



# Evaluation Summary



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## Road to Jobs (R2J): Bringing decent work to rural households of the Northern Provinces in Afghanistan – Independent midterm evaluation

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** *Afghanistan*

**Mid-Term Evaluation:** *February-March 2017*

**Mode of Evaluation:** *Independent*

**Administrative Office:** *ROAP*

**Technical Office:** *ENTERPRISES*

**Evaluation Manager:** *Ms. Khadija Khondker*

**Evaluation Consultant:** *Mr. Ashiq Muhammad Rehman (International) and Mr. Samandar Mahmudi (National)*

**Project End:** *May 2018*

**Project Code:** *AFG/14/01/SID*

**Donor & Project Budget:** *SIDA (\$7,641,365)*

**Keywords:** *Decent work, vulnerable groups, rural employment, migrant worker, tripartism*

### Background & Context

#### Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project “Road to Jobs: Bringing decent work to rural households of the Northern Provinces in Afghanistan” is funded by Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and is implemented by ILO Office in Mazar-i-Sharif/Balkh province. This is a three years’ Project which started its implementation in mid-2015 and will end in May 2018.

The overall goal of the Road to Jobs (R2J) project is ‘More and better jobs in selected Northern Provinces of Afghanistan to contribute to improved livelihoods and poverty reduction. The project also aims at addressing the underlying causes of poor market systems performance in selected agricultural sub-sectors.

#### Project Expected Outcomes

- **Outcome 1:** Collaboration and co-ordination among local stakeholders for local economic development is improved;
- **Outcome 2:** The position of poor and disadvantaged groups within selected sub-sectors is improved; and
- **Outcome 3:** Access to and utilization of financial services by the farmers and disadvantaged groups improved.

#### Project Impact Indicators

- Number of people recording a positive change in working conditions and/or incomes, (disaggregated by gender/poverty status/migrant status).
- Net additional income accruing to target enterprises as a result of the program.
- The net additional employment created and sustained as a result of the program.

#### Present Situation of the Project

The project geographical scope includes two Northern provinces of Afghanistan, i.e. Balkh and Samangan, and focuses on eight target

districts in these two provinces. The project mid-term evaluation covered both the provinces, and the implementation period from April 2015 (project inception) up to February 2017 was covered by the evaluation.

### **Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation**

The main purpose of this evaluation was to assess the continued relevance of the intervention and the progress made towards achieving its planned objectives, to identify any issues, challenges, new opportunities and to recommend possible adjustments to improve the project performance.

The objective of the midterm evaluation was to identify where and how SIDA and the ILO can optimize their support to the Government of Afghanistan in the field of employment generation, with the aim to help Afghanistan create more and better jobs in selected Northern Provinces to contribute to the improved livelihoods and poverty reduction.

The midterm evaluation also aimed to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, potential sustainability and progress of implementation of the currently ongoing 'Road to Jobs' Project; to evaluate the quality of Project implementation so far; and to assess the Project's capacity to respond to the current situation and needs of the country.

Main clients of the evaluation include ILO project office in Kabul, government of Afghanistan, workers and employers organizations, ILO HQ and DWT-New Delhi, ILO regional office for Asia and the Pacific and SIDA.

### **Methodology of evaluation**

ILO's policy guidelines for results-based evaluation (2nd edition) 2012 provides the basic framework; the evaluation was carried out according to ILO standard policies and procedures. The evaluation adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards on evaluation as well as to the OECD/DAC evaluation quality standards.

The OECD/DAC evaluation criteria consisting of the relevance, the validity of design,

effectiveness and efficiency of resource used and gender integration into the project was applied. For each criterion, specific evaluation questions were developed to address the issues and concerns of the national constituents, stakeholders and ultimate beneficiaries.

A mixed method was employed in undertaking this evaluation, including; 1) Desk review, 2) In-depth interviews with stakeholders and project advisory committee, 3) Key informant interviews with project staff and consultants, and; 4) Interviews with direct (ultimate) beneficiaries.

The mixed method was recommended to ensure that data from different sources is collected to allow for quality data collection and triangulation.

## **Main Findings & Conclusions**

The project continued its relevance and responsiveness to the Afghanistan context, the need of constituents, stakeholders and the target groups. And it was aligned with government priorities by addressing a number of areas related to the government priorities; like, women rights and empowerment, development of agricultural sectors and skills development for establishing SMEs, and improving market systems and value chains. The project is also aligned with the newly defined National Priority Programs (NPPs) of Private Sector Development, Comprehensive Agriculture Development Program, and Women's Economic Empowerment Program.

The aid effectiveness principles have been taken into account by the R2J project. As indicated in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Progress Reports, the results are oriented with mutual accountability framework.

The project was being implemented in close collaboration with key stakeholders, and tripartite constituents. ILO-R2J conducted extensive consultations with all stakeholders in the provinces of Balkh and Samangan to bring them onboard and engage them in the project design, assessments, and selection of interventions and adaptation of implementation modalities.

Despite a number of uncertainties, post-conflict situation, increasing insecurity moving to the Northern provinces, the project objectives are still valid and coherent.

It was revealed that some 40-60% of outputs during the first and second year were implemented on time with achievement of 60-80% of pre-defined milestones. Based on the indicators, it is likely that majority of outputs will be achieved by the end of the project.

Two of the three outcomes that include outcome 1: Collaboration and coordination among local stakeholders for local economic development is improved; and outcome 2: The position of poor and disadvantaged groups within selected sub-sectors is improved, while the third outcome seems to be not very much valid. Outcome 3: Access to and utilization of financial services by the farmers and disadvantaged groups improved; R2J partnered with Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) to introduce eligible and interested farmers to obtain interest based loans from ADF, but farmers are not willing to receive funds due to the fact that these loans are not Sharia Compliant. Also, market distortion is another big challenge.

All project resources, including funding, human, time, expertise and other resources were strategically allocated to achieve project objectives; a detailed implementation plan for 2016 well elaborated budget and had specific allocation for each activity and objective.

ILO/R2J was also collaborating with donor funded projects working with the government like, CARD-F, NHLP, SNAPII, and SEDEP/GIZ, UNDP/Gender Empowerment and FARM/GIZ. ILO has also collaborated with Youth employment project in Kabul. ILO is also collaborating with government to finalize cotton policy.

The project conducted a gender assessment, and based on the assessment results, a gender strategy was developed and implemented. Gender was considered as a cross-cutting Theme at all the stages of project implementation and gender issues were also

addressed in the reporting. The gender disaggregated data and information is available and adequately analyzed and reported in the project documents.

## Recommendations & Lessons Learned

### Main recommendations and follow-up

1. Improve the MRM System, Conduct DCED Audit and Improve M&E Planning and Reporting
2. Periodically Measure movement towards achieving Immediate Objectives
3. Revise and improve the Project Logical Framework
4. Re-Assess Immediate Objective 3 (Outcome 3) of the Project
5. Strengthen the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Administration
6. Beneficiary selection criteria should be improved, monitored for compliance by implementing partners; and mechanism for identification of vulnerable groups should be identified and implemented.
7. Engage and Inform Stakeholders; and development and implement a stakeholders' engagement mechanism
8. Develop Realistic Plans Considering Assumptions and Risks
9. Continue Building the Capacity of Counterparts
10. Scale-up and Expand Markets System Development (MSD) Approach in other Provinces

### Lessons Learned

Main lessons learned included impressive stakeholders engagement that increased project ownership, commitment of stakeholders and sustainability. Project Advisory Committee was

a substantially effective mechanism to engage and inform stakeholders.

Moreover, capacity building of counterparts that increased their commitment and ownership of project results; engaging stakeholders in conducting assessments was also effective in building their capacities and reaching out to insecure areas where ILO-R2J staff could not travel. In addition, working through implementing partners increased the geographical reach of the project interventions and led to effectiveness and efficiency.

On the other hand, Public Private Dialogues also increased collaboration and coordination; followed by collaborative interventions with other projects that leveraged financial resources for joint interventions.