is in reverse, plunging millions of people back below the poverty line. This is particularly true in places affected by fragility and conflict. From a donor perspective, there is also the sense that crises and humanitarian needs – and funding requests – were ballooning, with limited financing and programming strategies in place to resolve the issues driving this suffering. For example, the requirements in the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs’ Global Humanitarian Overview have increased four-fold over the past decade, up to 41 billion in 2021.³ Even before the Ukraine crisis, OCHA estimated that humanitarian needs were at record levels, with 274 million people needing humanitarian assistance in 2022.

In recognition of the need to rethink traditional ways of working, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus was launched as a unique, common standard aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of collective action in fragile and conflict-affected settings. This common standard is based on the following core elements⁴:

¹ While not included, Syria is part of the ILO Arab States portfolio of countries considered under “fragile or crisis”.

² Interviews and written consultation with adherents from the DAC-UN Dialogue on Operationalising the Nexus.

³ Global Humanitarian Overview, 2021. OCHA.

⁴ The 11 principles of the DAC Recommendation are an indivisible whole. This presentation of what are identified as core elements is not a redefinition of the agreed HDP nexus framework, but rather the entry points for the incorporation of all facets of the DAC Recommendation.

Box 1: 11 core elements of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN)

A. Coordination	B. Programming	C. Financing
• Undertake joint risk and gender sensitive informed analysis and identify collective outcomes • Empower leadership • Engage thru tools, approaches, instruments to prevent crises & build peace	• Prioritise peace & development, while ensuring hum needs • Put people at centre • Do no harm has to be conflict sensitive • Align programming w/risk environment • Strengthen local & national capacities • Invest in learning	• Develop joint financing strategies • Advocate and use multi-year financing

Source: DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus 8, OECD Legal Instruments, OECD/LEGAL/5019, 22 February 2019.

Implementation of the HDPN approach is gradually increasing and accelerating across 25 countries, involving most actors of the multilateral system. 5 of the 25 countries where the HDPN is being operationalized are in the Arab region⁵.

HDPN stakeholders report progress on the operationalization of the HDPN at both organizational level and at field level. At the organizational level, the DAC recommendation and nexus approach is being integrated into their strategic and policy frameworks, but also acts as a ‘checklist’ to ensure that institutional systems and processes are adapted to implementation of this approach. At the field level, there is increased joint planning and programming on various thematic areas. The most successful HDPN ‘initiatives’ are largely organically developed and driven by self-selecting coalitions of willing individuals and/or institutions identifying specific, practical opportunities and premised on existing mechanisms. In this regard, there is a perception that the contribution of the HDPN approach is a more coherent and complementary response to crises and fragility⁶ but that there is no one set standard for operationalizing the HDPN. In this sense, an effective Nexus operation is a moving target.

The DAC-UN Dialogue on operationalizing the Nexus documented a preliminary ‘checklist’ on “how do you know you are effectively *nexus-ing*?” including the following core features:

1. a long-term focus on reducing overall vulnerability and unmet needs and addressing root causes of crises
2. sustained efforts to foster inclusive country leadership and support local capacities
3. a priority focus on those most at risk or left behind, with support for equal fulfilment of basic needs for all and gender equality

⁵ The implementation of the HDPN has been led by the UN (through the NWOW) and by the EU: Iraq (NWOW & EU since 2021); Jordan (NWOW since 2016); Lebanon (NWOW & EU since 2017); OPT (NWOW since 2020); and Yemen (NWOW since 2016).

⁶ Mapping Good Practice in the Implementation of Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Approaches Synthesis Report, IASC Results Group 4 on the HDPN, September 2021, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2021-11/IASC%20Mapping%20of%20Good%20Practice%20in%20the%20Implementation%20of%20Humanitarian-Development%20Peace%20Nexus%20Approaches%2C%20Synthesis%20Report.pdf>

4. consideration and active management of risks including conflict sensitivity and do no harm
5. an approach, operational set-up and/or financing mechanisms that help navigate short-term realities and the evolving context without losing sight of long-term development perspectives
6. awareness of the interventions of other humanitarian, peace and development actors and joint efforts to prioritise, focus on comparative advantages and enhance coherence.

It is nevertheless important to note that applying the HDPN is a means to an end, and the means and the terms of engagement are defined by the context in which the Nexus is implemented. In turn, these terms of engagement need to be jointly defined in both strategic and operational terms by those involved in the specific operation. While there has been progress, there is recognition that opportunities for more meaningful cross-fertilization across humanitarian, development and peace communities remain largely untapped. It is also true that, since 2016, the HDPN concepts and terminology has evolved and is still evolving, with national and local contexts informing the global discussions on what works and what does not work.

The operationalization of the HDPN by the international community in the Arab states' region has been largely focused on issues related to protracted forced displacement, the impact of prolonged conflict and fragmentation and more recently, the socio-economic fallout from COVID-19. Recently, there has been a surge of lessons learned and promising practices emerging from the operationalization of the HDP nexus in the context of the Syria response although it is recognized that the practical application and documentation of the HDPN in the region is still in nascent stages. Arguably, the three pillars of focus repeatedly noted in the external documentation around the HDPN operationalization in the Arab region are the need for:

- rapid analyses of risk factors that drive and perpetuate fragility.
- focused engagement with local communities (and national actors when possible) and support to local systems and institutions to strengthen sources of resilience.
- short-term focus on attenuating violence and social tensions paired with efforts to transform the structural drivers of conflict.⁷

The ILO Arab States and the HDPN: Lessons Learned

From 2011, a significant part of the initial ILO Arab States portfolio of projects and programmes implemented in the region (specifically in Jordan and Lebanon) informed ILO's work on the Humanitarian-Development nexus. The work was further guided and strengthened by the **2016 ILO Guiding Principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour markets** and the more expansive ILO normative framework **Recommendation 205: Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience**. The first represents the ILO's first explicit commitment to working across the Nexus, with UNHCR and other international partners in addressing the issue of access to labour markets for situations of forced displacement. These Guidelines were then embedded into the second framework, Recommendation 205, that represents the closest articulation of the International Labour Conference's 'marching orders' on its work in crisis settings and on showcasing its relevance to the humanitarian development nexus through several integrated world-of-work interventions and solutions. In the region, the initial operations were based on these two frameworks, and in response to the wider UN response to the Syrian refugee crisis.⁸ ILO's work in the region gained momentum after the London conference in 2016 on "Supporting Syria and the Region" conference. For the ILO in general and the ILO Arab states region specifically,

⁷ A synthesis from Advancing Nexus in the MENA Region: Breaking the Silos, ICVA, July 2022, and A review of the triple nexus approach in discourse and practice: with a focus on Islamic Relief's triple nexus programme, Summer Brown & Rodrigo Mena, Islamic Relief, August 2021.

⁸ From 2013, the ILO allocated flexible core funding, mainly from the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA), has been used to: implement assessments and analysis to generate evidence for policy advocacy; actively engage with local, national and international partners; and launch small-scale demonstration projects.

“...the conference placed a spotlight on the critical role of decent work in the intervention strategy, highlighting the nexus between humanitarian action and development cooperation. The outcome of the London Conference has played a particularly significant role in reinforcing the ILO’s approach in addressing the impact of large movements of refugees in Jordan and beyond on the labour market.”⁹

In the aftermath of the Syria conference, the ILO Arab states adopted a cross-cutting development-focused strategy in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq which, to date, supports both refugees and host communities in order to preserve social and economic stability as well as realizes the rights of both to decent work and social justice.¹⁰ The Regional office also operated and continues to operate in the triple nexus space in countries like OPT and Yemen where protracted crises have increased fragility and emphasized the need for more integrated approaches. The operating environments in these countries are exceedingly complex. Continuity, impact, and sustainability are relative concepts in these contexts and meaningful presence and involvement are dependent on funding. In spite of the challenges, the ILO Arab states’ ‘score card’ has been quite good.

Drawing on some of the recent external assessments of the operationalisation of the triple nexus and based on reviews and evaluations on Arab states’ work in the more fragile contexts in the region over the past 10+ years, it is possible to identify lessons learned and effective practices as they relate to the HDPN. These reports were reviewed to extract evaluative findings and evidence of NWOW and HDP approaches to programming. In doing so, the main elements of the HDPN have been used as benchmarks, such as working towards collective outcomes; coordinated responses through joint planning; and coordinated sequencing in formulation and programming. It is important to note that few evaluations and lessons learned contained findings of direct relevance to the HDPN. With the exception of the Dutch-funded multi-annual and multi-regional programme PROSPECTS, the findings from the evaluations and lessons learned from the ILO Arab states’ work means that the findings relevant to the nexus had to be inferred.¹¹

The following HDPN elements and approaches that lay the foundation towards sustainability, self-reliance and resilience have been identified in the ILO Arab states projects and programmes reviewed. The elements are presented in a traffic light coding that conveys the degree of ‘successful’ incorporation of each of the elements into ILO Arab states’ programming and implementation. The ‘green’ represent a positive degree of integration of those elements in programming; the ‘orange’ denotes partial degree of success in integrating the HDPN elements in programming; and the ‘red’ points to those elements present in programmes and projects but with little meaningful integration in programming and implementation.

1. provision of short to medium-term solutions, that lay the basis or foundation for longer-term development.
2. involvement of national, subnational, and local actors’ engagement that helps drive processes that promote economic opportunities, ownership, and self-reliance.
3. localization of development and ‘humanitarian-like’ programming.
4. inter-sectoral collaboration that builds on implementing partners’ positioning, spheres of influence, and/or comparative advantages.
5. adaptive management to transition to and from development and humanitarian interventions.

⁹ Lessons Learned and Emerging Good Practices of ILO’s Syria Crisis Response in Jordan and Lebanon, Nieves Thomet for ILO Regional Office for the Arab, 2018.

¹⁰ <https://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/employment-policy/syrian-refugee-crisis/lang--en/index.htm>

¹¹ The ILO is not a signatory to the NWOW although it was signatory to the first chapter of the Grand Bargain which includes commitments to coordinate and work across the humanitarian-development divide. PROSPECTS is one of three specific budgetary instruments explicitly created to provide sustainable solution for forcibly displaced persons and host communities through the operationalization of the HDPN.

6. an analysis of the context (especially the political economy of the context), with requisite analysis of risks and needs addressing specific vulnerabilities of the affected populations, such as the forcibly displaced, women, children, and the disabled.
7. proactive contribution to building social cohesion.
8. meaningful participation of affected populations in planning and programming solutions.
9. knowledge management and sharing of experiences for replicability to other (similar) national and regional contexts.

The elements of ‘success’

Summary: Overall, the work of the ILO Arab states work has been and continues to be closely aligned and supportive of the HDPN. Irrespective of whether ILO Arab states stakeholders are aware of the existence of “nexable” elements in their planning and programming, the Regional Office has supported the operationalization of the HDPN by addressing simultaneously both immediate livelihoods-saving assistance while kickstarting and in some cases, consolidating longer term support for the labour market systems and decent work, the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 and social cohesion and peace. Whenever feasible, the ILO Arab states has worked alongside or in complementarity with humanitarian and peace actors as well as with social partners, local and national actors at the strategic, programmatic, and institutional levels to address the longer-term needs, risks and vulnerabilities of populations that have been affected by crisis. Importantly, ILO Arab states has laid a ‘light’ menu towards recovery that includes:

- strengthening longer-term education and vocational training for crisis-affected populations
- strengthening capacities of social partners, local and national government actors (when possible), and where relevant, implementing partners
- laying the foundation to strengthen labour market and social protection systems and decent work, through (whenever possible) support to regulatory and legislation that promotes inclusivity and accountability
- strengthening market access and value chain development to support socioeconomic recovery and long-term development
- targeting bespoke interventions towards more vulnerable groups (women, youth, the disabled), enabling a more inclusive and equitable recovery.

Lesson #1. The ILO Arab states’ applies an approach that addresses short-term realities while establishing a mid-to long-term strategy that lays the foundation for development solutions: Across the project and programmes reviewed in Regional Office’s portfolio, the ILO Arab states’ programming in their **downstream interventions address pressing and immediate needs for employment creation and contribute to social cohesion among affected communities, while simultaneously investing in upstream, policy interventions** to build a foundation for longer-term change. Whether it be in the case of Employment Intensive Investment Programmes (EIIP) in Lebanon (4th phase) Jordan (5th phase), Iraq and Yemen (focused on women’s employment) or in the case of work with UN partners in Yemen (ERRY), there is a careful balancing of short-term interventions to ensure much needed short-term gains that buys time to address the longer-term interventions that are focused on broader macroeconomic reforms and comprehensive national employment policies that lay the ground for socioeconomic recovery and for access to decent jobs. Further to this, these interventions are often accompanied by capacity development efforts with ILO toolkits adapted to each context, to build capacities of both national and local actors, as well as affected populations most in need of decent work. For the latter, this often involves much needed skills development in financial literacy or business start-ups, with the objective of increasing their future employability. **Applying the same formula, the ILO Arab states’ work in social protection has become a cornerstone of a long-term strategy to mitigate the impact of forced displacement on the lives of refugees and their hosts in countries such as Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and more recently in OPT.** ILO’s work in the region on transitioning the use of cash transfers as a humanitarian response modality to nationally led social protection

systems is the recognition of the multiple complementarities and growing convergence between humanitarian assistance and longer term sustainable social protection systems. These actions – mostly undertaken in close collaboration with actors such as UNICEF and WFP – simultaneously address “*the chronic and acute needs of crisis-affected populations – including female and male refugees and their hosts – while reducing humanitarian needs and ultimately, securing a path to peace and sustainable development for all*”

Box 2: Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme (EIIP): A tried and tested success story

ILO’s EIIP approach focuses on improving livelihoods and decent employment for host communities and refugees alike through the construction and maintenance of locally prioritised infrastructure, agricultural and environmental works. Embodying the HDPN approach, EIIP operations provides short-term employment opportunities while in parallel providing public infrastructure and services that support longer-term social, environmental, and economic development, including secondary employment effects. Importantly, employment opportunities and infrastructure development for both host community members and refugees ease tensions within the labour force, improve capacity for economic development and service provision and interventions, and programming in the more fragile contexts in the region, specifically in Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq, and with plans to expand to Syria, when possible.

Now in its fourth and fifth iterations, there have been significant efforts to incorporate a stronger dimension of sustainability by enhancing the array of collaborating local and national partners and proposing referrals to job centers (working with Social Development Centers) and to outreach outlets that would be more inclusive of vulnerable communities accessing employment opportunities.

Box 3: The promise of universal social protection – the case of the Occupied Palestinian Territories

In the latest report of the ILO Director-General to the International Labour Conference on the situation of workers of the Occupied Palestinian Territories¹², the plight of Palestinian workers was described as catastrophic. The impact of COVID-19 only deepened the pre-existing imbalances and vulnerabilities. As in the many countries around the world, the Palestinian Authority prioritized social protection interventions as part of their COVID-19 response, with a view to providing rapid relief to households affected by the crisis.

Efforts to advance social assistance in OPT is not new, but those efforts have been fraught with a series of issues related to the insufficient focus and inadequate transfer levels; the fragmentations of social assistance system that severely limiting the system’s potential impact; the duplication of efforts and lack of synergies with government programming; and the heavy dependence of social protection efforts and interventions on external donor funding. With EU funding, the ILO together with UNICEF and OXFAM, has embarked upon tackling the aforementioned issues. Among the various strategic directions proposed by the partnership is the alignment of humanitarian-development efforts towards an integrated national social transfers system for “*increased impact, cost-effectiveness, operational efficiency and shock responsiveness*.”

Lesson #2: The Arab states’ engagement with national and local actors, including social partners, is pivotal in securing sustainability in highly complex environments. The importance of meaningful engagement with local and national actors in the Arab region was perhaps the single most potent factor noted several times as the key to securing ownership and sustainability of interventions targeted

¹² The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, Report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 110th session, 2022

at creating employment and decent work conditions. **ILO Arab states' entry points with Ministries of Labour at the macro level and with social partners at the meso and micro level have enabled the Organization to tap into existing opportunities and to recognise where there are plausible pathways to positive change.** In various projects and programmes, effective coordination, and collaboration with local authorities in a conflict zone has been key to successful interventions (Protecting Children and Youth in Yemen), as these authorities often have the contextual knowledge with awareness of the 'other bargains' that are driving various forms of assistance amid chronic conflict and vulnerability.

The above does not obviate one of the greatest challenges for international actors like the ILO working in these environments. In most of these countries, the environments are overwhelmingly humanitarian. Consequently, to lay the ground for sustainable actions is dependent upon the capacities of local and national actors to engage in, own and sustain solutions introduced by the ILO. **The ILO has consistently addressed the need to adapt training tools to the context and build capacities in contexts where capacities of local actors are severely limited and the demand for private sector skills are not matched with the education provided in country. From the perspective of a development actor like the ILO, capacity development is part and parcel of the solutions** and a *sine qua non* in all of its work in fragile and crisis ridden contexts. This is a significant feature in all of ILO Arab states' work in the region and should remain so.

The elements of 'partial success'

Summary: A very basic premise of promoting and supporting the operationalization of the HDPN rests with the ability of an organization to build coherence and complementarity among and between HDP partners to address needs, risks and vulnerabilities. To date, the overwhelming ILO Arab states' successes regarding partnerships lies squarely with social partners and local actors. At the UN level, a best practice model of engagement and tried and tested partnership has been with UNHCR and to a lesser extent with UNICEF. To engage meaningfully in the HDPN space, partnerships with entities working in the HDPN space need to be nurtured and, where possible institutionalised (as is the case with UNHCR). Similarly, the ILO Arab states has successfully been able to pivot programming and operations towards more humanitarian imperatives, when needed. However, this has been dependent on the individual leadership of staff rather than the application of institutionalised standard operating procedures in case of crisis. Given the regional context, and the multiple stressors in country contexts, there is a need to 'codify' adaptive management and preparedness within ILO Arab states for meaningful and predictable engagement in HDPN contexts.

Lesson #3: Addressing the complexity of some fragile environments in the MENA region requires predictable and synergistic partnerships. Most ILO Arab states' interventions have varying degrees of "jointness" in terms of planning, co-ordination, programming and implementation with a variety of partners. Based on the review of the collective lessons learned and available evaluations, **ILO Arab states' collaboration with international actors is uneven, with significant polarity in enhancing synergies and consolidating "successful partnerships".** At one extreme, there have been instances where ILO and the partner act as spokespersons for each other (UNICEF-ILO UPSHIFT work in Iraq, PROSPECTS) and there is unequivocally a consolidated successful humanitarian-development partnership in the Memorandum of Understanding signed with UNHCR. However, in other cases, programmes have been conceived with specific roles and division of labour, evoking the HDPN as a blueprint for involvement (ERRY in Yemen, PROSPECTS in Jordan), yet the complementarities and synergies in terms of division of labour with international actors have remained largely aspirational (*"This intended synergy, however, maximising impact in targeted communities by offering various forms of support in the same locations, did not always work well."*). In contrast, collaboration with implementing partners such as INGOs that have significant operational footprints are perceived as win-win situations, with ILO providing the technical know-how and training packages and the implementing partner multiplying the Regional Office's outreach to remote areas that otherwise would be out of reach for the ILO in the region (Iraq with Lutheran World Relief).

Engaging a wide range of stakeholders through improved partnership and coordination models is a fundamental element of the HDPN. Effective stakeholder engagement is critical to avoid duplication of effort, encourage broader support for projects and programmes, promote learning between stakeholders with different expertise and perspectives, and ensure that affected populations' concerns are adequately addressed. An improved model should also empower line ministries, local government and municipalities, NGOs, and affected populations in the decision-making process.

Box 4: The HDPN in Forced Displacement Contexts: Findings from PROSPECTS Lessons Learned

The ILO recently commissioned a document learning and promising practices about the Organization's experience from the exploratory and initial implementation phases (2018-2021) of the Kingdom of the Netherlands' funded Partnership for improving Prospects for host communities and forcibly displaced persons (PROSPECTS). In its third year of implementation, the programme aims to *"shift the paradigm from a humanitarian to a development approach in responding to forced displacement crises. [The paradigm shift is] grounded in the consensus of the Global Compact on Refugees that helping refugees and their host communities thrive, not just survive, will reduce the risk of protracted stays and lessen refugees' dependence on humanitarian aid."* Operationally, the programme consists of multiannual hybrid projects implemented in eight countries, three of which are part of the ROAS portfolio (e.g. Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon). The five partners – UNHCR, UNICEF, the World Bank, the IFC and the ILO – have been asked to implement the work through the New Way of Working (or the HDPN).

To date, ILO has been able to capitalize on the comparative advantages of some of the programme partners to ensure complementarity of interventions between and among the partners and in support of the HDPN. Internally, ILO's work in PROSPECTS has enabled a more systematic, coordinated 'one ILO' interdisciplinary approach to developing world of work solutions for FDPs and host communities. In the region, the Dutch funding has provided catalytic funding for work in Lebanon and Jordan that had already begun under the Syria regional response plan and kicked off ILO's operational footprint in Iraq. The activities in the region within PROSPECTS are providing emerging best practice in nexus approaches in Jordan in ILO's work on the development of inclusive national agriculture legislation, in Lebanon on applying adaptive management approaches to the multiple crises in the country and in Iraq on innovation and localization through inclusive and multi-tiered inclusive financing models.

In identifying lessons learned from programme implementation, several areas with shortcomings and challenges have also been identified. These include the need for more responsive management and back-office support in the ILO that would allow more flexible and adaptive integrated programming to seize opportunities to support nationally led world-of-work solutions in environments that are often unpredictable and complex; the importance of firmly rooting programme design and implementation in a thorough and early analysis of the political economy of the local contexts including drivers of conflict and of gender relations and dynamics to inform work on social protection and social cohesion; the recognition that long-term engagement and investment is required to build national and local partners' capacities; the imperative of identifying synergies among the PROSPECTS partners – notably the World Bank and the IFC – to optimally support development, humanitarian, and peace action in pursuit of forced displacement solutions; and the challenge of embedding PROSPECTS results and outcomes in the accountability mechanisms and processes of the ILO.

Lesson #4: The ILO Arab states' use of adaptive management requires a systemic and systematic approach. While adaptive management is not an explicit principle linked to HDPN operationalization, **the capacity of an organization to undertake adaptive management in contexts that require a HDPN approach is becoming a gamechanger.** There are many definitions of adaptive management across the literature. In this context, adaptive management is an intentional approach to making decisions and adjustments

in response to new information and changes in context.¹³ Even though it can be the case, adaptive management is not about changing goals during implementation, rather it is about changing the path taken to achieve the goals. **Project and programme lessons learned from ILO Arab states' implementation in the region point to programme managers' ability to "switch gears" when humanitarian imperatives prevail (COVID response in all countries).** However, often lessons learned and evaluations from the programmes and projects implemented in the region point to delays in operations and implementation due, in part, to a lack of a systems' adaptive management. Organisational systems, processes and tools play a key role in reinforcing or hampering adaptive management initiatives. As a development organization, there are limits of internal support services, such as procurement and human resources, that are not always able to accommodate modifications in sudden changes in interventions.

Box 5: Adaptive Management & Lessons from ILO's COVID-19 pandemic response in the Arab region¹⁴

The toll the COVID-19 pandemic has exacted on the functioning of the multilateral system has been significant. For the ILO, it was no less different. Throughout 2020 and 2021, ILO undertook evaluations related to the COVID-19 pandemic response. These focused on two dimensions – the ILO's policy action at national, regional and global levels, and its institutional readiness and capacity to deliver timely support in a responsive manner. The review revealed the progress and success of the ILO's immediate response to the urgent need for action in the outbreak of the pandemic crisis. Interestingly some of the findings and lessons learned overlap with some of the findings and lessons from ILO Arab states' operations on adaptive management and the region's lessons on managing HDPN operations. These include specifically:

- Finding 2 - ILO interventions were forced to adapt to the unexpected restrictions imposed by the pandemic. They experienced implementation delays and were often unable to implement activities as planned. Despite these challenges, and to varying degrees, projects were able to adjust their planned activities to ensure they remained relevant to the suddenly changed circumstances and to the changing needs and priorities of constituents during the crisis. Not all the reviewed interventions could significantly change their direction in response to the shock brought about by the pandemic. Yet, those that were showed that the ILO was quick to respond to the crisis, could be agile in developing highly relevant activities and resources that meet stakeholder needs, and can overcome barriers to internal collaboration to unlock latent synergies and capacity to innovate. In general, projects quickly adapted to their new circumstances by using new remote delivery methods, training content, and conducting research into the pandemic's effects. Some were able to make more extensive changes and introduce new strategies and services to directly respond to the crisis.
- Finding 3 - The COVID-19 pandemic has led to strengthened internal collaboration and has improved communication in some programmes. The ILO showed that, when faced by a crisis, it could overcome its tendency to "work in silos". This needs to be maintained in the post-COVID world.

In several instances, such as ILO Arab states' operations in Lebanon and Jordan, the project and programme teams were able to pause and pivot to respond to "*the suddenly changed circumstances and to the changing needs and priorities of constituents during the crisis*". It remains to be seen whether this adaptive management remains the default response in the region's modus operandi to crises and protracted fragility.

¹³ Intrac, 2018. Other definitions include Agile or "adaptive management (...) is a structured, iterative process of robust decision making in the face of uncertainty. ALNAP notes that it is "the ability of an organisation to adjust and respond effectively to dynamics and uncertainty". USAID states that it is "an intentional approach to making decisions and adjustments in response to new information and changes in context."

¹⁴ ILO's response to the impact of COVID-19 on the world of work: Evaluative lessons on how to build a better future of work after the pandemic, ILO Evaluation Office, August 2021.

Elements that need focused attention and action

Summary: ILO Arab states' planning and programming in fragile contexts has consistently been informed by evidence-based assessments regarding employment-related issues. However, working in HDPN contexts requires a more comprehensive assessment of the political, social and economic factors that drive crisis and conflict in a given context. As was noted, the fragile contexts in many of these Arab countries are the result of a complex combination of conflict, institutional weakness, governance deficits, policy incoherence, the agendas of malign actors, and structural or situational economic inequities. Discerning these factors and analysing how these factors interact with each other to influence economic growth, social justice and poverty reduction positively or negatively should ideally form the basis of development action and inform the long-term strategy and design for project and programme interventions in these contexts. This type of analysis has been largely missing from ILO Arab states' projects and programmes. Ideally, within a HDPN operation, actors such as the UNDP or the World Bank have or will have undertaken this type of analysis to share with all partners. As noted in most of the Regional office's lessons learned and evaluations, the absence of this analysis results in delays in project or programme implementation, particularly when activities under the programmes need to be adapted to volatile circumstances or sudden downturns in external environments. More importantly, these analyses are an essential basis for formulating interventions that proactively and explicitly lay the foundation for building social cohesion and peace.

Lesson #5: Lack of comprehensive assessment of risks and political economy has hampered ILO Arab states' agile implementation in complex environments. Adaptive management is also critically dependent on an early assessment and conceptualization of needs including national and local socio-economic-political dynamics beyond sector assessments (labour market, supply chain, etc), to be able to identify security risks and levers of change. **All the evaluation findings and lessons learned recorded a consistent lack of a “comprehensive pre-implementation assessment” that inevitably results in delays, changes in implementation and missed opportunities for early engagement on critical areas such as building social cohesion and transitioning to nationally led social protection systems.**

“The local political context of each municipality should be analysed before and during the outreach phase to ensure a smooth implementation.” (Jordan, Forest and Land Management)

“.....accounting for the difficulty of operating context in the conflict zone and the delays that happened in initiation of the project, the intervention design and timeframe (less than 3 years) of the project were not realistic. Identification of strategies for ensuring result-transitions, and for risk management require better conceptualisation of needs assessment (with engagement of families) of CAAFAGs, better targeting...” (Yemen, Protecting Children and Youth)

“While mostly participatory, there is no evidence, however, of strong assessments, having affected planning in an effective manner. Capacity assessments were done at various levels but did not lead to adaptations in the implementation...” (Yemen, ERRY)

Importantly, given the complex realities of the environments in the countries in the region, project and programme planning requires at a minimum an understanding of the multi-dimensional factors, including issues of governance, perceptions, social dynamics and the role of stakeholders and risks. These assessments should inform design, programming and implementation in an iterative manner and can be critical and catalytic in transitioning away from humanitarian crises and laying the ground for longer-term strategy. Equally, these assessments can also provide the basis for transitioning into “humanitarian” mode when required and inform as to the level of readiness needed to prepare for the eventuality of crises.

Lesson #6: ILO Arab states' work on building social cohesion has arguably paved the way for the Organization's demonstrable contribution to building peace. Still, the Arab region has layers of complex socio-cultural-economic dynamics that require a more systematic comprehensive bottom-up approach to building social cohesion and that lends itself to an HDPN approach. Lessons learned regarding the Arab states' work on social cohesion point to the need for mainstreaming social cohesion in the region's programme strategy, design, and operations. While important, this is not sufficient. Perhaps the most widely misunderstood and 'resisted' dimension of the Triple Nexus and its operationalization is linked to the 'peace' dimension. The ILO Arab states' work in building social cohesion has been largely a positive byproduct of interventions such as providing work permits to Syrian refugees or expanding social protection to vulnerable populations. A recent ILO Arab states study¹⁵ details the lessons learned on how these interventions and programmes contribute to social cohesion between and among forcibly displaced people and host communities, noting *"changes in Jordanians' perceptions towards Syrian workers over timestill interesting indications of the effects of letting Syrians into the Jordanian labour market. However, from the Syrian work permit holders' point of view, it becomes quite obvious that holding a work permit contributes to better integration into Jordanian society"*. The topline recommendations of the study highlight the need to "streamline" social cohesion into the design of ILO programmes and in their implementation and strengthen monitoring and evaluation on the subject. While the report documents detailed analysis and evidence of incremental changes in the degree of social cohesion attained due to ILO projects and programmes, the lessons learned, and recommendations do not capture the full breadth and scope of the process of building social cohesion and peace in such complex contexts as the Arab region. Ideally, the lessons learned from contexts such as Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq should lay the ground for more comprehensive approaches, including and explicitly with peace actors.¹⁶ Building social cohesion is intrinsically linked with a greater focus on strengthened localization, and with programming that effectively contributes to sustaining peace beyond its technical focus. These points are not explicitly addressed in the report.

Lesson #7: The function of knowledge management needs to be re-evaluated, prioritized and adequately resourced (in terms of time and funding). Most of the evaluations and lessons learned noted that knowledge management needed to be significantly improved *"with regular sharing of thematic experiences across similar contexts"*. The work on knowledge management is often an afterthought, and often seen as a way of showcasing emerging best practice. Instead, knowledge management must be part and parcel of a process to facilitate adaptive management, through active and timely learning on lessons learned and adjusting actions in real time to find sustainable solutions to design, programming, planning and operations.

Honourable mentions: A review of the lessons learned and evaluations regarding ILO Arab states' work in support of the HDPN highlight important gains and gaps in the following issues.

- **On gender:** While ILO Arab states' projects and programmes have documented evidence-based understanding of key barriers to female labour force participation and better targeting, these assessments do not translate into meaningful involvement of women in programme activities. Efforts often dissipate during implementation. Repeatedly, programmes and projects do not address the issues of access to business opportunities and associated trainings as well as disparities in decent work for women. As one evaluation noted, women trainees with skills related to self-employment or related to the Gig economy provides more opportunities as it is less vulnerable to the rate of job generation in the economy. Trainings designed for women should also strive to make it easier for women to attend the sessions through the provision of transportation and day care facilities (Floriculture project, Jordan). Importantly, and in reference to the discussion on social cohesion, women are potentially important agents of change and peace, a point that is often overlooked in projects and programmes designed to build social cohesion.

¹⁵ How ILO Programmes Contribute to Social Cohesion between Refugees, IDPs and Host Communities in the Arab States Region, ILO-ROAS, 28 August 2022.

¹⁶ It is important to note that formal peacebuilding efforts are being undertaken in Iraq, Lebanon and OPT. In Iraq in particular, there have been regular conflict analysis and guidance by a social cohesion and peacebuilding subgroup that guides the implementation of area-based action plans for durable solutions.

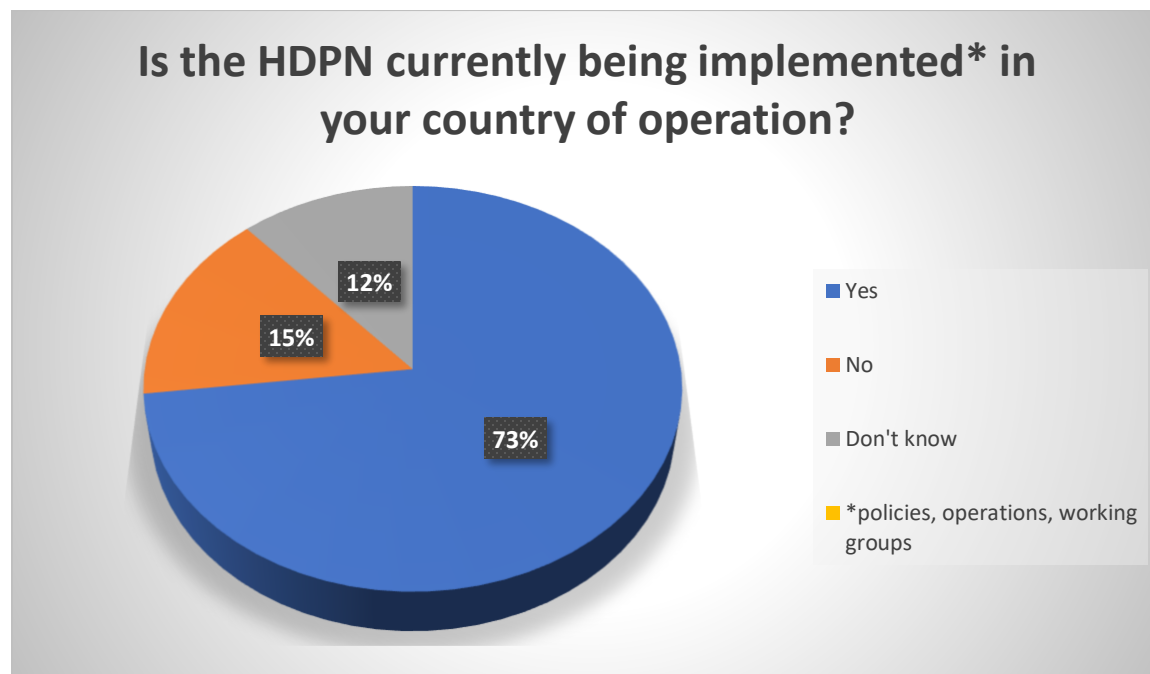
- **On social dialogue and cross-cutting issues:** While the ILO Arab states' work addresses cross-cutting issues in its various projects and programmes, these issues are often not addressed in the initial design of projects and are often left until implementation. In particular, one of the ILO's cornerstones is social dialogue with ILO constituents. There seems to be little focus as to the potential links between social dialogue and using this more deliberately as a mean to building social cohesion. The design of future projects should incorporate fostering social dialogue with ILO constituents, environmental sustainability wherever feasible and measures to ensure the inclusiveness of projects, especially in terms of including people with disabilities.
- **On advocacy:** In most Arab states' projects and programmes, advocacy efforts have been seen as a byproduct of work on supporting more inclusive national legislation and regulation. While this is indeed important, the ILO Arab states' should make efforts to design specific advocacy components and campaigns preferably with HDPN partners to address more sensitive issues related to more inclusive access to employment opportunities, decent work and social justice.

III. Reflections and perceptions of HDPN implementation: findings from interviews with ILO Arab states' stakeholders

The following section of the report presents the current stage of engagement with the HDPN in the selected countries throughout the region, by consolidating and documenting reflections and perceptions from the ILO Arab states' stakeholders on their experience. The reflections and perceptions are loosely organized along some of the core tenets of the DAC Recommendation 8 on the operationalization of the HDPN.

- **Finding 1: Overall understanding and knowledge of the HDPN** - There is no common ILO Arab states' understanding of the HDPN and its application to the region. Notwithstanding, its engagement with and in the HDPN "world" is significant and takes on various forms and functions.

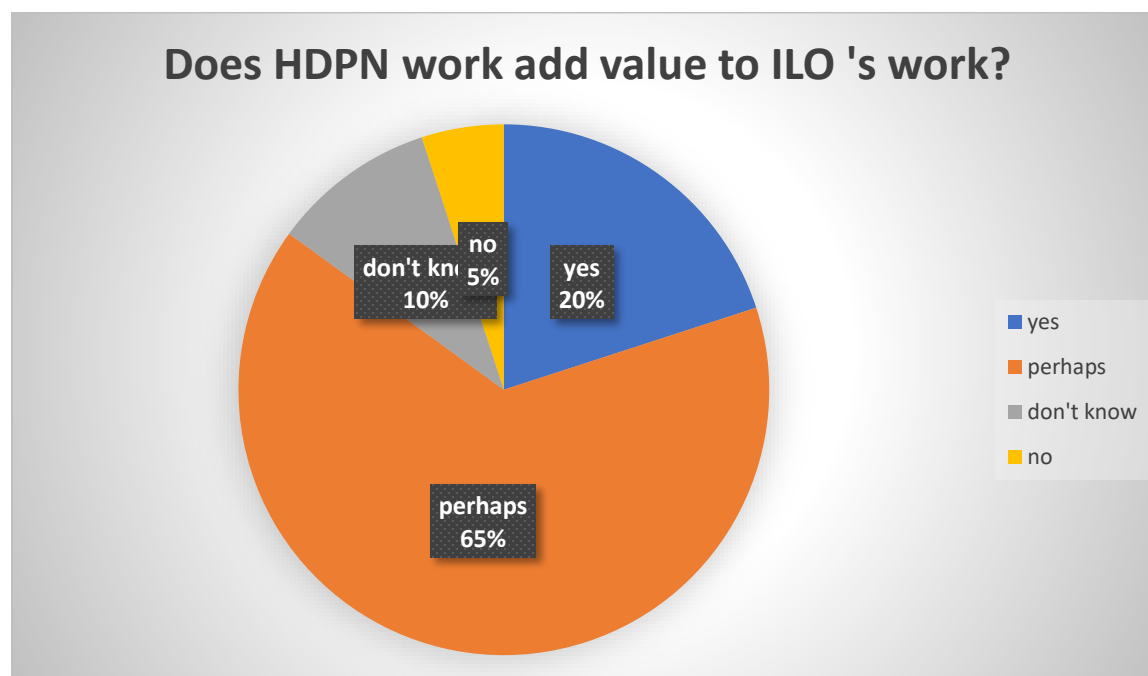
Generally speaking, the general awareness of the HDPN is high but the specific knowledge of the HDPN in terms of its objectives and the 'whys' and the 'hows' was low. ILO Arab states' stakeholders expressed a significant variety of understanding, even interpretation of the HDPN. It was noted that, in the region, nexus discussions and work were often referred to as "emergency development". Some referred to the HDPN as being a change in mindset (*"the difference between working in humanitarian and development work is whether you are thinking on your feet or whether you are actually planning....and in this region, you have to do a little of both"*). A few noted that nexus was simply a change in the lexicon of development professionals "reinventing the wheel". Almost all interviewees noted that the concept of the nexus was not new *"...the HDPN is not a new theme...there has always been an effort to connect emergency with long-term development"*. However, because of the protracted and pervasive nature of crisis in the region (*"you cannot separate what is humanitarian and development in this context..."*), and the prevalence of humanitarian actors and action (*"...the common dimension in this region is humanitarian..."*), engagement in the HDPN space has been revived and part of the dialogue.



A significant part of the ILO Arab states' engagement with the HDPN has taken on the form of designing joint programmes and coordinating and sequencing programme interventions usually with other UN agencies, while in others the HDPN has been in the form of participation in technical thematic Working Groups at the level of the country teams¹⁷. Those stakeholders who conveyed no knowledge of HDPN nexus engagement was more of an expression of little to no knowledge of or interest in the Organization's engagement with the HDPN. In light of these responses, there is a need for greater clarity, contextualization and definition of modus operandi about the HDPN.

- **Finding 2: Strategy and positioning of the ILO Arab states' work in the region's HDPN space**
- In spite of its roots in the humanitarian space, the HDPN approach has significant relevance with and close alignment to ILO's work in the region, which focuses on the sustainability of its interventions. As such, the ILO Arab states can ideally capitalize on its past and current work to meaningfully inform future planning and programming HDPN initiatives.

Most ILO Arab states stakeholders noted that the HDPN provided ILO the space to highlight its robust normative role as a development actor working in complex crisis ridden contexts. While seemingly at odds with the fast-paced work of humanitarian agencies, the objective of the HDPN is exactly to bring the longer-term perspective of the ILO and combine the efforts of these two communities of actors to address intractable crises. The strategic shift expected by the application of the HDPN is in fact the engagement of development actors to address underlying and structural causes of crisis, although to date opportunities for this have been variable across the region. As a development actor, the Regional office interviewees noted that the ILO scopes opportunities to work with and through government systems as capacities and trust are developed. In areas where this is not yet possible due to the absence of structures and relationships or weak governance,



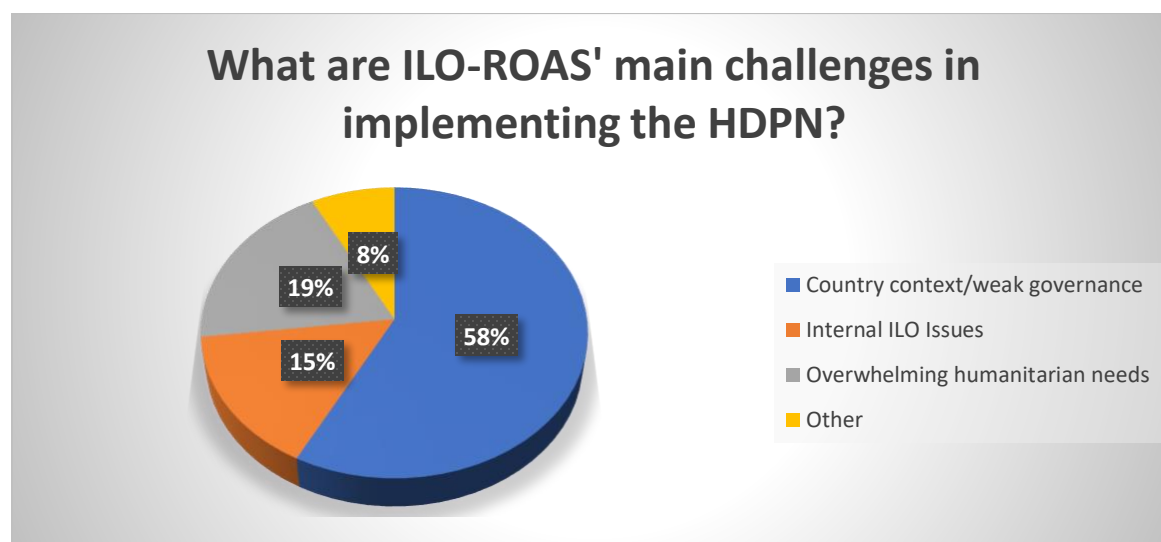
¹⁷ There are different thematic Working Groups created, depending on the context and national priorities.

opportunities are scoped for laying foundations for working with government in the future. Equally, and as expected from a development actor, ILO interventions consistently attempt to address the element of sustainability and exit strategies in most of their work in the region, which is not the case of humanitarian actors whose model of engagement often perpetuates dependency. In seeking more sustainable solutions, addressing livelihoods and extending social protection becomes a more complex long-term venture.

Still, there were concerns voiced by some interviewees that ILO's HDPN work had resulted in "humanitarian-like" work ("*....we act as if we are an NGO.... That is not where our value addition lies*"), and in a proliferation of downstream work in the form of small-scale projects. However, as one ILO Arab states colleague noted, "*...the Regional Office is not trying to compete with operational agencies, but it cannot simply have a policy message...*". Most stakeholders remain steadfast in their conviction that ILO's downstream work is not created in isolation and that they are linked to upstream interventions, with the objective of producing short-term gains in highly fragile settings while, in parallel, capitalizing to the extent feasible on longer-term opportunities to develop capacity, social cohesion, and accountability. Examples include EIIP projects designed to create short term employment while incorporating skills and vocational training to increase longer-term employability of participating populations; social protection interventions focused on transitioning from shock responsive cash transfer mechanisms to nationally led inclusive social protection systems; and the creation of livelihoods linked to, wherever possible, reforming the legislative and regulatory framework to address decent work deficits. As one interviewee noted, "*an organization's relevance is not only dependent on its mandate...[relevance is dependent] on how to adapt to the situation and offer the support needed by its constituents...*". In the Arab region, "*policy without demonstrable gains is a no-go*".

- **Finding 3: ILO Arab states Programming & Implementation in the HDPN - Designing, programming and implementing project and programmes in a highly complex region such as the Arab states is faced with significant challenges linked to weak or non-existent governance and the multifaceted nature of crises and the prevailing humanitarian model to respond to these crises. In addition, the lack of internal organizational agility primarily at Headquarters level impedes more flexible, adaptive management at the regional and country level. Strengthened coordination with HDPN partnerships can offset some of these issues.**

When asked about the challenges in engaging in the HDPN, ILO Arab states' stakeholders' feedback coalesced around three main areas: country context/weak governance in the region; overwhelming humanitarian needs and prevailing humanitarian response; and internal ILO issues linked to lack of agile support systems and 'mindsets'



1. **Complex regional/country contexts characterized by weak governance are both an opportunity and a challenge:** Much has been documented of the complex contexts in the Arab region, particularly in the countries under study. The root causes of poverty and social injustice in MENA include (1) poor governance (high corruption, favoritism, weak/inefficient/unaccountable state sectors, inequitable services and infrastructure, etc.); (2) social/cultural and gender norms, especially affecting women; (3) the political crisis in many countries causing clashes, restrictions on political rights, wars, and a significant destruction to livelihood and agriculture resources as well as to basic services (health, water, education, etc.); and (4) a distorted private sector that is not able to generate enough jobs for the youth bulge – also due to poor, enabling environment that stifles growth and innovation.¹⁸ As one interviewee noted, “...in most countries, humanitarian work dominates but paradoxically is extremely limited and works parallel to all national systems while development is challenged because of the lack of capacities”. As democratic voices in the region are withering away, advocacy efforts have also become increasingly more difficult to implement. From the ILO’s perspective, the context is equally a challenge and an opportunity – on the one hand, the region seems incredibly hostile to the everything ILO represents in terms of social justice and decent work and on the other, ILO’s interventions in the region can showcase where development in fragility really works.

2. **The multi-faceted nature of crises means humanitarian response still prevails, with some exceptions:** Several stakeholders noted that the international community’s HDPN work in the region has been predominantly humanitarian in nature. This prevailing modus operandi has been counterproductive in achieving progress in sustainable solutions to beneficiaries. In contrast, some ILO Arab region interviewees informed that donors were phasing out humanitarian work in some countries (Iraq, Jordan) towards more development work and funding while in other countries, funding continued to be predominantly humanitarian, given donors’ reticence to provide development funding in the face of protracted political instability (Lebanon, OPT). In these circumstances, ILO Arab region stakeholders shared the following two phenomena: the first is that agencies like IOM and WFP are “changing hats” and delving into more development-like work, in light of shrinking humanitarian funding. Secondly, in switching operations towards more development interventions, these agencies are seeking ILO’s partnership to access its world of work solutions through the lens of the HDPN in areas such as social protection and forced displacement solutions. Here again, there is an opportunity to set the parameters for an expansion of ILO’s normative and operational footprint in the region through the HDPN.

3. **Lack of internal organizational agility impedes more flexible, adaptive management:** While gaining some important traction in this area, ILO Arab states’ stakeholders noted that operational agility “*is just not a part of ILO’s DNA*”. Some interviewees opined that because of this lack of operational support to “*act quickly*”, ILO’s operations should be kept to a minimum to include only pilot operations that inform normative policies and standards that makes up the core of ILO’s work. For the most part, these colleagues did not consider the HDPN a core element of ILO’s modus operandi. Other ILO Arab states’ stakeholders noted that the lack of internal organizational agility extended to the inability of Headquarters based technical specialists to “*think out of the box*” and “*go beyond traditional silos*”, demonstrating a certain resistance to adapt to new, more complex circumstances. One colleague shared the fact that the process of revising a project document to reconfigure ILO’s intervention to rapidly changing humanitarian like circumstances was readily accepted by various donors, but internally was met with significant resistance, as the standard parameters for the ILO intervention had changed. In organizations like the ILO, some

¹⁸ Doing Nexus Differently, CARE, September 7, 2018. https://www.care.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/care_hub_detailed_paper_doing_nexus_differently_final_sep_2018.pdf

development thinking and practice still remains stuck in a linear planning model which impedes learning and adaptation, and where projects are seen as ‘closed, controllable and unchanging systems’. In contrast, projects and programmes in a context like the Arab region, especially in fragile crisis-ridden countries and their micro-climates, requires much more agile programming that addresses the interrelated causes and dynamics of poverty and crisis. Importantly, adaptive management and agility, as approaches that enable organisations to deal more successfully with constant change and several layers of complexity, is increasingly associated with successful HDPN programming and operations.

- **Finding 4: Partnerships with National & Local actors (including social partners), UN agencies & the MDBs** - All of ILO Arab states work is premised on work with and in support of national and local actors. In many cases, ILO’s entry points with its social partners provides the Regional office with an advantage in navigating complex social dynamics and in securing support for its work with sensitive topics. With international partners in pursuit of HDPN approaches, the picture is less clear, with successful partnership models with “humanitarian” agencies and less successful “on-off” partnerships with the World Bank. It is important to note that the HDPN is premised on partnerships with actors, international and national, that will jointly share information, plan and coordinate together to address root causes and reduce humanitarian needs. The ILO Arab states needs to rethink its strategy and engagement with existing and potential HDPN partners, local, national, and international.

Most ILO Arab states’ projects and programmes in the selected countries are designed to address longer-term work of work issues, using the entry points with Government and/or social partners, when possible, and with humanitarian partners with important operational footprints in each country. From the discussions with ILO Arab states stakeholders, a mixed picture of collaboration with different partners emerged. As was previously noted, relationships with national and local actors, and social partners are foundational in the Regional office work in these contexts. Despite the volatility of changing government positions on sensitive issues such as forced displacement or references to peace or social cohesion, the ILO Arab states navigates these relations with dexterity and a high degree of diplomacy, *“it is a push-pull, with one step forward, two steps back”*. ILO’s entry points with Government have brought about positive breakthroughs and the ILO is often seen as an honest broker (e.g. Government acceptance of burden-sharing of 1 million IDPs in Iraq). Similarly, in spite of limited capacities, partnerships with social partners have been the basis for HDPN work (e.g. in Jordan, work with the Jordanian Chambers of Commerce resulted in enhanced productivity and employment of small and medium-sized enterprises in the agri-food sector). In spite of complex dynamics in the region and in the specific subset of countries, there is a manifest level of comfort with working with national and local actors and anchoring much of the country-based work with these actors, as part of ILO’s natural modus operandi as a development actor.

In contrast, much of the feedback around partnerships with UN agencies and MDBs was regarding agencies seeking out ILO’s expertise to dovetail and/or enhance the work around thematic areas, such as social protection, livelihoods or solutions for forced displacement caseloads. In most cases, the partnerships were either donor-driven and prescriptive (PROSPECTS); pre-existing arrangements in the form of Headquarters driven Memorandum of Understanding (UNHCR); or individuals from other agencies (WFP) that have expressed interest in working on more development operations. None of these (except for PROSPECTS) have been explicitly articulated through the lens of the HDPN. Yet another form of HDPN-like collaboration with international actors often cited by various ILO Arab states colleagues are the technical Working groups created around themes (migration, livelihoods, social protection) at the level of the UN Country Teams. The ILO Arab states does not participate in the Humanitarian country teamwork (unless it is invited). The ILO colleagues confirmed that there was neither alignment of the coordination mechanisms among the country team members nor systematic sharing of analysis and joint planning as required by the HDPN approach.

Among the multilateral development banks engaged in the HDPN, the most important development player in the region is the World Bank. In particular, its commitment to working more systematically in fragile states and adopting the HDPN as part of its global commitment to leave no one behind is possibly a game changer. In relation to its partnership with the ILO, Regional office interviewees described the partnership with the World Bank as “flip-flop”. On the one hand, the World Bank has worked closely with the ILO on labour market assessments, in the successful operation of securing work permits to Syrian refugees living in Jordan and in using ILO indicators for funds disbursement, thus securing a level of conditionalities linked to Decent work conditions. On the other, the World Bank has positioned itself as a competitor in the region particularly in the field of social protection, where there are deep ideological differences with the ILO regarding fundamental rights (e.g. minimum wage standards, social assistance coverage etc). Even in a situation where they are presumably in equal standing as an implementing partner (PROSPECTS), there have been little attempts at identifying possible joint initiatives or activities or possible advocacy efforts around forced displacement.

A word on funding

While there was no specific discussion with stakeholders on funding and the quality of funding, several stakeholders referred to the fact that access to humanitarian funding (through the Syria response plan) had provided the catalytic funding to kick start and grow ILO’s operational footprint in the region, and specifically in those countries that were severely impacted by the fallout of the Syria crisis. However, the growth of ILO’s technical cooperation programme was questioned by several stakeholders, noting that by accepting these funds, the organization was “*running after the money*”.

Perhaps a more significant issue put forward by some stakeholders relates to the fact that it is difficult to reconcile the different funding streams from the ILO as it relates to Organizational priorities and flagships (typically funding from RBSA), funding from Regular budget, and then donor funding (Technical Cooperation funding). Donor funding is often earmarked in terms of target beneficiaries such as refugees that often excludes other parts of the population that are as marginalized and vulnerable (host communities). Moreover, meeting donor commitments – particularly those related to humanitarian imperatives – appear to run in direct contradiction to ILO’s mandate which is one of empowerment of all people, and not a select few.

With the added dimension of HDPN, and more meaningful engagement in this space, and in light of the Director-General’s guidance note,¹⁹ there will be a need to rethink strategies that build coherence and stakeholder consensus around different funding streams in support of both decent work country programmes and ILO operations in support of the HDPN.

ILO’s role as a development actor in fragility: Some final considerations

The next phase of the external collaboration involves understanding ILO’s value addition and positioning in the Nexus within the region, from the perspective of external partners, and further defining best practice and emerging areas of future focus and collaboration in the region.

In moving forward, it may be important to remember that the medium- and long-term outlook for the world and in particular the region is that the humanitarian imperatives are prevailing. Crises are the new norm. In the Arab region in particular, successive disruptions have been accompanied by a global cost-of-living crisis and climate stressors that impede any realistic forward planning. Crisis that are protracted have become seemingly intractable.

For a development actor working in these environments, the ‘goal’ posts of development work have fundamentally shifted. Development cooperation can no longer be equated with formalistic processes and frameworks that align to national goals and plans, even if this is the most appropriate entry point and basis for

¹⁹ Programme and Budget 2024–25, Programme guidance letter from the Director-General-elect Geneva, 8 July 2022

sustainable development. In these contexts, securing incremental development gains, and kick-starting the process of a locally led recovery is fundamentally about directly supporting people and where possible, safeguarding the systems and institutions that preserve people's capacity to exercise choice. 'Leaving no one behind' becomes about supporting development in and through emergencies and as one ILO colleague noted "staying put and delivering".

For the ILO Arab states, staying and delivering in these crisis-ridden contexts means connecting directly with people whose lives have been upended and providing capacity building and innovations that include facilitating short term employment, access to credit and markets and longer-term jobs and basic services such as job referrals and work permits. These basic interventions essentially serve as the premise for restoring personal agency to people and building trust in local institutions, two primary elements for social cohesion, peace and development. In these contexts, sustainable development starts with these basic actions that, in turn, need to be continually supported to revive and rebuild the social contract between the people and their governing entities at both local and national level. Together with its international partners, the ILO Arab states needs to continue effectively "nexusing", directly supporting people in situations where development cooperation frameworks are not feasible while exploiting opportunities, when and where possible, for building an enabling policy and legal environment that provides a minimum of social safeguards and decent work for the citizenry of a country.

Annex II: List of Internal & External Stakeholders Interviewed

Inception Phase

<u>Key Informant Interviews – Inception Phase</u>	<u>Titles/Functions</u>
Peter Rademaker	Deputy Regional Director & Director DWT for Arab States
Maha Kataa	Country Coordinator, Iraq & Regional Resilience & Crisis Response Specialist
Nathalie Bavitch	Regional Partnerships Officer & UN Coherence, ROAS
Luca Pellerano	Senior Social Protection Specialist, ROAS
Shaza Ghaleb Al-Jondi	Regional Chief Technical Adviser (Lebanon- Jordan – Iraq) PROSPECTS, ROAS
Nieves Thomet	Decent work for Peace Specialist, Coordination Support Unit for Peace and Resilience, ILO Headquarters
Patrick Daru	Head of Operations, Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning, ILO Headquarters

Phase 2 – Interviews with ILO Arab States stakeholders

<u>Internal Stakeholders Interviews</u> <u>ILO Regional Office for Arab States</u>	<u>Titles/Functions</u>
Sandra Silva	Social Protection Technical Specialist, ILO Jordan
Temesgen Berisso	Programme Manager, ERRY, ILO Yemen
Rita Abou Jaoudeh	Decent Work and Gender Advisor, EIIP, ROAS (now Senior Environmental & Social Safeguard Coordinator), ROAS
Mustapha Said	Senior Specialist, Workers' Activities, ROAS
Meredith Byrne	Technical Officer, ILO Jordan
Simon Done	Chief Technical Adviser, EIIP, ILO Jordan
Charis Reid	Social Protection Officer, ILO OPT
Paolo Salvai	Senior Employers' Specialist, ROAS
Ryszard Cholewinski	Senior Migration Specialist, ROAS
Badra Alawa	Enterprise Development Specialist, ROAS
Maha Kataa	Country Coordinator, Iraq & Regional Resilience & Crisis Response Specialist
Luca Pellerano	Senior Social Protection Specialist, ROAS
Peter Rademaker	Deputy Regional Director & Director DWT for Arab States
Richard Lorenz	Chief Technical Adviser, EIIP, ILO Lebanon
Qais Qatamin	Chief Technical Adviser to ILO Programme of Support to the Crisis Response, ROAS
Tawfik Jaber	National Project Officer, ILO Yemen
Joumana Karame	Programme Officer, ROAS
Kishore Kumar Singh	Senior Skills Development Officer, ROAS
Shaza Ghaleb Al-Jondi	Regional Chief Technical Adviser (Lebanon- Jordan – Iraq) PROSPECTS, ROAS
Nathalie Bavitch	Regional Partnerships Officer & UN Coherence, ROAS
Frida Khan	Country Coordinator, Jordan & Senior Gender Equality, ILO Jordan
Mounir Kleibo	ILO Representative for OPT (former)
Rasha El Shurafa	Programme Analyst, ILO OPT
Oktavianto Pasaribu	Chief, Regional Programming Services, ROAS
Federico Negro	Head, Coordination Support Unit for Peace and Resilience, ILO Headquarters
Nieves Thomet	Decent work for Peace Specialist, Coordination Support Unit for Peace and Resilience, ILO Headquarters

Tomoki Watanabe	Country Coordinator, ILO Syria
Kane Raky	Senior Partnerships Officer, PARDEV, ILO Headquarters
Evgenia Tyurina	Programme Analyst, PARDEV, ILO Headquarters

Phase 3 – Interviews with ILO Arab States partners (external stakeholders)

<u>External Stakeholders Interviews</u> UN Partners & the World Bank	<u>Titles/Functions</u>
Romano Lasker	Programme Specialist, Crisis and Fragility Policy Engagement Team, Crisis Bureau, UNDP New York (Secretary to UNDC-IASC HDPN Joint Committee)
Agnese Spiazzi	Head of Resident Coordinator Office, Jordan
Pierre Fallavier	Head of Resident Coordinator Office, Yemen
Natalie Sarafian	Head of Resident Coordinator Office, Lebanon
Seija McMillin	Head of Resident Coordinator Office, Iraq (PROSPECTS Coordinator)
Lisa van Hogerlinden	Reporting Officer, UNHCR MENA Regional Bureau, Jordan
Arthur Muhlen-Schulte	Senior Development Officer, UNHCR MENA Regional Bureau, Jordan
Ana Belen Anguita Arjona	Senior Community-Based Protection Officer, UNHCR MENA Regional Bureau, Jordan
Adaiana Lima	Livelihood and Economic Inclusion Officer, UNHCR Iraq
Silvia Terren	Assistant Durable Solutions Officer, UNHCR Iraq
Arefu Araki	Senior Development Officer, UNHCR Iraq
Israa Al-Juboori	Youth and Adolescent Development Specialist, UNICEF Iraq
Khalid Ahmed Ali Mohayddeh	Senior Social Protection Specialist, World Bank Office in Jordan
Angela Elzir	Labour Market Specialist, World Bank Office in Lebanon
<u>External Stakeholders Interviews – Donors</u>	<u>Titles/Functions</u>
Ingrid Sandström	Counsellor, Swedish embassy in Lebanon
Petr Kostohryz	Senior Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Embassy of Denmark, Jordan (Project Manager of European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon , Jordan and Iraq)
Jan-Jaap Sas	First Secretary on International Cooperation, Embassy of the Netherlands, Lebanon

Barbara Egger	Head of Cooperation for Iraq, European Union
Stephanie Rosseau	Programme Manager – PEGASE, social development, result-oriented framework, M&E, EU, West Bank & Gaza Strip
Massimo LaRosa	Global Thematic Coordinator, Migration & Forced Displacement, Social Protection Adviser, ECHO, Jordan
Cornelis Van Kessel	Second Secretary, Economic Affairs, MFA the Netherlands, Jordan
Camilla Veerman	Coordinating Policy Officer, MFA the Netherlands, Jordan
Stefanie Hochheim	Consul, BMZ, German embassy, Iraq
<u>External Stakeholders Interviews</u> Social Partners & Local Actors	<u>Titles/Functions</u>
Hamdan Yacoub	Head of Syrian Refugees Department/Policies & International Cooperation Directorate, Jordan
Mohammad Mazen Al Maita	General Office Coordinator at Arab Trade Union Confederation, Amman Office
Jelena Vujanovic	Head of Programme, Danish Refugee Council, Lebanon
Nayef Steitieh	Former Minister of Labour of Jordan, Jordanian Business Development Centre
Marina Molino Lova	Country Representative, AVSI Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon
Enda Nevin	Project Development Manager, ACTED, Beirut, Lebanon
Dr Taha Al-Mahbashi	Assistant Professor of Business Development, Sana'a, Yemen
Esam Alzubairi	Director of Commercial Department, Federation of Yemeni Chambers of Commerce & Industry, Yemen
<u>External Stakeholders Interviews</u> HDPNexus Evaluation Experts	<u>Titles/Functions</u>
Phil Vernon	Peacebuilding, International Humanitarian & Development Adviser, Interpeace, Geneva
Francesca Bonino	Evaluation Officer, Global & Synthesis Unit, Office of Evaluation, WFP Headquarters, Rome
Suzanne Morrison - Metois	Senior Research Fellow - Evaluation, Learning and Accountability, ALNAP, UK
Zeina Aqaileh	Free-lance Development Consultant, Amman, Jordan

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