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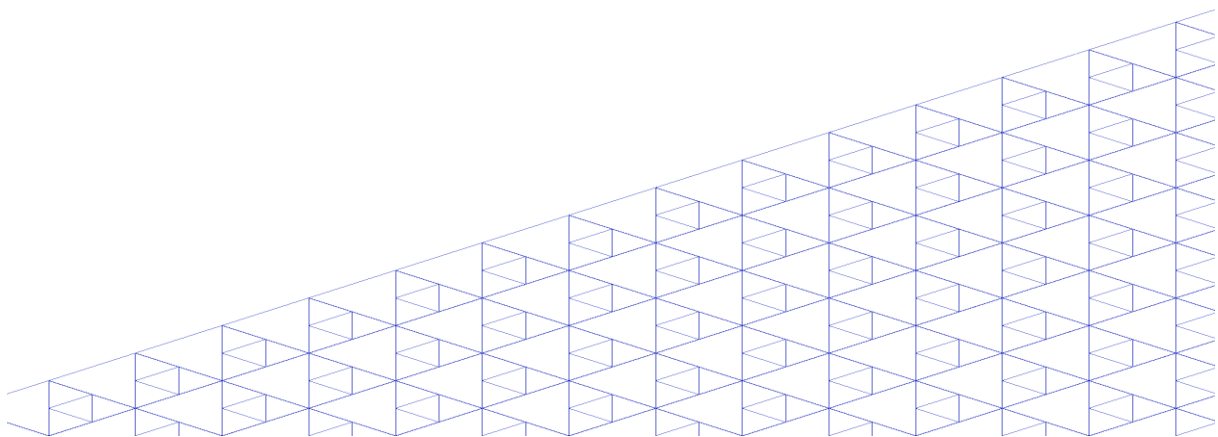
▶ ILO brief



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

September 2023

The case of Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) Afghanistan



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1. Background

▶ EIIP defined

At the forefront of ILO actions in delivering humanitarian and development assistance in post-crisis scenarios is the **Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP)**. EIIP supports countries with immediate to medium- and long-term interventions through reconstruction and rehabilitation of destroyed infrastructure and improvement of the environment and community assets, while addressing conflict drivers related to the lack of livelihoods and access to infrastructure. Ultimately, the response stimulates the economy and generates local multiplier effects and contributes to inclusive governance, sustainability, resiliency-building, and social cohesion.

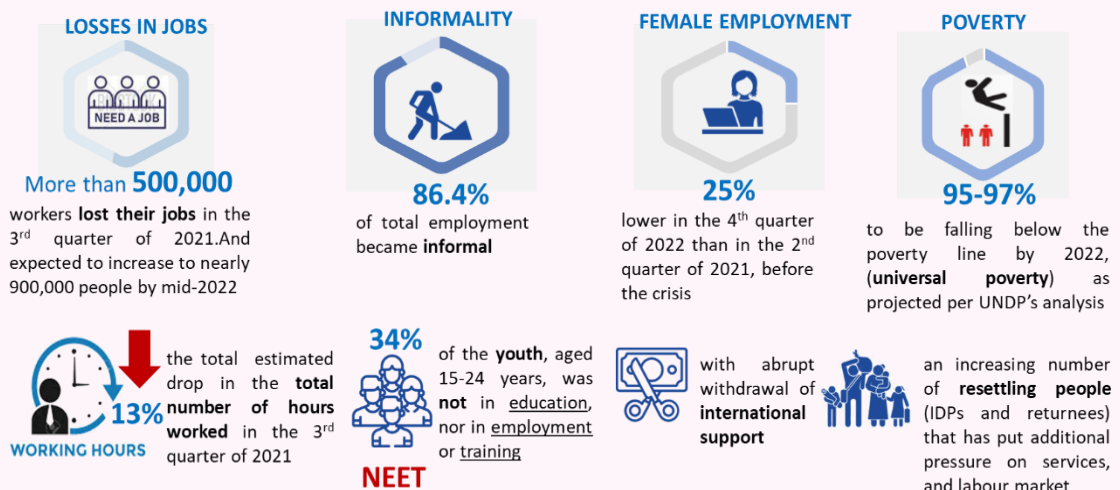
▶ HDPN defined

The international community, confronted with the increasing number of displaced persons generated by conflicts, maintains that peace building and development assistance are distinct components that entail short- and long-term actions. These got embodied in a new approach named ‘**the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus**’ (HDPN) that refers to the “interlinkages between humanitarian, development, and peace actions, with the aim of strengthening collaboration, coherence, and complementarity. The approach seeks to capitalize on the comparative advantages of each pillar – to the extent of their relevance in the specific context – to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict¹.”

▶ Country Context²

Afghanistan has witnessed decades of internal conflict, political uncertainty, and a severe humanitarian emergency, compounded in the last years by a socio-economic crisis caused by two droughts, COVID-19 pandemic as well as the Ukraine invasion. Which all led to significant challenges and limited availability of decent employment opportunities in the country, which, together with other factors as imposed restrictions on women, result in huge losses in jobs and working hours, lower labour force participation rates particularly for women, and high levels of unemployment and informality in the labour market.

KEY CHALLENGES FACING THE COUNTRY



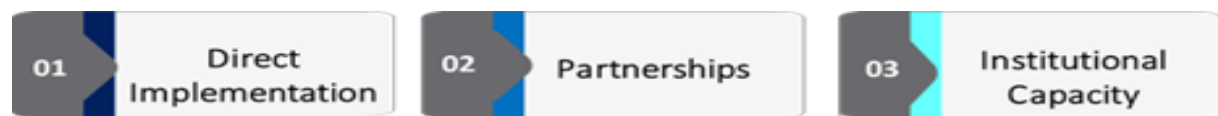
¹ Employment and decent work in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, ILO, 2021

² The latest rapid assessment in Afghanistan conducted by ILO in 2022, and [Source 2](#)

As the Afghan population continues to face unprecedented challenges, providing equal access for all young women and men to quality education and training as well as **decent and productive employment** opportunities remain a key priority for the future of the Afghan economy and society.

2. The ILO EIIP Model offered in Afghanistan

In 2022, under the framework of the DWCP programme and the UN Joint Programme ABADI, and which is funded by the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA), the ILO began implementation of the **Employment Intensive Investment (EII) approach** in Afghanistan, to play a key role in meeting both humanitarian and development needs by working simultaneously across **three dimensions**:



Through the application of EIIP in Afghanistan, socio-economic participation of vulnerable groups - amongst refugees, IDPs and host communities- is being enhanced by **direct implementation** of initiatives that deliver immediate peace dividends by creating **quality jobs**, providing opportunities for **skills acquisition and enterprise development** for longer-term prospects, and accordingly contributing to the development and maintenance of priority **quality infrastructure**.

Another core pillar of the EIIP approach is to leverage **productive partnerships** by **aligning efforts**, with private and international actors in the local market, through joint effective collaborations that support addressing vulnerabilities and increasing resilience, whilst **sharing ILO's well-rounded technical expertise** in improving **working conditions**, realizing **fundamental labour rights**, and stimulating **employment generation**.

Under the EIIP approach, the ILO engages in **core capacity-strengthening** activities for: **chambers of commerce, private sector**, and **humanitarian and development partners** to effectively plan and implement EIIPs to provide sustainable infrastructure and productive employment opportunities.

This deepened engagement with social partners and implementing partners, in terms of capacity development and involvement of local actors in the design, programming, and implementation of EIIP and HDPN strategies and solutions, is strengthening **localization**.

And to guide the procedure for labour-based projects in Afghanistan and promote labour standards and rights, **SOPs for EIIP approaches** are set as simplified guidelines for EIIP implementation based on key principles and good practices. This is anticipated to build the capacity of stakeholders to increase the labour intensity of programmes and it might be also used, at later stages, by the relevant Afghanistan labour Inspectors in charge of monitoring the legal compliance with the Afghanistan Labour Law.

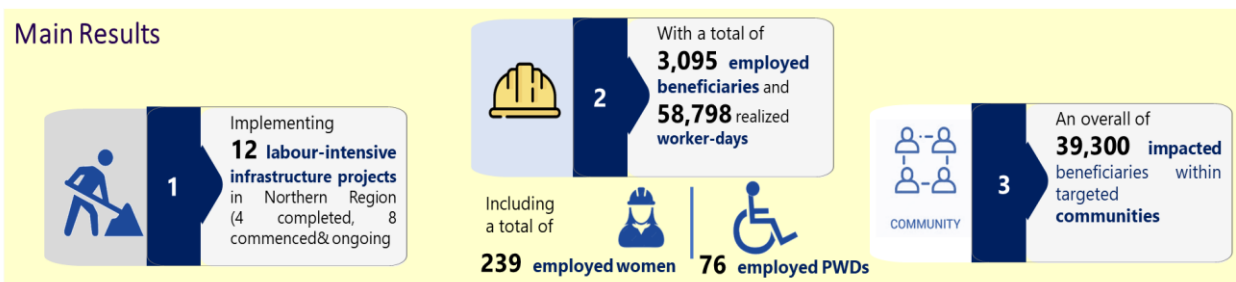
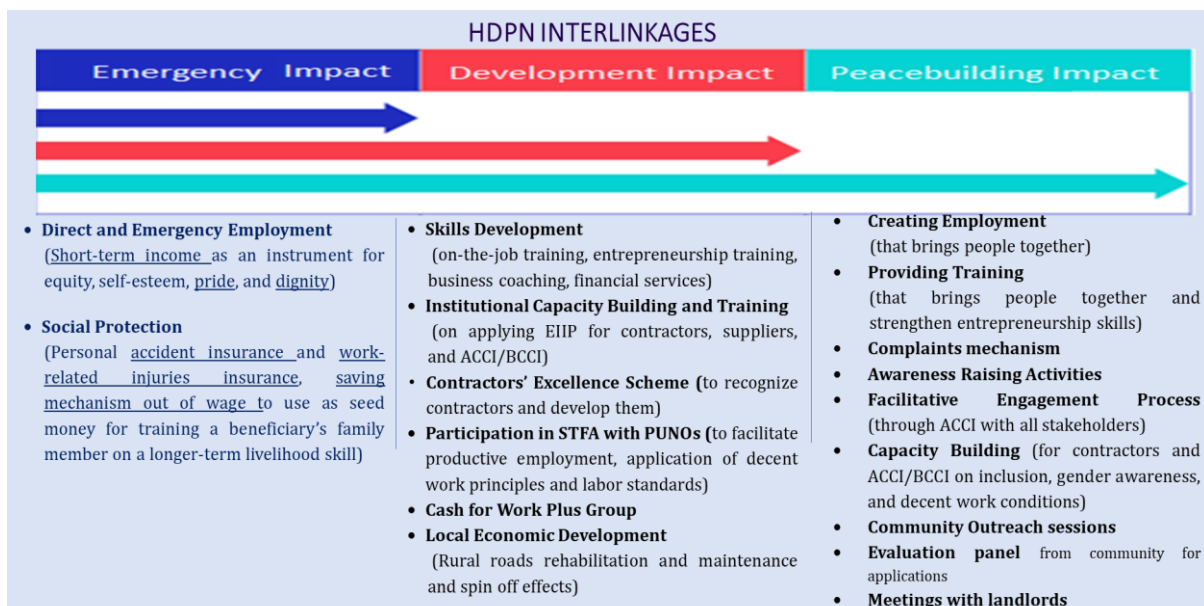
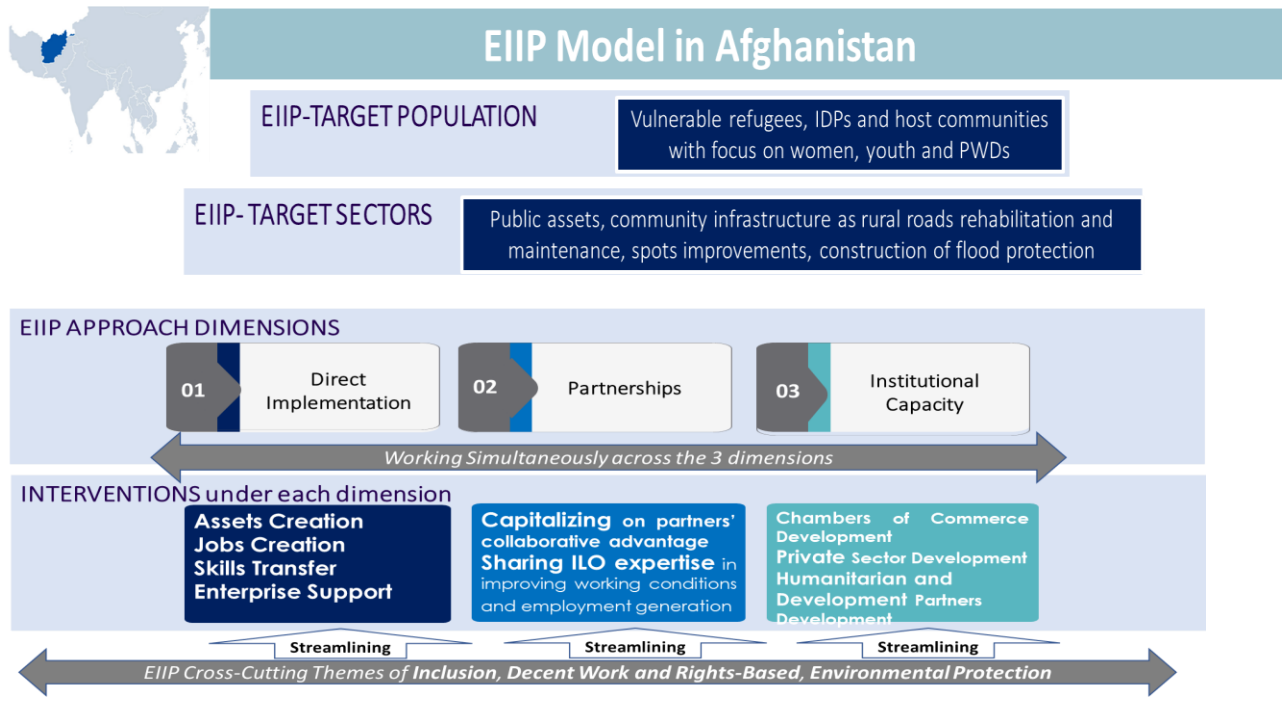


Success Story: Cash for Work Plus Working Group (CfW-WG)

Within the Northern region, the ILO is currently co-ordinating a Cash for Work Plus Working Group initiated with UNOPS, UN HABITAT, UNDP, UNWOMEN, FAO, and WFP. The working group has agreed to collaborate to identify and address common problems, share experiences and knowledge, organize joint visits and activities. One of the recent achievements of the group is setting appropriate wage levels for skilled and unskilled labour under EIIPs in coordination with the UN members of the group.



Concurrently, all **cross-cutting issues** of gender equality, social inclusion, conflict sensitivity, workers' rights, social protection, community engagement, and environmental protection are streamlined at all levels of the EIIP approach.



3. EIIP Contribution to HDPN in Afghanistan

How does the ILO EIIP approach support the HDPN?

Through the application of EIIPs in Afghanistan, the operationalization of the HDPN is being supported by addressing simultaneously both humanitarian and development needs while contributing to the attainment of peace and resilience. Most EIIP activities cover several components of the triple Nexus albeit to varying degrees. **Humanitarian** activities start with the emergency employment that provides immediate income to workers, while in parallel contributing to public assets and community infrastructure that support longer-term social, environmental, and economic development, including secondary employment effects. The contribution to **transition and development**, is characterized by its support to longer-term employment outcomes in the form of transfer of technical, enterprise and entrepreneurial skills to workers and workers' family members, private sector development, humanitarian and development partners development, climate change adaptation and environmental protection, and local economic development. Together with the humanitarian and development outcomes, EIIP actions can be also considered contributing to **horizontal social cohesion**. EIIP interventions bring people of different backgrounds together and establish contact. Ultimately, this paves the way for mutual trust, cooperation, friendships, and thus contribute to **social cohesion**.

EMERGENCY EMPLOYMENT IMPACT

EIIP supports the direct creation of decent jobs in the form of **immediate income opportunities** targeting the most vulnerable youth and women among refugee, IDP, returnee, and host community populations. Work is mostly carried out on public assets and community infrastructure addressing the immediate economic, social, and environmental needs of those affected. In addition to the **basic income security** granted for the vulnerable workers employed, EIIPs' participants are also provided with **personal accident insurance** and **work-related injuries insurance** during participation, and **social protection** in the form of seed money saved for skills training and stimulating an economic activity after the project completion.

"The school paid me 6,000 Afs, but this school closed, and we lost the only source of income as a family... then came this opportunity, I was very happy, everything was well organized, and the wages were very good, and I made 10,000 Afs in a month on the EIIP project".

An unskilled female worker on Khalid bin Walid project [Link](#)



Emergency Employment

The ABADEI-STFA ILO Programme Brings Changes to Afghans



ILO launched **EIIP Afghanistan project** in May 2022 in the **Northern region** within the blue zone in Mazar-I-Sharif, activities have expanded to rural areas of Balkh and Jawzjan provinces and seeks to expand further. EIIP distinguishes itself from Cash for Work (CfW) projects as it creates **quality assets**, promotes **productive employment** and **decent work** by promoting labour rights and standards including OSH measures, minimum wages, equal pay for work of equal value, and protection against child labour. Work will generate till end of projects realization **3,095 jobs** for vulnerable workers, **239** of whom **are women and 76 PWDs**.

TRANSITION AND DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

EIIP's contribution to transition and development, is characterized by its support to longer-term employment outcomes in the form of **transfer of technical skills** to workers either on-the-job or through entrepreneurship training, **institutional strengthening and capacity building** of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment and its local chapter and private sector contractors to employ EIIP approaches within similar construction activities while applying decent work conditions, humanitarian and development partners development, till reaching to **local economic development** by rehabilitating rural roads and providing easier and faster access to markets and basic services.

"I really thank EIIP project that made me establish my own shop business".

Juma Khan-35 Years old man from Mazar-e-Sharif [Link](#)



Skills Development Bringing Synergy with enterprise development to complement EIIP interventions to create longer-term prospects of employment, more sustainable income and enhance women participation

EIIP Afghanistan linked with its sister project, the **Roads to decent Jobs for All Afghans (R2DJ4All)** under STFA funding, seeking to leverage its existing networks, knowledge, and successes in bridging the short-term employment opportunities by longer-term **enterprise and entrepreneurial activities** of women beneficiaries through skilling, and market systems development targeted at women beneficiaries from the workers' households that initially benefited from the EIIP work component. The piloted model, that will be rolled out as the programme expands, to incorporate entrepreneurship training for women with skill, business coaching and mentoring services for women-owned micro enterprises and financial services.



Moreover, guided **on-the-job training** is provided to workers in all infrastructure projects, as a practical approach to acquire new competencies and skills needed for the job in the real working environment, through hands-on exercises on labour-based methodology, measurements, reporting, OSH, Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF), etc.

Training is provided under the EIIP for the bidding, pre-commencement, and implementation process of infrastructural interventions particularly to **private contractors'** directors, engineers, and site supervisors, to



Institutional Capacity Building

improve their capacity to function effectively and implement upcoming infrastructure works. In addition, **Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) and its local chapter (BCCI)** are engaged by ILO to serve as an interlocutor with local government by leading the selection and prioritization of proposed interventions, besides training, and providing support to construction companies.



Local Economic Development

Besides creating quality jobs for the vulnerable groups, EIIPs' interventions leverage the **infrastructure quality**, such as through rehabilitating rural roads in Mazar e-Sharif; this improved access to markets and basic services which created some income earning opportunities for business enterprises, entrepreneurs, and target beneficiaries around EIIP construction zones and the diverse value chains.

PEACE IMPACT

EIIP contributes to **social cohesion** through a variety of channels. Incorporating a **conflict-sensitive** approach combined with the prospects of immediate income from **jobs created** encourage working-aged people across social groups to communicate and interact. The **contact** helps ease the tension between the groups of different backgrounds. And the social groups' participation in EIIP activities helps break the communication barrier to address the grievances expressed during the **dialogue**. Ultimately, this enhances the sense of belonging and builds **social cohesion**.



DIALOGUE

Social Dialogue

Communities Engagement as a Priority

EIIP focuses on adopting a **'Community-Based Approach'** while designing and implementing the funded EIIP projects to help ensure communities' buy-in, enhance the sense of ownership, and minimize the risks of miscommunication and misinformation.



ACCI and ILO field team engage with the **community** from the beginning through regular **meetings**, sensitization and outreach **sessions**, and established **community development committees** and **leaders** to understand well the challenges faced by the community, the need for the intervention, and the potential impact of the intervention upon the affected population. In addition to outlining the workers' selection criteria, EIIP projects features and ESS conditions. Concurrently, ACCI and its local chapter BCCI engage with the relevant **local government** separately through regular **meetings** for planning and identification of projects.

Social dialogue is also informed by **feedback and grievance mechanisms**, where a complaint procedure is set up in place to ensure that the concerns of workers and communities are adequately addressed in EIIP projects.



Inclusiveness

Mainstreaming gender and disability

Inclusivity of EIIPs is promoted through different strategies, including by enforcing minimum **quotas** in employment and including that in **contractors' contract documents**, specifying **relevant tasks assigned** to women and PWDs, and applying conditions for **protection from harassment and violence** etc. [Link1](#), [Link2](#)



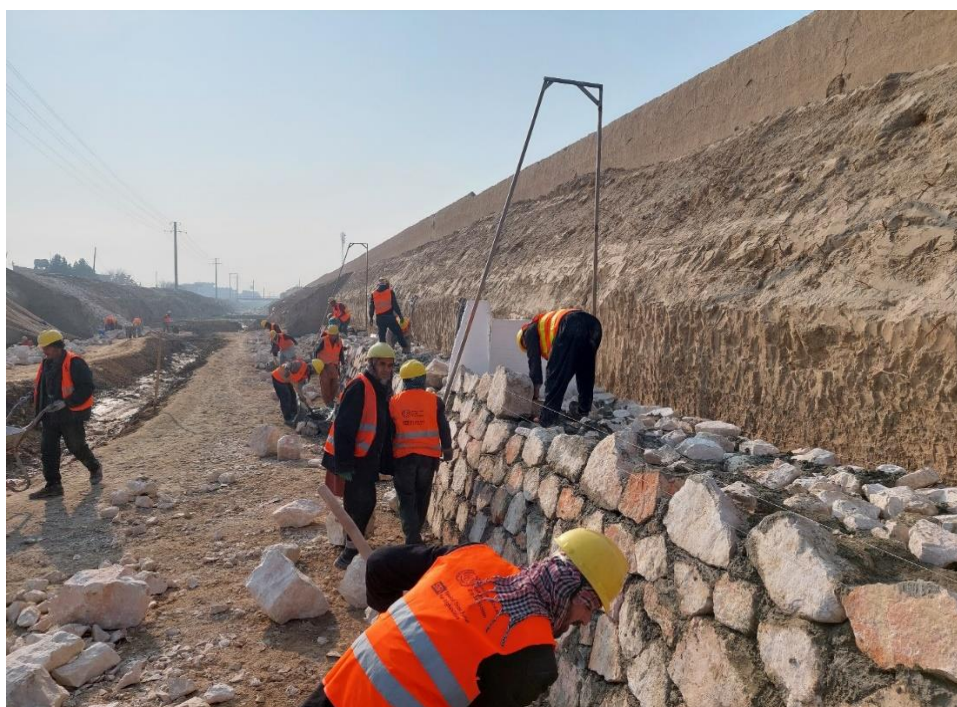
CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

EIIPs streamline a group of cross cutting themes reflecting ILO's core values and principles.

Inclusion is a key element promoted by the EIIPs in Afghanistan, and despite the restrictions prohibiting women employment, which impacted all projects intention of ensuring effective and equitable women participation, efforts are being made to effectively mainstream **gender equality** and **non-discrimination** to pave the way to more equal, peaceful, and resilient societies and ensure nobody is left behind. This is based on utilization of certain measures towards those individuals and groups made particularly vulnerable by the crises such as *minimum quota* for participation for women, refugees, IDPs and people with disabilities, *equal remuneration* for work of equal value, giving a *privilege for the women contractors* in EIIP bidding, introducing *women-only areas*, *female-only groups*, and *family targeting employment*, and innovating approaches to let women *produce construction materials at home*, and many other measures.

Decent work and rights-based approach are the second essential building blocks to be integrated throughout EIIP approach to govern the employment and implementation processes and comply with labour legislation. This is offered by ensuring a *safe working environment*, *amending workers' employment contracts* with fair terms and conditions, *empowering contractors* to ensure compliance with fundamental principles and rights at work, and *assisting partners* to promote and adopt international labour standards and decent work in the work norms and ethics of their programs.

Environmental protection and climate change adaptation is another value incorporated by EIIPs through adopting *climate resilient construction standards* which are based on environmentally friendly materials, along with applying an *environmental and social safeguard* that offset out procedures to avoid adverse impacts that may arise in EIIPs implementation, and setting *monitoring measures* to ensure compliance with safeguards and contribute to the sustainability and overall viability of EIIPs.



4. Opportunities to work across the HDPN

A series of lessons learned have emerged from the experience of implementing EIIPs in Afghanistan so far:

- ▶ **EIIP Approach and Alignment with HDPN:** The EIIP approach is a sustainable conflict-sensitive approach that is closely aligned and supportive of HDPN and **bringing in its three pillars all together**; through the application of EIIPs in Afghanistan, the operationalization of the HDPN is being supported by addressing simultaneously both humanitarian and development needs while contributing to the attainment of social cohesion and resilience. **Thus, there is a need to broaden EIIP work across the country and sectors.**
- ▶ **Innovativeness:** is always needed within fragile context as Afghanistan to develop solutions to impending challenges. Hence, there is need to explore and consult widely and adapt to local techniques and solutions.
- ▶ **Partnerships:** EIIP implementation is premised on productive partnerships with actors at national, local, and international levels that should be pursued from the early **conceptualization stage** of programmes. While bringing in ILO's experience and technical expertise, in advocating to decent work and stimulating employment generation in the local market, is considered highly essential and expected to extend the use of EIIP approaches, as a means of supporting the creation of more sustainable and productive employment. However, this requires better **coordination** between the different partners that demands good **planning, joint analysis, capacity building** for quick and comprehensive engagement, and **harmonization** of timelines, resources allocation, budgeting, and disbursement mechanisms etc.
- ▶ **Internal management systems** presented by well-established **procurement and recruitment** systems are the key towards safeguarding the integrity of the EIIP process, enabling effective and fast response, and ensuring value for money within a challenging context as Afghanistan.
- ▶ **Skills Development** is the vital step towards enhancing **long-term employability** especially with impactful upskilling and certification packages. Skills can also **transform gender relations** and promote inclusion, equal learning opportunities, and social cohesion in classroom. However, skills development should always be informed by comprehensive **assessments of the current and future needs of the labour market.**
- ▶ **Contribution to Social Cohesion** requires various mechanisms and interventions throughout EIIPs for bringing the different groups together and enhancing interaction. However, social cohesion should be applied holistically by being **mainstreamed** in programmes' strategy, design, operations, and monitoring.
- ▶ **Climate change adaptation** necessitates the **integration of the EIIP model in any climate change** response to generate jobs that conserve the environment and to support the ecosystem to withstand and adapt to climate change. This is crucial, especially that Afghanistan is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, thus, utilizing EIIP to helping communities to adapt to climate change is an area that **needs further work and collaboration with partners.**



5. Future Overall Direction of EIIP in Afghanistan

Considering the humanitarian, development and peace needs in Afghanistan, there is **potential** for EIIP Afghanistan to **expand both within the Northern region and other regions**. Thus, ILO is currently trying to build capacity by compiling and **condensing the experience and lessons learned** from the first two years of EIIP implementation. Consequently, ILO will be consolidating, expanding, and mainstreaming EI approaches by making it available to a **broad audience**. And through exploring several **joint-implementation opportunities** with various UN agencies aiming to mainstream EI concepts and get them utilized in rehabilitating **heritage sites**, executing **green works and durable solutions** for climate change adaptation and to promote **green economy** and contribute to preserving and restoring the environment and others.



There is also an increasing call for **peace and security** and **women empowerment** which the work in process can ideally respond to. Furthermore, and as part of the EIIP vision, work is in the pipeline to link EIIP beneficiaries to further **skills and enterprise support** services to enhance longer-term employment prospects, through for example sustainable **alternative finance** mechanisms, ongoing **coaching, and mentorship** support to business start-ups and construction companies even after the life of the project and others.

This would require, besides **identifying sustainable sources of financing**, initiating **evidence generation, assessments, and analyses** to inform programme design parameters and implementation modalities, along with adopting **key policies, and SOPs**. Additionally, these processes will need to go hand in hand with **core capacity-strengthening activities** both at national and sub-national levels to strengthen the ability of all partners to effectively implement the programme, potentially with support from donors, and development and humanitarian actors with expertise in these elements. Strengthen the ability of all partners to effectively implement the programme, potentially with support from donors, and development and humanitarian actors with expertise in these elements.

This brief is an extract of a full documentation report. For more information or reference to the full documentation report, please contact:

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