



Jordan: Advancing gender equality and supporting job creation among refugees and host communities through public works

1. PROJECT SUMMARY

The project “Employment through Labour Intensive Infrastructure in Jordan” aims to improve the living conditions of Syrian refugees and Jordanians through increased employment and better infrastructure.

The project is fully funded by The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of the Federal Republic of Germany, through the German Development Bank (KfW). The project operates in the northern part of Jordan in the Irbid and Mafrq Governorates, and focuses on (i) the improvement of rural infrastructure through the use of labour intensive methods and (ii) the improvement of employability and access to the labour market for Syrian refugees and Jordanians. The core strategy of the project is to create employment by implementing infrastructure works such as road maintenance, soil improvement and water conservation activities on farms, forestry maintenance works, rehabilitation of schools, and environmental cleaning activities in selected municipalities. Its interventions include facilitating the process of obtaining work permits for Syrian refugees, additional skill training and certification for workers having participated in the project in order to enhance future employability, and the roll out of accredited training courses for engineers, among others.

The project aims at an equal work distribution between Jordanians and Syrians, and a minimum of 10% of women and 3% of persons with disabilities among the project participants.

2. GENDER COUNTRY CONTEXT

The social context and labour market in Jordan are permeated by gender inequalities that led Jordan to have a rank of 138 out of 149 countries in the World Economic Forum gender gap analysis of 2018.¹ The female labour force participation was only 14% in 2018², and continues to be one of the lowest in the world.

Jordanian women – and Syrian refugee women to an even greater extent – are prevented from entering the labour market on an equal basis with men for a range of reasons. Factors cited in a survey by UN Women/REACH in October 2016 include: cultural, societal, familial or religious pressures (43%), a lack of job opportunities which match women’s education, skills or training (42%), unacceptable pay for women (36%), childcare (35%) and housework responsibilities (32%).³

For Syrian refugee women access to work may be further limited by reasons related to work permits, including the high cost of obtaining one, the lack of information concerning the availability and application process and the fact that work permits are limited only to a few employment sectors that are considered “male professions”. In 2017 only 5% of the work permits issued to Syrian refugees were to women.⁴



1 World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2018*, World Economic Forum, Geneva, 2018.

2 ILO modelled estimate from ILOSTAT (www.ilo.org/ilostat, accessed January 2019).

3 UN Women and REACH, *Women Working: Jordanian and Syrian Refugee Women’s Labour Force Participation and Attitudes Towards Employment*, REACH/UN Women, Amman, 2017.

4 ILO, *Standard Operating Procedures: Cash-For-Work and Employment-Based Projects in Jordan*, ILO, August 2018.

3. ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

The project has introduced various measures to advance gender equality and enhance women's participation:

- In 2016, the project developed a gender strategy to lay the grounds for efficient gender mainstreaming throughout the project cycle in order to ensure gender equality concerns are thoroughly included in implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The strategy foresees, among others, measures related to setting targets (a minimum 10% of all direct beneficiaries in EIIP interventions to be women); a gender friendly work environment to enable women to balance their domestic and care responsibilities with EIIP employment; awareness-raising to address gender stereotypes and a zero tolerance for sexual harassment/violence at work; and technical and soft skills building for women in the areas of construction, agriculture, and business management.
- The project has conducted various awareness-raising workshops in the districts, with a particular emphasis on the importance of providing employment opportunities for women and persons with disabilities.
- The Standard Operating Procedures developed by the project contain a generic principle on “measures to improve gender balance and increase participation of women”, several gender provisions with regard to specific work organization– and remuneration-related issues such as worker rotation and contracts or payments systems, and a dedicated section on gender balance.
- The project also included gender-related conditions in the Implementation Agreements with implementing ministries and contract conditions for road works. These include decent work conditions such as equal opportunities and non-discrimination between women and men in terms of access to work, and separate toilet facilities for women workers on construction sites.
- The project is currently engaged in negotiations in order to address some of the regulatory barriers to women's access to jobs: it has already managed to secure work permits for women in infrastructure-related cleaning work and is currently discussing the issue of appropriate work permits for women for further activities in the road sector with the Ministry of Labour.



Box 1: Good practice measures for achieving gender balance contained in the Standard Operating Procedures of the project

The following steps or approaches can be taken to attain an appropriate gender balance:

- Include a strong communication campaign in the project, which provides good livelihood guidance for women (highlighting their rights, opportunities and support that can be provided)
- Advertise jobs in places that women can easily access, such as community groups, UN Women Oasis Centres or ILO Job Centres
- If there are application requirements, ensure that these do not discriminate against women (in terms of language and application conditions set)
- Ensure that any terms of employment do not discourage women's participation and ensure that men and women are paid equal wages for work of equal value
- Ensure that women do not work too far from their homes and if it is feasible, provide free, safe and reliable transportation to and from the worksite
If culturally preferable, arrange for separate work-teams of women and men or identify jobs that are adapted to women's skills, training, interest and education
- Provide flexibility in the hours of work (women may have household tasks in the morning), part-time work and flexibility in the time allocated to complete a task
- Include piece-work in the implementation plan, to allow women to spend less time on the job
- Promote the use of female work-team leaders or role models, especially if this can encourage other women to participate
- Avoid requirements which can hinder promotion, such as formal qualifications for work-team leaders which are not needed if the person has the skills required
- If appropriate, specifically tailor sub-projects to provide appropriate jobs for women and/or target female headed households
- Provide free child care, child minding or after school tuition facilities – this service can be provided by one or a group of the workers employed on the project
- Provide separate on-site sanitary facilities for women where women are working outside the community (on roads projects for example).

Excerpt from: ILO, *Standard Operating Procedures: Cash-For-Work and Employment-Based Projects in Jordan*, August 2018.

4. RESULTS AND IMPACT OF GENDER INITIATIVES

Despite the challenging context, the project has achieved tangible positive results in terms of promoting gender equality and advancing the empowerment of both Jordanian and Syrian refugee women.

The project has surpassed the target of 10% of women beneficiaries, achieving 16% women worker-days since the beginning of July 2016 up to the end of November 2018.

A workers survey⁵ carried out in 2018 indicates positive impacts not only in quantitative terms, but also with regard to several qualitative dimensions:

- With regard to wages, the majority (over 80%) of workers in the survey earned more than JOD 490 (USD 691) in total compensation, and the share of workers earning more than JOD 700 (USD 987) was higher for women (47.5%) than for men (41.6%).
- In terms sanitary facilities, around 22% of workers in the sample employed in positions which require employers to provide toilets and washing facilities indicated that their employer does in fact provide mobile toilets and washing facilities, and out of those who said yes, 80.4% confirmed that the employers provides separate mobile toilets and washing facilities for men and women.
- With regard to work quality overall, the vast majority of workers indicated that they are satisfied with the EIIP job opportunity. For those who were dissatisfied, reasons for the lack of satisfaction included low pay, long working hours, not receiving their wages in full, a lack of confidence in the employer or the job itself which they perceived as “too dangerous” or “harmful”. However, almost all of those who expressed their dissatisfaction were men, whereas all surveyed women with the exception of one indicated that they are satisfied.

More broadly, the project has managed to overcome some of the deeply entrenched barriers to women's participation in public works, including through the demonstration impact that the above positive experiences generate, as well as its targeted efforts to change regulations and to incorporate gender equality provisions in public works agreements.

⁵ ILO, *Employment through Labour Intensive Infrastructure in Jordan Phase I: Workers Survey*, ILO, April 2018.

5. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A series of lessons learned have emerged from the project's work.

In terms of culture, achieving mind-set change among women, their families and communities, as well as policy makers in the relevant fields is a critical step in order to enable women to apply for work in such projects.

With regard to regulatory barriers, the project has recognised the need to try to break down prohibitive regulations, as no practical measures can enable women to work in the road sector while work permits cannot be obtained by women for a substantial share of the activities to be undertaken. The project is currently working with the government in relation to facilitating the issuance of appropriate work permits for women in various activities related to construction work, beyond cleaning.

In terms of practical workplace arrangements, in the 2018 workers survey⁶ carried out by the project, 30.1% of female workers report having experienced difficulties in their jobs, mainly due to the lack of transportation to and from the workplace as well as family obligations, indicating that addressing such practical needs might enable the project to achieve even more significant results in terms of promoting women's employment. Despite these challenges, the project has made significant progress in addressing such practical concerns. For example, work in the terracing, water cistern and forestry projects proved to be unsuitable for women because of their remote locations; to overcome this limitation, the project has advised its partner (Ministry of Agriculture) to compensate for this by employing more women in tree nurseries and hydroponic works instead.⁷

Based on the experiences of the project, a key recommendation for similar projects is a multi-dimensional approach covering mind-set change; addressing regulatory barriers; and designing and implementing a range of affirmative action and practical support mechanisms to facilitate women's employment.



6 ILO, *Employment through Labour Intensive Infrastructure in Jordan Phase I: Workers Survey*, ILO, April 2018.

7 ILO, *Employment through Labour Intensive Infrastructure in Jordan: Fourth Bi-Annual Report, January 2018 – June 2018 (Phase II)*, ILO, 2018.

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www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-intensive-investment/lang--en/index.htm