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# ► The ILO's post-conflict and recovery work in the Arab States region with emphasis on Iraq and Yemen (2019-2023):

A synthesis review on lessons learned, what works and why

Evaluation Office  
March 2023

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The ILO's post-conflict and recovery work in the Arab States region with emphasis on Iraq and Yemen (2019-2023): A synthesis review on lessons learned, what works and why

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## ► **The ILO's post-conflict and recovery work in the Arab States region with emphasis on Iraq and Yemen (2019-2023):**

A synthesis review on lessons learned, what works and why

**March 2023**

This review is part of preparatory work for the high-level independent evaluation of the ILO's Programme of Work in Support of Decent Work in the Arab States. The synthesis review has not been professionally edited, but has undergone quality control by the ILO Evaluation Office. Any error and omissions are the responsibility of EVAL

## Preface

This report was prepared as an input into the independent evaluation of the ILO's programme of work in the Arab States. The evaluation will focus on crisis situations over the last two biennia (2019-2023) with special emphasis on Iraq and Yemen. The study was prepared by Hiroyoshi Hiratsuka, independent international evaluation consultant and managed by Craig Russon, Evaluation Officer at EVAL. Guy Thijs, Director of EVAL, provided oversight to ensure the quality and independence of the study.

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## Abbreviations

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|               |                                                                                    |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COVID-19      | Coronavirus disease                                                                |
| EVAL          | ILO Evaluation Office                                                              |
| ILO           | International Labour Organization                                                  |
| LABADMIN/ OSH | Labour Administration, Labour Inspection and Occupational Safety and Health Branch |
| CPO           | Country Programme Outcome                                                          |
| OSH           | Occupational safety and health                                                     |
| RBSA          | Regular Budget Supplementary Account                                               |
| SIDA          | Swedish International Development Agency                                           |
| WORKQUALITY   | Work and Equality Department                                                       |

## ► Executive Summary

---

This high-level evidence synthesis focused on ILO's response to peacebuilding and conflict prevention initiatives in the Arab States between 2019 and 2023.

Since its establishment, the ILO has addressed the challenges of wars and conflicts by promoting social justice in the world of work and labor relations issues. This high-level synthesis project extends ILO's mission, mandate, and history of interventions to improve the conditions of member states, especially in the Arab region.

The previous synthesis project focused on ILO's Programme of Work to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis in the region.<sup>1</sup> This synthesis project shifted its focus to generating evidence from ILO's initiatives in the Arab region. Furthermore, this project examined Iraq and Yemen as the countries' cases to investigate ILO's efforts in peacebuilding and conflict prevention initiatives.

Evidence from this synthesis was to inform the design of data collection and analysis on the ILO's centralized evaluation in peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the region.

This analysis synthesized the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab region. The investigation put a particular emphasis on Iraq and Yemen in addition to the overall Arab region.

A specific emphasis of this analysis is the context of the regional conflicts. This analysis intended to examine the results from the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work on the foundation of a peace and conflict analysis framework in two particular countries (Iraq and Yemen) and the Arab region.

This analysis was qualitative to formulate themes and thematic relations across the evaluation reports. After the quality assurance procedure and screening against the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the screening procedure selected 15 of 21 reports for synthesis. The synthesis answered a set of evaluation questions proposed in the original call. Some questions were also revised or eliminated due to duplication or a lack of evidence from the reports.

The main themes out of the 15 reports were the following. First, the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab region focused on conflicts in three countries: Iraq, Syria and Yemen. In Iraq, the ILO projects centered around improving the Labour ministry's capacity to generate evidence and developing support services for business creation. In Syria, the ILO projects focused on supporting the Syrian refugees. In Yemen, the ILO projects supported the most vulnerable groups. The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention interventions were also in Jordan and Lebanon on the Syrian refugee issues.

**Relevance.** Even though some discrepancies existed across the countries in the Arab region, the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention initiatives in Iraq, Syria and Yemen brought relevant interventions that fit into the local contexts and the needs of the local beneficiaries in the Arab region. The ILO's interventions in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria were mainly aligned with SDG Goal 8 although additional frameworks were available in the report. Even though not all projects were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, the ones affected by the pandemic were flexible in reorienting their projects through the creativity and flexibility of local staff and stakeholders.

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1 The International Labour Organization (ILO). (2018). *Independent evaluation of ILO's programme of work in Lebanon and Jordan in Terms of Decent Work and the Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis, 2014-2018*.

**Design Coherence and Validity.** All three conflict issues in Iraq, Yemen and Syria were coherent and valid based on different development frameworks: Job for Peace and Resilience and the UN Sustainable Development Groups. However, ones without evidence on JPR or UNSDG frameworks need to include these frameworks to be accountable, ensure quality and learn from the project experience.

**Effectiveness.** The ILO played a crucial facilitation role in achieving the project objectives. The primary support by the ILO in Iraq and Yemen was extensive consultations with local stakeholders and flexible adjustments of the projects to meet local needs. In Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, a primary success factor was building and maintaining effective partnerships with local stakeholders. In Iraq and Yemen, gender equality and non-discrimination were successful mainstreaming issues by the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work. The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work responded to the COVID-19 pandemic without systematic procedures to mitigate the pandemic challenges.

**Efficiency.** Even though the disruptive nature of the conflict contexts, the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work maintained efficiency in the Arab region overall. Although not all projects were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ones affected by pandemic found different levels of cost-efficiency depending on the local conflict contexts. The differences between the two groups might be 1) the level of stability and security, 2) the local capacity to be flexible.

**Impact.** The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work to create an impact at the system level depended on the instability, severity and insecurity of the local conflict contexts. The ILO's work created positive systematic changes in the Syria conflict issues in Jordan and Syria through developing and maintaining social cohesion and capacity building of local stakeholders. Even though the same approach was taken in Lebanon, the local instability in the country posed significant challenges to influencing positive changes through the ILO's work. In Iraq and Yemen, the severity and instability of the local conflict contexts posed critical challenges to the ILO's work to create positive systematic changes.

**Sustainability.** Across the countries, four (4) main factors would ensure the sustainability of the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab region: the maintenance of positive relationships with local stakeholders, the assurance of adequate funding, the improvement of local capacities and sustainability designs in future projects. In the Arab region, evidence suggested that these four factors or a lack of them, appeared to be critical for the sustainability of the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work.

**Lessons Learned.** Ensure the inclusion of the international development framework in future evaluation designs. Some evaluation projects missed the generation of evidence on the international development framework, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in their methodologies. Innovate evaluation methodologies to generate evidence in conflict contexts.

**Recommendations.** The first recommendation is to prioritize future projects based on the existing evidence from the Arab region: Egypt, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Turkey and Yemen. The second recommendation would be to design an intervention specific to Lebanon to address the country's needs.

## ▶ 1. Introduction

---

### EVALUATION FEATURES

This final report describes the synthesis project on peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab region, specifically Iraq and Yemen, by the International Labour Organization (ILO). This report illustrates the findings, conclusions and lessons learned from evidence generated by the design and methodologies with feedback from the focal point at EVAL. The report aimed at informing the EVAL and subsequent evaluation projects in the Arab region, specifically in Iraq and Yemen. The document also included this synthesis project's purpose, scope and questions. The project was scheduled from January to February 2023.

The report intends to provide insights for research team members responsible for the subsequent evaluation in the Arab region.

### CONTEXT

Conflict prevention and peacebuilding have been one of the core missions of the ILO through its advocacy efforts of promoting social justice within the ILO mandate: the world of work and labour relations.

However, operationalizing the peacebuilding and conflict prevention initiatives requires critical considerations of a unique context. For example, wars, conflicts and other violent crises shape the fragile context. This fragility due to violence destabilizes the operational ground with insecurity. Security improvement on the ground becomes the priority, discontinuing all other activities.

The Arab region has faced a few of the worst civil conflicts and wars in the world. Iraq has gone through internal conflicts in the recent past, but continues to be a fragile state. Yemen is cited to be the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. The Syrian Arab Republic also remains to be volatile, and Jordan and Lebanon host Syrian refugees at their borders.<sup>2</sup> The Arab region is rich in its history and culture, but the current struggles in these countries require interventions to reduce poverty, improve labor conditions, and eliminate the sources of conflicts through preventative and post-conflict recovery initiatives.

This evidence synthesis must focus on generating evidence, best practices and lessons learned from the ILO's existing work on the subject area. This synthesis project intended to generate evidence of the ILO's responses to peacebuilding and conflict prevention work, especially on employment, decent work, fostering recovery efforts and grasping the opportunity for preventing violence, reducing fragility and improving insecurity.

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2 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). (2022). *SIPRI Yearbook 2022: Armaments, disarmament and international security*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep43750.8>

## SUBJECT BEING EVALUATED

The initial screening identified 15 reports out of the initial 22 reports by EVAL based on the peacebuilding and conflict prevention theme. 15 reports involved ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention initiatives in countries around the Arab states.

The geographic focus for this evidence synthesis is the Arab region. Furthermore, specific attention was paid to Iraq and Yemen to generate evidence from this evaluation synthesis in ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the region.

This synthesis project covered between 2018 and 2022. The current period is an extension of the previous synthesis project on the subject area in the region.

## METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This project applied evidence synthesis as the main analytical approach to the generation of themes and thematic relationships across 15 evaluation reports.

For the purposes of this synthesis review, the synthesis used the ILO EVAL standard methodology that ensured a rigorous and systematic analysis and appraisal of the existing evaluations and research on the subject, through being transparent about review processes and decisions. This methodology was shared by the EVAL focal point and included in the TOR. The methodology also took into account the limited time and budget available for this task.

The development of clearly defined research questions, based on the key questions outlined in the TOR and consultation with the ILO EVAL team and further stakeholders.

The definition of a search strategy (including the definition of key sources) and protocol, defining parameters for inclusion, such as publication date, geographical scope, language, study type, research question.

The screening and inclusion of the collected literature according to a set of defined parameters relating to the quality of the evidence. Criteria included the degree of relevance of the study to the questions, the reputation of the sources (if other than ILO), the robustness of research methods used (including considerations of sample sizes, experimental and quasi-experimental methods) and the country of origin.

A detailed appraisal, analysis and synthesis of the filtered literature, using a detailed recording grid, before summarizing the consolidated evidence base.

- ▶ First, the researcher collected 22 articles from the i-eval Discovery database according to the EVAL list: <https://www.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#b8pbato>. 21 reports were downloaded from the database. One report was retrieved from an EVAL staff member.
- ▶ Second, the researcher screened the reports based on two considerations: the quality assurance and thematic focus on the peacebuilding and conflict prevention theme. The researcher applied the ILO EVAL Quality Assurance instrument his screening procedure to ensure the reports' quality. The researcher also screened all 22 reports, excluding reports outside the peacebuilding and conflict prevention contexts. 15 reports were selected for the full review after the exclusion of the reports that were outside of the peacebuilding and conflict prevention themes.
- ▶ Third, the researcher organized 15 reports by two groups: Iraq/Yemen and the Arab region.

FIGURE 1. THE EVALUATION BY COUNTRIES.

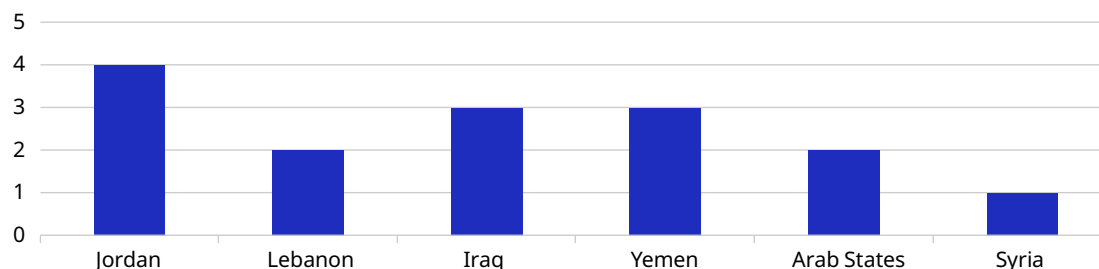


FIGURE 2. EVALUATION TYPES.

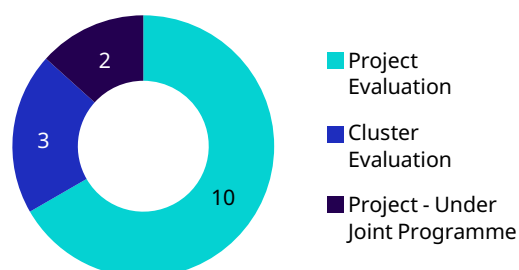
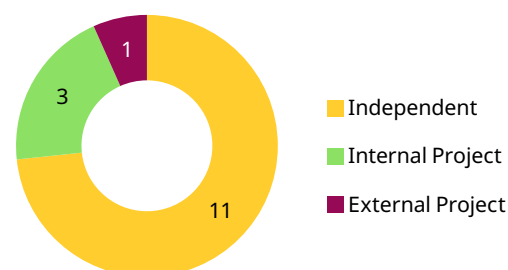


FIGURE 3. PROJECT TYPES.



Fourth, the analysis applied the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria with specific questions: Relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The analysis organized the data against the criteria in a spreadsheet. After the organization, themes and thematic relations were generated to answer the evaluation questions. The cross-case synthesis between the two countries and the region functioned as a triangulation strategy in this analysis.

The following table illustrated the criteria and questions:

TABLE. 1: EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

| Criteria  | Questions                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | Iraq and Yemen                                                                                                            | The Arab Region                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Relevance | What is the status of the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in Iraq and Yemen?                             | What is the overall relevance of ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the region?                                                                                                                                                                 |
|           | In what ways does the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work relevant to constituents' needs in Iraq and Yemen? | What is the status of the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the region?                                                                                                                                                                        |
|           |                                                                                                                           | In what ways does the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work relevant to constituents' needs in the region?                                                                                                                                            |
|           |                                                                                                                           | How is the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab states relevant to international development frameworks, including UNCFs and the SDGs?                                                                                                   |
|           |                                                                                                                           | To what extent have the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention interventions been designed or repurposed based on results from COVID-19 diagnostics, UN socio-economic assessments and guidance, ILO decent work national diagnostics CCA or similar tools? |

|                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Design Coherence and Validity</b> | To what extent is the work in Iraq and Yemen coherent with Jobs for Peace and Resilience (JPR)?                                                                                                                      | To what extent is the ILO's post-conflict recovery work in the Arab States coherent with that of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) for the Arab States under the Sustainable Development Goals? |
|                                      | How well are the XBTC projects aligned to the Iraq and Yemen programmes of work?                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Effectiveness</b>                 | How did ILO support help the Iraq and Yemen programmes of work to achieve their results?                                                                                                                             | What are the key success factors of these projects in the region?                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                      | To what extent have the Iraq and Yemen programmes of work made progress in achieving results on cross-cutting issues, including gender equality and non-discrimination, disability and environmental sustainability? | What were the main constraints or challenges to responding to COVID-19's impact?                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Efficiency</b>                    | How cost-efficient was the ILO's implementation in Iraq and Yemen?                                                                                                                                                   | How cost-efficient was the ILO's implementation in the Arab region?                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                      | To what extent have the Iraq and Yemen programmes of work leveraged new or repurposed existing financial resources to mitigate the COVID-19 effect in a balanced manner?                                             | To what extent have the ILO's programmes of work in the Arab region leveraged new or repurposed existing financial resources to mitigate the COVID-19 effect?                                                          |
| <b>Impact</b>                        | To what extent do the Iraq and Yemen programmes of work contribute to positive changes in Decent Work?                                                                                                               | To what extent do ILO's programmes of work contribute to significant positive changes in Decent Work in the Arab region?                                                                                               |
|                                      | To what extent have the Iraq and Yemen programmes of work adhered to the core normative and social dialogue principles of the ILO to yield the desired results?                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                      | To what extent do the Iraq and Yemen programmes of work contribute to the enhancement of partnerships or financing toward the Decent Work agenda?                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Sustainability</b>                | How would the Iraq and Yemen programmes of work lead to sustainable or integrated results in other post-pandemic responses over time?                                                                                | How can the findings of the evaluation inform the region's strategic direction for ILO?                                                                                                                                |

This synthesis is limited to secondary data. No field mission was involved in collecting primary data in the region due to the nature of the analysis. The evaluator worked closely with this project's focal point to overcome this limitation.

This synthesis conformed to the 2020 United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines and the ethics section of UNEG Norms and Standards in 2016. Accordingly, the researcher is responsible for safeguarding and ensuring ethics at all stages of this analysis. The ethical considerations include, but are not limited to, protecting the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of participants in the reports. The researcher is responsible for ensuring cultural sensitivity and that the synthesis does not harm participants or their communities.

## 2. Synthesis Findings: The Arab Region

This section illustrates evidence from the analysis of all reports. The section organizes the structure in the following format. First, based on the criteria, the analysis provides evidence by countries according to questions specific to these countries. Second, the findings are compared to one project which focused on the whole region.

### RELEVANCE

**Finding.** The ILO brought relevant interventions to the improvement of labor relations and the promotion of social justice in work conditions in the Arab region. The ILO's initiatives and activities are aligned with its post-conflict recovery or conflict prevention priorities in the Arab region.

In the Arab region outside Iraq and Yemen, the ILO's interventions are centered around the Syrian refugee issues due to the country's long-standing civil war. The ILO's interventions implemented their activities and initiatives in Syria (ID 2037) and its neighboring countries: Jordan (ID 2817; ID 3005; ID 3015; ID 3483), Lebanon (ID 2425; ID 2762), and across the two countries (ID 3034; ID 2666). For example, the report (ID 3034) explained,

*The aim of the EIIPs to combine the objectives of providing decent work for Syrian refugees and vulnerable host community members and the improvement or preservation of assets clearly has relevance for the circumstances created by the influx of refugees in Jordan and Lebanon... (p. 19)*

**Finding.** The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work focused on intra-state conflicts in Syria. The ILO projects in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria aimed to prevent future conflicts and lay the foundation for post-conflict peacebuilding.

In Jordan, the ILO focuses on the improvement of employment opportunities for both Syrian refugees and Jordanian host members (ID 2817; ID 3005; ID 3015) through labor intensive infrastructure improvement, the formalization of access to the legal labor market and green works and agricultural industries. One ILO project (ID 3483) focused on the eradication of the worst child labor in the country. For example, the report (ID 3483) explained,

*The project was found to be highly relevant to the needs and priorities of Jordan. Child labour has become a serious problem in Jordan and has dramatically increased over the past decade or so, partly as a result of the Syrian refugee crisis. (p. 26)*

In Lebanon, the two ILO projects (ID 2425; ID 2762) focused on establishing evidence on Syrian refugees and the eradication of the worst child labor in the country. For example, the report (ID 2425) expressed,

*The Labour Force and Households' Living Condition Survey as explained above was intended to produce national and sub-national statistics on the labour force and the living conditions of people living in Lebanon at the governorate and local levels. These statistics are pertinent to the identification, conceptualization, and development of programme and projects. The funder for this project has specifically requested that the survey identifies and produce information on the Syrians living in Lebanon. (p. 10)*

Across Jordan and Lebanon, the ILO projects (ID 3034; ID 2666) emphasized improving employment opportunities through intensive infrastructure programmes and improving knowledge of labor market and employment conditions among Syrian refugees. For example, the report (ID 3034) explained, "Overall, the project was adequately designed to respond to the needs of the Syrian refugees and Host Communities in Lebanon and Jordan" (p. 15).

In Syria, the ILO project (ID 3079) focused on the capacity building of the national government and social partners to reduce child labor and improve occupational safety and health in the country. For example, the report (ID 3079) explained,

*In terms of thematic areas, child labour and occupational safety and health were perceived as neutral areas for intervention in a highly political and complex programming environment for ILO to re-engage in Syria after some years without a presence in the country during the civil war which began in 2011. (p. 19)(The emphasis by the original report)*

**Finding.** The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the region addressed the needs of the constituents in the Arab region overall, although the level of relevance across the countries and issues was somewhat challenging to identify overall evidence.

In Jordan, the ILO's interventions were relevant to the needs of the local beneficiaries: Syrian refugees and Jordanian host members (ID 2817; ID 3005; ID 3015), including the eradication of the worst child labor in the country (ID 3483) For example, the report (ID 3015) explained,

*The programme remains relevant to address the needs of supporting Syrian refugees. Relevance has also been heightened with the outbreak of COVID-19 which affects not only Syrian refugees but the broader Jordanian population as well. (p.5)*

In Lebanon, the two ILO projects (ID 2425; ID 2762) focused on establishing evidence on Syrian refugees and the eradication of the worst child labor in the country. For example, the report (ID 2425) expressed,

*...the ILO had successfully supported a national policy on child labor. The National Action Plan includes an itemized budget for its implementation, and as the primary partner, the ILO was expected to bring substantial resources as well as technical assistance forward to achieve it. (p. 9)*

Across Jordan and Lebanon, the ILO projects (ID 3034; ID 2666) addressed the needs of Syrian refugees in the two countries. However, only one project (ID 2666) could identify the evidence of the project's adequate solution to the local communities. Another project (ID 3034) was uncertain about the ILO's intervention to address the needs of the host communities in the two countries due to different needs. For example, the report (ID 3034) explained,

*For the displaced Syrians facing hardships because of lack of adequate income from employment, the additional means of livelihood from decent employment that EIIP offers is highly relevant and important, albeit for short periods. For Jordanian participants, typically unemployed unskilled or semi-skilled persons, the decent employment opportunities offered are relevant and important, not least because of the increased labour market distress as a consequence of the influx. In Lebanon, while unemployment and labour market distress exist, the type of work offered, especially unskilled physical work, has been less preferred. (p. 20)*

In Syria, the ILO project (ID 3079) addressed the local need to eradicate child labor and improve occupational safety and health in the country. For example, the report (ID 3079) explained,

*...these areas were strategic because stakeholders could all agree that helping children is a worthy cause, and the occupational safety and health aspect was tied in with that regarding inspection, enforcement and building the capacity of inspectors to monitor and investigate child labour. (p.19)*

**Finding.** The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab region was relevant to the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme, the ILO Programme and Budget, UNSDF, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Sustainable Development Goals, depending on the projects. Six (6) projects in three countries and the region included SDG Goal 8. Also, four (4) projects, including The ILO Programme and Budget, were the second most cited relevant framework in the region. One project in Jordan (ID 2817) included no evidence of the project alignments with any frameworks. The table summarizes the findings in this section.

**TABLE 2. A LIST OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS RELEVANT TO THE ILO'S PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION WORK IN THE ARAB REGION.**

| Country     | Project ID | The ILO Decent Work Country Programme | The ILO Programme and Budget | UNSDF 2018-2020 | The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) |
|-------------|------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Jordan      | 3005       | X                                     |                              | X               | Outcomes 4, 5                               | Goal 8                               |
|             | 3015       | Priority 1, 3                         | Outcome 6, 10                |                 |                                             | Goal 8                               |
|             | 3483       |                                       | Outcome 7, 8                 |                 |                                             | Goal 8                               |
| Lebanon     | 2425       |                                       |                              |                 |                                             | Goal 1, 5                            |
|             | 2762       |                                       |                              |                 |                                             |                                      |
| Arab States | 2666       |                                       |                              |                 |                                             | Goal 8                               |
|             | 3034       |                                       | Outcome 7                    |                 |                                             | Goal 8                               |
| Syria       | 3079       |                                       | Outcome 1, 2, 5, 6, 7        |                 |                                             | Goal 3, 4, 8                         |

**Note:** "X" means the report included an indication, "relevant." Some reports included specific outcomes, priorities or goals. These were identified in the table. If a cell is empty, then no indication was available in the reports.

**Finding.** Not all projects were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. For those affected, the evidence showed flexibility in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic changes by repurposing the existing structures and procedures to continue their implementations. Because of the pandemic's disruptive nature, the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab region applied any instruments in the original evaluation question, such as UN socio-economic assessments and guidance. These adjustments thoroughly depended on individual staff members' creativities and resilience.

In Jordan, all three projects (ID 3005; ID 3015; ID 3483) responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by facilitating flexible project structure and procedure adjustments. The reports identified evidence for repurposing the existing project funding for the COVID-19 pandemic responses. For example, the report (ID 3015) explained,

*With regards to the context of COVID-19, The project team provided a swift and relevant response to the continuous disruptions made by the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the project lifecycle. Contingency plans were prepared and implemented, including converting some theoretical trainings towards remote online learning, lowering the training group number to abide by government regulations, contracting additional partners to meet project targets, and supporting the national vaccination campaign to have fully vaccinated trainees and trainers. (p. 20)*

The project (ID 2817) was unaffected by the pandemic in 2019.

In Lebanon, one project (ID 2425) included no evidence of new or repurposing the existing project structures or procedures to overcome the COVID-19 challenges. Another project in the country (ID 2762) was unaffected by the pandemic due to its implementation in 2019.

Across Jordan and Lebanon, the first project (ID 2666) was unaffected by the pandemic. ILO projects (ID 3034) explained that the project reinforced its original purpose during the pandemic and included adjustments to overcome the pandemic impact. For example, the report (ID 3034) explained,

*Further, given the emergence of COVID-19 around the world and the unpredicted intensifying economic and political situation in Lebanon, stakeholders confirmed that the project remained relevant as the population targeted were already more vulnerable than others in both countries. Yet, the project did undergo certain adjustments including for example in terms of questionnaire design, to gather information related to the COVID-19 impacts on refugees and vulnerable host communities. (p. 5)*

In Syria, the project (ID 3079) included the new COVID guidance tool in its occupational health and safety activities. Even though no specific adjustments due to COVID were evident, the report's following statement illustrated the relevance in the country.

*The projects were also relevant because they sought to raise awareness of fundamental principles and rights at work, including in the context of the COVID-19 response. The realization of fundamental principles and rights at work – in law and in practice – is critical to mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 crisis among the most vulnerable people, and to rebuilding in a more resilient, just, equitable and productive manner (p. 22).*

## DESIGN COHERENCE AND VALIDITY

**Finding.** The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab state is coherent with the regional UN Sustainable Development Group in the Arab region when evaluated against the SDGs as its target. For example, seven (7) out of nine (9) reports found evidence for the design coherence and validity criterion by identifying SDGs. Out of seven (7) reports, six (6) included Goal 8, while two (2) other projects included other SDG goals. Two (2) projects had no evidence for the SDGs in their reports.

**TABLE 3. THE ANALYSIS OF THE DESIGN COHERENCE AND VALIDITY UNDER THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) IN THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GROUP (UNSDG) IN THE ARAB REGION.**

| Country     | Project ID | Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) |
|-------------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| Jordan      | 2817       | n/a                                  |
|             | 3005       | Goal 8                               |
|             | 3015       | Goal 8                               |
|             | 3483       | Goal 8                               |
| Lebanon     | 2425       | Goal 1, 5                            |
|             | 2762       | n/a                                  |
| Arab States | 2666       | Goal 8                               |
|             | 3034       | Goal 8                               |
| Syria       | 3079       | Goal 3, 4, 8                         |

**Note:** n/a means that no indication was made of coherence regarding the UNSDGs in their reports.

## EFFECTIVENESS

**Finding.** Several key success factors contributed to the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work. Among a few factors, one common success factor is a successful partnership in the local context.

In Jordan, the ILO's interventions were successful due to strong partnerships with local stakeholders (ID 2817; ID 3005; ID 3015; ID 3483) when the projects were implemented. For example, the report (ID 3015) explained, "It is worth noting here that implementing partners were involved in the design of the intervention, including the selection of locations and activities" (p. 27).

In Lebanon, the two ILO projects (ID 2425; ID 2762) seemed to miss evidence on success factors in partnerships. In fact, both projects under effectiveness expressed challenges to achieve success factors. For example, the report (ID 2425) expressed, "Overall, it appears that the design of the project fell short in some areas in terms of adaptation of a generic model..." (p. 13).

Across Jordan and Lebanon, the ILO projects (ID 3034; ID 2666) were able to establish and maintain effective partnerships with local stakeholders. For example, the report (ID 3034) explained that project partnerships were "...expected to enable rapid selection of suitable projects" (p.7).

In Syria, the ILO project (ID 3079) established effective partnerships with local stakeholders. For example, the report (ID 3079) recommended continuing "...ILO partnerships with local organisations who are established implementing partners of other UN agencies to integrate child labour prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration aspects into existing child protection programmes at the local level" (p.12).

**Finding.** The COVID-19 pandemic posed constraints in different countries. Two significant challenges were a need for more capacity to coordinate mitigation measures and a reduction of government capacity to respond to the pandemic.

In Jordan, a main challenge was a lack of coordinated mitigation against COVID-19 (ID 3005; ID 3015; ID 3483). All three projects placed efforts to respond to the impact of the pandemic. For example, the report (ID 3015) explained,

*Despite efforts, the programme has been affected by worker absences and an inability to engage with key government counterparts due to reduced staffing levels in MOL, MOPW and municipal offices. This has exacerbated the issues already raised with regards to workers permits and associated approvals. (p. 37)*

The project (ID 2817) was unaffected by the pandemic.

In Lebanon, one ILO project (ID 2425) seemed to generate no evidence of challenges to responding to COVID-19's impact. Another project in the country (ID 2762) was unaffected by the pandemic due to its implementation in 2019.

Across Jordan and Lebanon, the first project (ID 2666) was unaffected by the pandemic in 2019. ILO projects (ID 3034) were unable to identify evidence of mitigation to respond to the pandemic other than the fact that COVID-19 was disruptive to the project.

In Syria, one major challenge was the reduced capacities of public offices across the Syrian government (ID 3079). According to the report, "Public labour administration and inspection enforcement capacity have come under further pressure as financial and human resources are diverted to meet urgent needs linked to the pandemic" (p. 22).

## EFFICIENCY

**Finding.** The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab region managed its project funding cost-effectively, overall.

Jordan, three projects (ID 3005; ID 3015; ID 3483) were deemed cost-efficient with or without additional funding. The project (ID 3015) received additional funding through the project extension, but was determined to be cost-efficient overall. For example, the report (ID 3005) explained, "Overall, the programme has achieved a relatively high degree of efficiency. The number and scope of contracts across the three phases have provided opportunities to improve livelihoods on an on-going manner" (p. 29).

The project (ID 2817) defined efficiency issues without project cost aspects.

In Lebanon, the cost-efficiency of the ILO projects (ID 2425; ID 2762) explained more nuanced pictures. The two reports explained that their evaluations were unable to determine the project's cost-efficiency based on evidence, but these projects achieved their objectives under their budget amounts. For example, one project (ID 2762) reported, "The project expenditures more or less matched budgeted projections for the FU training, children's choir. There was an underspend for Labor Inspector and ISF trainings—activities which were not carried out." (p. 18).

In the two countries, both projects (ID 3034; ID 2666) managed their project budget cost-efficiently. For example, the project (ID 2666) explained, "Both JP-II and LP-I+II have met their employment generation (worker days) and asset creation targets within the available budgets" (p. 7)

In Syria, the project (ID 3079) illustrated its cost-efficiency through evidence. For example, the report explained that "... financial resources were allocated efficiently and strategically..."(p. 35).

**Finding.** Not all projects identified evidence for the new or repurposed funding to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The ones with the evidence showed flexibility to fund new or repurpose the existing fund to support the mitigation measures of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Jordan, the two projects (ID 3005; ID 3015) identified evidence for repurposing the existing project funding for the COVID-19 pandemic responses. For example, the report (ID 3005) explained,

*The programme is committed to supporting safe work environments and safe work practices. The programme has ensured workers are protected while working, this not only includes safety equipment but also COVID-19 responsive approaches including, social distancing, maintenance of hygiene practices and the use of masks and other personal protection equipment (PPE). Funding has been repurposed in an appropriate manner to support this. (p. 37)*

The project (ID 2817) was unaffected by the pandemic in 2019. One project (ID 3483) included no evidence targeted for the repurposing of its project budget.

In one project (ID 2425) included no evidence of new or repurposing of the existing funding for the COVID-19 responses. Another project in the country (ID 2762) was unaffected by the pandemic due to its implementation in 2019.

Across Jordan and Lebanon, the first project (ID 2666) was unaffected by the pandemic. ILO projects (ID 3034) included no evidence of new or repurposing the existing funding for the pandemic responses other than that COVID-19 was disruptive to the project.

In Syria, the project (ID 3079) included no evidence for the new or repurposing of the existing funding to respond to the pandemic.

## IMPACT

**Finding.** ILO's programmes of work contributed to changes in Decent Work in the Arab region through social cohesions, capacity building of national ministries and other stakeholders for peacebuilding and conflict prevention at the system level.

In Jordan, two projects (ID 3005; ID 3015) included evidence for building capacities of the national ministries, social cohesion between Syrian refugees and Jordanian hosts. One project (ID 3483) emphasized the enhancement of national capacities through the training of the officials. One project (ID 2817) explained the integration and collaboration between the two national groups. The project (ID 3005) suggested, "The programme has made a strong contribution to social cohesion and peace and conflict prevention" (p.35).

In Lebanon, evidence for one project (ID 2425) identified its impact on national capacity building on data collection at the national level. Another project in the country (ID 2762) also identified raising awareness of child labor issues among local stakeholders as evidence for ILO's initiative impact, even though this evaluation raised a number of challenges on its impact orientations. For example, the project (ID 2425) explained,

*The implementation of the survey has been a success despite all the hurdles met since its launch the project started in August 2014. The survey data was collected during the year that preceded the October Revolution and as such, it has become an even more important benchmark for measuring the impact of the revolution and the pandemic. It is important to have good data to plan and monitor the economic recovery of the countries. (p. 35)*

Across Jordan and Lebanon, both projects (ID 2666; ID 3034) highlighted the two countries' national capacity development through new policy formation and the improvement of knowledge gaps among policymakers. The first project (ID 2666) also included evidence for social stability among the refugees and the hosts in the short term. "There is positive short-term contribution on the livelihood support and social stability objectives. The longer term impact would be through changes in policy and their improved implementation" (p. 8).

In Syria, the project (ID 3079) included evidence for the improvement of capacities among national ministries, social partners, children and their parents on child labor issues through workshops and study tours in Jordan for Syrian officials. For example, the report suggested, "The projects have built the technical capacity of the tripartite stakeholders in Syria by increasing their access to relevant information to participate in social dialogue, and by increasing commitment to engage in social dialogue by all parties" (p. 36).

## SUSTAINABILITY

**Finding.** Maintaining positive relationships and better capacities of local partners, adequate funding and sustainability designs are needed to guide the ILO's future strategic direction in the Arab region.

In Jordan, positive relationships and better capacities of local partners, and a need for sustainable funding emerged from the four projects. Two projects (ID 2817; ID 3015) identified a lack of sufficient funding to be critical. Three projects (ID 3005; ID 3015; ID 3483) identified positive relationships and capacities of local partners to be necessary. For example, the report (ID 3005) explained,

*Some sustainable features were found resulting from this project, especially in terms of the capacities of implementing partners...some of the training providers benefitted from the project through establishing online learning platforms and training materials which will continue to be utilized after the end of this project. (p. 37)*

In Lebanon, two key findings in the two projects (ID 2425; ID 2762) were a lack of design and building local capacities for sustainability. Both projects identified no sustainability plan in the project's design based on evidence. Adequate capacities of local partners were also identified as critical. For example, the report (ID 2762) explained,

*It is not clear that the project promoted longer term commitment to the issue or systems development—both indications of sustainability. The ILO appears to be able to continue to identify additional resources to channel to local partners to address the issue. Perhaps this is a sign of sustainability, or just a continuation of its role as an intermediary. (p. 23)*

Across Jordan and Lebanon, the improved assets through sufficient funding, capacity building and institutional agreements (ID 2666). The project (ID 3034) identified partnerships among the stakeholders were critical. For example, the report (ID 3034) explained, "The success of the tripartite dialogues with the governments and social partners in both countries is deemed critical..." (p. 7).

In Syria, among several sustainability findings, the project (ID 3079) identified capacity building as a factor for sustainability even though the capacity level would be inadequate. For example, the report explained, "Much of the knowledge provided through capacity building programmes will have improved the skills of labour inspectors, which will hopefully be applied in their daily work" (p. 10).

### 3. Synthesis Findings: Iraq and Yemen

This section illustrates evidence from the analysis of Iraq and Yemen reports. The section organizes the structure in the following format. First, based on the criteria, the analysis provides evidence from Iraq and Yemen, according to questions specific to these two countries.

#### RELEVANCE

**Finding.** The current status of the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in Iraq and Yemen is relevant to the local contexts in the two countries.

Current status of the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work provides relevant contributions to the local context in Yemen: the improvement of employment opportunities for vulnerable youths to avoid the civil war (ID 2542; 2946) and the enhancement of food security (ID 3120). For example, the report (ID 2542) explained,

*The project is also aligned to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq vision of labour market in which workers can find better jobs, Government works for the people and there is food security for the people of the Kurdistan Region, economic prosperity for farmers, and prosperity through the export of our agricultural and food products. (p. 20)*

The current status of the ILO's post-conflict and recover work provides relevant contributions to the local context in Yemen: the improvement of employment opportunities for vulnerable youths to avoid the civil war (ID 2542; 2946) and the enhancement of food security (ID 3120). For example, the report (ID 2542) explained,

*Arguably, the greatest strength of ILO's project activities were their relevance to Yemen and the current socio-economic and political context...Because the project targeted at-risk youth ranging from the ages of 14 to 35, it necessarily included the same target population who are being targeted for army recruitment. (p.13)*

**Finding.** The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work meets the needs of the constituents in Iraq and Yemen.

In Iraq, the project on employment policy formulation (ID 3428) created its design based on evidence from an analysis of Iraqi labor market issues identified by national policymakers. The project on the business development support services (ID 3477) also showed the expression of the constituents who shared their needs to be met by the project. The labor governance project (ID 3252) illustrated a unique view by the constituents. Although the stakeholders explained their needs to be met through the project, the constituents wished to be consulted at the design stage of this project. For example, reports (ID 3252) explained,

*Some of the stakeholders complained to the lack of consultations during the designing of the project, but still confirm the necessity of labour inspection modernization and improvement of occupational safety and health. (p.20)*

In Yemen, the residence and self-reliance enhancement project (ID 2542; ID 2946) met the needs of the youth groups by providing alternative opportunities for military recruitment. The resilient livelihood and food security support project (ID 3120) organized the project by using the evidence from the previous project to provide the services. For example, the report (3120) explained,

*The targeting criteria were revised, based on lessons learned from ERRY I. The strategy helps prioritizing the most vulnerable groups and the populations in need in geographical areas, which had the highest poverty indicators and the highest levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. The targeted vulnerable groups included IDPs, returnees and stressed host communities, households with high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, women-headed households, and people with disabilities. (p.5)*

One unique feature to be acknowledged among these projects is the identification of the evidence use for designing and implementing the projects in these evaluations. Although not all reports illustrated this approach, one Iraq project (ID 3428) and one Yemen project (ID 3120) identified the evidence use in their evaluations. This evidence use practice must be encouraged in future evaluation projects by ILO.

## DESIGN COHERENCE AND VALIDITY

**Finding.** Compared to the Iraq projects, the Yemen projects aligned better with one of four main objectives in the JPR program by targeting the priority groups, including youth and women in fragile, conflict or disaster contexts.

In the section, Job for Peace and Resilience (JPR), the projects in Iraq and Yemen were examined against four main objectives in the JPR program and the analysis of the project evaluation reports.

In Iraq, the business development support services (ID 3477) had its alignment with the JPR objectives. The project was designed to meet the needs of the local community beneficiaries through skills enhancement for employment, entrepreneurship education for self-employment support, and bridges between labor supply and demand gaps for the target vulnerable groups. For example, the report (ID 3477) explained,

*The project is coherent with ILO's Employment intensive infrastructure programme (EIIP) activities which allows workers to build demand-driven skills and access private sector jobs through employment services such as job-matching and e-counselling. This includes support to national vocational training and certification systems. (p. 23)*

However, the two projects (ID 3252; ID 3428) had no evidence to explain their alignments with the JPR objectives.

In Yemen, all three projects (ID 2542; ID 2946; ID 3120) aligned with the JPR objectives. The two projects (ID 2542; ID 2946) provided employment opportunities and skills training to protect vulnerable youth from military recruitment for the civil war. The resilient livelihoods and food security project targeted building the capacities of the local communities in the conflict context. For example, the report (ID 2946) expressed, "The project implementation focussed mainly on skill building, employment, and job creation" (p. 23).

**Finding.** Yemen seemed to have better alignment than Iraq. The Yemen projects were aligned, while the Iraq projects had different levels of focus between policies and local communities.

In this section, extra-budgetary projects (XBTC) were defined as projects funded by non-ILO entities. Only one project (ID 3427) was excluded due to its funding from the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA). The analysis examined whether the five projects are as cohesive as the Iraq and Yemen programme of work.

In Iraq, two projects (ID 3252; ID 3477) appeared to be misaligned with each other. The labor governance project (ID 3252) focused on policy reform. The business development support

services focused on the improvement of the local beneficiaries. While both projects were critical to Iraq, the target objectives could have been prioritized by aligning the level of implementation: policy or local capacities. For example, the report (ID 3252) explained, "The project has a focus on development of labour inspection policy, labour inspection plan and occupational safety and health policy, as the steppingstones to the comprehensive reform and modernization of the labour inspection and creation of a preventive OSH culture" (p.21). However, the report (3477) identified, the project focused on "...the generation of jobs and support to small businesses remains a key priority to enable improved livelihoods among the target populations" (p. 23).

In Yemen, all three projects held cohesion to achieve strategic objectives in the country. All three projects (ID 2542; ID 2946; ID 3120) focused on delivering services to improve the lives of the most vulnerable groups by delivering alternative employment opportunities for war recruitment and supporting livelihoods and food security. "Under ERRY II, the task distribution was designed in such a way, that any potential overlap was avoided and the PUNOs were able to combine their particular strengths into a coherent programme" (p. 11).

## EFFECTIVENESS

In this section, the report defined ILO's support as its direct involvement in projects in Iraq and Yemen.

**Finding.** The ILO's support in the two countries influenced the achievement of their project results. The ILO supported the Iraq and Yemen programmes of work through a variety of effective approaches: extensive consultations with stakeholders and flexible adjustments of the project objectives.

In Iraq, the ILO provided its support through consultation, needs articulation and capacity-building functions in the project. In the labor governance project (ID 3252), ILO team members provided extensive consultation with its stakeholders to prepare its labor inspection assessment in the country. In the employment policy project (ID 3428), ILO made adjustments to provide support for the national agency instead of the original purpose of the project. In the business development service project (ID 3477), ILO supported the development and adaptation of training materials as well as training the staff members on the project. For example, the report (ID 3428) explained,

*Initially, the purpose of the project was to support Iraqi authorities in formulating a national employment policy. But in order to support this mission, it was deemed necessary to support the national statistical organizations (NSOs) in Iraq to develop and implement a labor force survey. Therefore, the project was designed with this logic in mind: that in order to support the formulation of a national employment policy, the ILO opted to first support the LFS development and implementation such that the policy development process can then be informed and shaped by recent labor market data and indicators, according to good practices. (p.21)*

In Yemen, the evidence is less clear, but some signs of ILO's support contributed to the desired results. In the resilience and self-reliance project (ID 2542), ILO's agility to implement the target activities in the conflict context was an important support. In the child and youth protection project (ID 2946), the ILO contributed to developing a module on socio-economic reintegration to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standard (IDDRS). For example, the report (ID 2542) stated,

*In coordination with MoTEVT, ILO assisted in rebuilding business infrastructure that showed itself to be effective and sustainable, so much so that the MoTEVT and other INGOs operating in Yemen have plans to implement similar programming based on ILO's design. (p.3)*

**Finding.** The Iraq and Yemen programmes of work progressed to achieve results on cross-cutting issues, including gender equality and non-discrimination. However, disability and environmental sustainability were achieved less than gender equality issues.

In Iraq, the ILO programmes of work contributed to the progress of the achievement results on cross-cutting issues, mainly on gender equality and non-discrimination. All three projects (ID 3252; ID 3428; ID 3477) illustrated evidence of gender equality achievements. For example, the report (ID 3428) explained,

*The design of the project was found to have taken into account the issues of gender equality and non-discrimination concerns. A main feature of the project design was its focus on collecting gender-disaggregated data and producing gender-disaggregated results and indicators. In specific, gender mainstreaming was part of the capacity building component designed for this project, for both the LFS implementation and the policy development process. (p.21)*

However, disability and environmental sustainability mainstreaming were less pronounced in the evidence from Iraq. The business development support services project (ID 3477) mentioned green business as one of the training areas. For example, the report mentioned, "The SIYB training materials at the entrepreneur and trainer level were adapted to small enterprises in Iraq...The updated materials include topics related to environment and green business..." (p. 27). No disability mainstreaming was acknowledged in these analyses.

In Yemen, all three projects (ID 2542; ID 2946; ID3120) involved gender equality and non-discrimination mainstreaming. The evidence explained that gender equality and non-discrimination mainstreaming received high priorities in the existing Yemen projects. For example, the report (3120) explained,

*Women benefited from water and health facilities projects, young men and women from cash for work and cash for assets and farmers from agriculture, irrigation and livestock interventions either directly or indirectly as the project targeted the whole community's resilience. Women IDPs also benefited from cash for work, as was illustrated from an example in AzZahrah where a female IDP established a small grocery store in her village. (p.15)*

However, disability and environmental sustainability mainstreaming were less pronounced in the evidence from Yemen. No disability mainstreaming was acknowledged in these analyses. The resilience livelihoods and food security project (ID 3120) recorded extensive evidence of environmental sustainability.

*ERRY II has had an impressive focus on environment and climate change. The project has supported climate friendly equipment and other environment friendly projects. The solar component under ERRY II has improved access to renewable solar energy in communities, which has contributed to environmental sustainability. This benefited 105,000 individuals in selected schools, health centres and districts in Hajjah, Hodeidah and Taizz. The development of solar solutions for productive assets and communities' production facilities has just started. (p.18)*

## EFFICIENCY

**Finding.** The ILO's implementation in Iraq and Yemen faced diverse challenges in cost-efficiency issues. In some cases, this lack of cost-efficiency was due to COVID-19, which delayed the project implementations in the two countries.

In Iraq, cost-efficiency issues were mainly due to projects' implementation delays by COVID-19. Two reports (ID 3252; 3428) explained that the projects were delayed due to nationwide lockdowns. The labor governance project (ID 3252) resulted in the fund deployment at the 60% level as of June 2022. The employment policy formulation project (ID 3428) explained that the majority of the planned fund was unspent due to COVID even though a portion of the fund was repurposed to meet the COVID needs. For example, the report (3428) explained,

*...the project was able to repurpose its existing financial resources in light of the COVID crisis, but ultimately, significant project funds were unspent by the end of the project. The project team was able to repurpose existing financial resources that were allocated for project missions to Iraq towards the provision of hygiene supplies and face masks for researchers to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. (p.24)*

The business development support services project (ID 3477) was able to determine its cost-saving by analyzing the project budget. The report (ID 3477) identified,

*The total amount of US\$ 2,344,706 was spent while total income reached US\$ 2,816,806, constituting 83.2 per cent of income received. This would mean that significant saving was made (US\$ 472,100). The saving can be mainly attributed to the fact that most of the activities, particularly the TOTs and coaching of the Master trainers, were conducted online. (p. 39)*

In Yemen, some attempts by the projects contributed to their cost-efficiency. Two projects (ID 3120; ID 2946) employed some cost-efficiency approaches. The children and youth protection project (ID 2946) was able to employ its strategic fund allocation approach. The resilient livelihoods and food security project (ID 3120) in-kind contribution from local communities to offset the project expenses and improve their ownership.

"Overall, the project managed to allocate reasonably well though allocations could have been more strategic across components" (p.26).

However, the resilience and self-reliance project faced efficiency problems due to the conflict. The report (2542) recognized,

*One of the major weaknesses of ILO project activities was its challenge to remain cost effective. This was primarily due to the ongoing conflict, which impacted transportation costs, stipends provided to beneficiaries, and the ability to train trainers. (p.15).*

**Finding.** The Iraq and Yemen programmes of work faced challenges in leveraging new or repurposed existing financial resources to mitigate COVID-19 effects.

In Iraq, the ILO projects attempted to leverage the existing funding resources to mitigate challenges caused by COVID-19. The labor governance project (ID 3252) included no evidence for any mitigation measures. Two projects (ID 3428; ID 3477) repurposed the existing funding toward the mitigation strategies for the pandemic. In fact, the business development support services project (ID 3477) was able to make changes to mitigate the pandemic effects on the project. For example,

*The project was efficient in adapting its interventions to Covid 19 while completing all activities as planned. Digital tools for the distance learning were successfully introduced despite the fact the ILO tools rely heavily on action-learning methods and participatory approach. The use of such digital tools has reduced the planned expenditures, resulting in savings in the project. (p. 39)*

In Yemen, evidence is unclear on the mitigation measures as a result of repurposing the existing project funding. The resilience and self-reliance enhancement project (2542) included no evidence; the report appears to be completed before the pandemic. The children and youth protection project (ID 2946) included no evidence of repurposing the project fund. The resilient livelihoods and food security project (ID 3120) explained that the project implemented some mitigation measures to respond to the pandemic effects, although no explanation on the repurposing of the project fund was included.

## IMPACT

Under the impact questions, this analysis defined the term as creating changes at the system level. The analysis also acknowledged the challenge of impact under complex conflict contexts. The severity of the conflict appeared to make differences between Iraq and Yemen in positive changes at the system level.

**Finding.** Iraq and Yemen programmes of work were severely challenged to create positive changes in the two countries even though the evidence shows some contributions to a few positive changes despite the challenges under the complex conflict dynamics.

In Iraq, positive changes at the system level were evident, although challenging to analyze. The employment policy formation project (ID 3428) established the foundation for evidence-informed policy design to create changes at the national level. The business development support services project (ID 3477) explained the strengthening of partnerships on the ground. For example, the report stated,

*This sequential logic (i.e., the development of policy only after the finalization of LFS indicators) was based on a decision made by the ILO team during implementation to halt activities related to the policy component until after the LFS is completed and its indicators finalized. The rationale behind this approach is that the development of policy should be based on updated data and indicators in order to be grounded in evidence, resulting in evidence-based policy making. (p. 27)*

In Yemen, a system change faced tremendous challenges. The first two projects on youth protection from army recruitments (ID 2542; 2946) described no evidence of system changes. Both projects expressed limited changes at the beneficiary levels. One sign of positive changes appeared in the project on resilient livelihood and food security project (ID 3120). The report described the empowerment of the local NGOs was seen as a positive change; this change might expand the changes at the systems level.

**Finding.** Evidence was available, but challenging to identify the contribution of the Iraq and Yemen programmes of work according to the ILO core principles to yield the desired results.

In Iraq, the principles were evident in different sections of the reports. In the employment policy formulation project (ID 3428), the ILO principles were evident in the relevance criterion as the report explained the project's alignment with the international labor standards and social dialogue. The business development support services project (ID 3477) stated that the project design was coherent with the ILO's principles and social dialogue. For example, the report (ID 3428) explained,

*With regards to social dialogue in specific, the project design aimed to guarantee that social dialogue among constituents take place throughout the implementation of the project through the formation of an inter-ministerial committee at the very start of the project to guide the whole process. (p.22)*

In Yemen, In Yemen, the ILO principles in the projects were difficult to analyze. The resilience and self-reliance project (ID 2542) identified the contribution of the project to adhere to the social dialogue that encouraged community participation, but this was not materialized. Two projects (ID 2946; 3120) had no evidence of the projects adhering to international labor standards and social dialogue.

**Finding.** The enhancement of partnership or financing toward the Decent Work agenda was challenging, but the evidence was visible in some projects in Iraq and Yemen.

In Iraq, a little contribution was evident to enhance partnerships toward the Decent Work agenda in the reports. In the business development support services project (ID 3477), the project contributed to the organization of the social partners, including private consulting firms and other enterprises, to implement the ILO tools in the next phase. For example, the report indicated,

*The project was able to engage a significant number of partner organizations from the public sector (MoLSA), NGOs, INGOs and the private sector...as part of the implementation of their current projects on livelihoods, job creation and support of IDPs, refugees and host communities in entrepreneurship. (p. 48)*

However, no evidence was available on partnership enhancement in the two other reports (ID 3252, 3428). The labor governance project (ID 3252) expressed the need for building a culture of evidence-informed policy designs through partnerships. No evidence was also available on financing.

In Yemen, the conflict severity of the projects seemed to influence the generation of evidence on partnership or financing. The resilient livelihood and food security project (ID 3120) illustrated the evidence of partnership enhancement. The report explained,

*ERRY II is a joint programme implemented in Yemen...by four UN agencies and their international and local NGO partners...based upon lessons learned from the preceding ERRY I...acknowledged the need to operate in a truly joint manner and strive for synergy. (p. 19)*

The two other projects (ID 2542; 2946) had no evidence of partnership enhancement. The report (ID 2946) determined the conflict dynamics as a source of challenges to enhancing partnerships in the project.

No evidence was available on financing for three Yemen projects.

## SUSTAINABILITY

**Finding.** The Iraq and Yemen programmes of work would lead to the results to sustain or integrate into other post-pandemic responses over time if sufficient resources were available.

In Iraq, the sustainability criteria were conditional that sound investment and system would be in place. The labor governance enhancement project (ID 3252) explained that the project would be sustainable in the next phase by seeking partnerships with other organizations that would institutionalize the ILO instruments. The employment policy formulation project demonstrated that the project is partnering with another ILO project to sustain its momentum. The business development support services project (ID 3477) provided similar evidence as the two projects. The project's sustainability depends on the availability of resources from its partners. For example, the report (ID 3477) stated,

*The weak sustainability of NGOs and INGOs is mainly due to the fact that they are heavily dependent on the projects funded by donors, particularly when SIYB is implemented as part of their projects. (p. 37-38)*

In Yemen, the influence of the conflict was pronounced for the potential of sustainability among the projects. All three reports (ID 2542; ID 2946; ID 3120) highlighted the ongoing conflict as a source of barriers to project sustainability. The complexity of the Yemen conflict was a challenge to ensure the sustainability of the projects in the country. For example, one report (ID 2946) explained, "The ongoing conflict and security situation could undermine the gains that the project has achieved" (p. 33). The same project also identified, "The incentives of being a child soldiers, though reduced over the years, are still strong" (p.33). The conflict is a root cause of many sustainability challenges in Yemen.

## 4. Conclusion

### CONCLUSIONS

This analysis synthesized the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab region. The analysis focused a particular emphasis on Iraq and Yemen in addition to the overall Arab region.

A specific emphasis of this analysis is the context of the regional conflicts. This analysis intended to examine the results from the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work on the foundation of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in particular countries and the Arab region.

This analysis was qualitative to formulate themes and thematic relations across the selected evaluation reports. After the quality assurance procedure and screening against the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the procedure selected 15 of 21 reports for the synthesis. The synthesis answered a set of questions proposed in the original call. Some questions were also revised or eliminated from the analysis due to duplication or a lack of evidence from the reports.

The main themes out of the 15 reports were the following. First, the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work focused on three conflict issues related to Iraq, Syria and Yemen. These projects were in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, to provide interventions on these issues. The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work also were in Jordan and Lebanon on the Syrian refugee issues.

**Relevance.** Even though some discrepancies exist across the countries in the Arab region, the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work on Iraq, Syria and Yemen, brought relevant interventions that fit into the local contexts and the needs of the local beneficiaries in the Arab region.

**Relevance.** The ILO's interventions in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria were mainly aligned with SDG Goal 8, although additional frameworks were available in the report. As the ILO's mandate, its alignment with Goal 8 is a most relevant framework target.

**Relevance.** Even though not all projects were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, the ones affected by the pandemic were flexible in reorienting their projects through the creativity and flexibility of local staff and stakeholders. No instrument for diagnostic reasons was found in the reports as originally asked by this project question.

**Design Coherence and Validity.** All three conflict issues in Iraq, Yemen and Syria were coherent and valid based on different development frameworks: Job for Peace and Resilience and the UN Sustainable Development Groups. However, ones without evidence on JPR or UNSDG frameworks need to include these frameworks to be accountable, ensure quality and learn from the project experience.

**Effectiveness.** The ILO played a crucial facilitation role in achieving the project objectives. The primary support by the ILO in Iraq and Yemen was extensive consultations with local stakeholders and flexible adjustments of the projects to meet local needs. In Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, a leading success factor was building and maintaining effective partnerships with local stakeholders.

**Effectiveness.** In Iraq and Yemen, gender equality and non-discrimination were successful mainstreaming issues by the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work. However, disability and environmental sustainability were less pronounced, with little evidence in these reports.

**Effectiveness.** The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work responded to the COVID-19 pandemic without systematic procedures to mitigate the pandemic challenges. Even though not all projects in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ones affected by pandemic faced a lack of capacity to coordinate mitigation measures due to the reduced government capacities to respond to the pandemic. At the same time, COVID-19 was a global disruption; no single individual, entity or society was prepared for the pandemic. The pandemic is a significant lesson for the ILO to consider similar disruptions in the future project design of its peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab region.

**Efficiency.** Even though the disruptive natures of the conflict contexts, the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work maintained efficiency in the Arab region overall. This efficiency depended on the location of the project implementation or size. The reports found Jordan to be the most cost-efficient, but Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen faced major cost-efficiency problems due to their instability and the severity of the local contexts. In Iraq and Yemen, the COVID-19 pandemic also affected cost efficiency. Syria, even though a challenging context, was relatively cost-efficient due to the size of the project, according to the report.

**Efficiency.** Even though not all projects were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ones affected by pandemic found different levels of cost-efficiency depending on the local conflict contexts. In Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, the projects showed flexibility to repurpose the existing fund to mitigate the pandemic by reallocating a portion to purchase public health equipment. In Iraq and Yemen, however, the projects struggled to repurpose the existing fund to minimise the COVID-19 effects. The differences between the two groups might be 1) the level of stability and security 2) the local capacity to be flexible. The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab region needs to consider this for future projects and preparation for a similar pandemic.

**Impact.** The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work to create an impact at the system level depended on the instability, severity and insecurity of the local conflict contexts. The ILO's work created positive systematic changes in the Syria conflict issues in Jordan and Syria through the development and maintenance of social cohesion and capacity building of local stakeholders. Even though the same approach was taken in Lebanon, the local instability in the country posed significant challenges to influencing positive changes through the ILO's work. In Iraq and Yemen, the severity and instability of the local conflict contexts posed critical challenges to the ILO's work to create positive systematic changes. As Iraq and Yemen evaluations were found to examine evidence of the ILO's contribution to the impact criteria, the future analysis could benefit from developing and applying conflict-sensitive evidence generation approaches to the impact criteria.

**Sustainability.** Across the countries, four (4) main factors would ensure the sustainability of the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab region: the maintenance of positive relationships with local stakeholders, the assurance of adequate funding, the improvement of local capacities and sustainability designs in future projects. In the Arab region, evidence suggested that these four factors or a lack of them, appeared to be critical for the sustainability of the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work.

## LESSONS-LEARNED

Ensure the inclusion of the international development framework in future evaluation designs. Some evaluation projects missed the generation of evidence on the international development framework, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in their methodologies. These evaluation projects without the SDGs even included the SDGs in their evaluation questions. If the evaluators were unable to identify evidence from their sources, then the evaluators would need to explain their reasons for the omissions of the indicators.

Innovate evaluation methodologies to generate evidence in conflict contexts. Some evaluations were unable to generate evidence on a few criteria in the original evaluation design due to the challenges in the conflict contexts. New innovative methods are necessary to generate evidence under complex emergencies in the future to learn from the ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The ILO's current peacebuilding and conflict prevention work in the Arab region mainly focused on three country issues: Iraq, Syria and Yemen. The first recommendation is to prioritize future projects based on the existing evidence as other countries such as Egypt, Israel/Palestine, Libya, and Turkey.<sup>3</sup>

Among the countries targeted in the Arab region, Lebanon appeared to struggle the most. The ILO's peacebuilding and conflict prevention work faced major challenges based on evidence in the country. The second recommendation would be to design an intervention specific to Lebanon to address the capacity needs of the country's partners to serve the target population: the Syrian refugees.

The COVID-19 pandemic was disruptive for everyone. The evaluations in this synthesis were unable to examine the effects of the pandemic since many evaluations occurred as the pandemic progressed. Upon the completion of this synthesis, the researcher also reviewed the ILO's report on the impact of COVID-19 on the ILO's initiatives.<sup>4</sup> ILO's future projects would benefit from integrating the learning from the report into future projects.

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3 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). (2022). *SIPRI Yearbook 2022: Armaments, disarmament and international security*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep43750.8>

4 The International Labour Organization (ILO). (2022). High-level independent evaluation of ILO's COVID-19 response (2020-22).

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