



# Job Creation for Syrian Refugees and Jordanian Host Communities through Green Works in Agriculture and Forestry

This policy brief describes a project of the ILO in Jordan to carry out Green Works and generate employment for Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities through employment-intensive investment approaches.

The intervention focuses on the construction of green community assets such as water cisterns and drip irrigation, the terracing of slopes, and tree planting to benefit local farmers and communities using labour-intensive methods to create immediate jobs.

Since 2013, 1.3 million Syrian refugees have fled their country for the Kingdom of Jordan. This rapid influx of people, accounting now for 10 percent of the Jordanian population, has put a heavy strain on communities, natural resources, infrastructure, and the local economy.

While advocating for policies that align with the Decent Work Agenda, the ILO supports the direct generation of decent livelihoods for both Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians. With a budget of about USD 4 M for Phase 1 and Phase 2, donated by Norway, and technical backstopping by the Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP), the project links decent job generation with infrastructure and environmental asset creation in communities hosting a large number of Syrians refugees in the Governorates of Ajloun, Jarash, Karak, Albalqa, and Tafila.

## Key Challenges

Despite strong improvements in human development indicators, poor growth, informality, and decent work deficits remain challenging issues in Jordan.

A 2015 ILO labour market study showed that 50 percent of Jordanians and 99 percent of Syrians were working in the informal economy. This has a negative impact on the quality of the jobs provided with possibly sub-standard wages, poor working conditions and exploitative practices, including child labour. At the same time, the increased competition for jobs has led to social tensions between Syrians and Jordanians.

These issues have been exacerbated by regional instability and climate change. As for the latter, water scarcity, droughts, and heat waves undermine in particular the livelihoods of the nation's poorest families in rural areas. The amount of water available for each person per year in Jordan has dramatically

decreased from 3600 m<sup>3</sup> /year in 1946 to 135 m<sup>3</sup> /year in 2017. Agriculture consumes the largest amount of water resources in Jordan, followed by domestic consumption.

Although the share of the labour force engaged in agriculture has declined over the past decades, 25% of Jordan's poor are still concentrated in the sector. It is also estimated that over 40% of all Syrians working under a work permit, work in agriculture.

Addressing both climate change and promoting decent work in the rural sector is critical to reaching the poorest and most vulnerable in Jordan.

## ILO's Syrian Refugee Response

In 2013, the ILO launched a strategy to support Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Egypt. In Jordan, the framework focuses on improved labour market governance, private sector development and immediate job creation for Syrian refugees and Jordanians, as well as improving agricultural production and promoting local products through value chains development.

The ILO interventions are fully aligned with the United Nations' Regional Refugee Response and Resilience Plan (3RP) for Syria and its Decent Work Agenda which promotes decent work as a key component of national development strategies and puts ILO knowledge, instruments, advocacy and cooperation at the service of tripartite constituents in a results-based framework in order to provide decent work opportunities to all women and men.

## The Project

The project aims to provide more and better employment for Syrians and Jordanians while contributing to the development of infrastructure and realizing the agriculture potential of the target areas. This is achieved through the building of water catchments to collect rainwater, soil protection works, terracing, and planting and installation of irrigation systems. The project also tackles the issue of desertification by increasing vegetation cover through tree planting.

The project differs from various earlier initiatives of cash for work in Jordan due to a special focus on both environmental protection, sustainability and decent working conditions, including occupational safety and health, worker's protection, no child labour, and equal pay for work of equal value. It also enables the creation of public, agricultural and environmental infrastructure with a long-term positive impact on rural livelihoods.

### The Employment-Intensive Investment Program

EIIP supports ILO member States in the design, formulation, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programmes aiming to address unemployment and underemployment through public investment, typically in infrastructure development.

EIIP is part of the ILO's Employment Policy Department and has evolved over the past 40 years from a series of labour-intensive infrastructure programmes to a comprehensive and integrated package of interventions which contributes to both the provision of improved and climate resilient infrastructure, and the creation of decent jobs. EIIP influences public investments to become more employment-oriented through knowledge development, capacity building, and technical advisory services at policy, institutional and operational levels.

### Project Implementation

After an implementation agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture was reached, and agreements with cooperatives were signed, technical committees were established in Ajloun, Jarash, Karak, Albalqa, and Tafila consisting of technical members of the Ministry of Agriculture, along with ILO members. Throughout the project, continuous training and coaching are provided to the technical committees and local contractors to build capacity on employment-intensive methodologies, respect do no harm principles, inclusive workplaces, and gender. Awareness sessions on occupational health and safety and social security are also organized.

At each step of the project, the local ILO team provides technical backstopping and supervises the infrastructure work that is performed by the Ministry of Agriculture as the contracting agency.

The project uses so-called local resource-based approaches to build and maintain infrastructure, which combine local participation in planning with the utilization of locally available skills, appropriate technology, materials and labour-based work methods.

### Achievements

The project successfully introduced and demonstrated the effectiveness of local resource-based approaches and local participation in planning, utilization of locally available skills, appropriate technology, materials and work methods, for infrastructure and agricultural works. Through better wages and better supervision, the project achieves significant work outputs, increased productivity and better quality of work.



**Terraces building in Albalqa governorate**

With 30,000 immediate workdays generated for 800 Syrian refugees and Jordanians, Phase 1 one of the project exceeded the planned total workdays and income generation.

The infrastructure built and the reforestation work will have a direct impact on reducing the intensity of water usage in the sector thus offsetting pressure on the limited water resource base. Local farmers will benefit from the construction of water cisterns, soil terraces and drip irrigation installation.

The construction workers receive skill development training on green infrastructure works, improving their employability. The



**Water cisterns and tanks in Alkarak**

ILO is also creating a database referencing workers who worked on the project to match them with employers through ILO's eleven employment centres. This supports the creation of longer-term employment opportunities.

New income-earning opportunities in the agricultural sector, might be generated as farmers mitigate land desertification and increase productivity by developing sustainable and weather-resilient agricultural practices to anticipate a higher rate of extreme weather events.



Phase II of the project is targeting three more governorates; Zarqa, Madaba, and Ma'an and will generate 45'000 workdays for 1000 Syrian refugees and Jordanians. Fruit trees seedlings will be distributed to farmers who will also benefit from the construction of water cisterns.

In the intervention area, better social cohesion among Syrian refugees and Jordanians inside the host communities has been observed. Competition between the two groups was mitigated through social dialogue. A complementary piece of research is being carried out which will provide further insight into improved social cohesion in the target communities.

Through collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the ILO was able to foster dialogue and insert itself in discussions to finalize Jordan's National Adaptation Plan. This engagement will support policy coherence and align employment with environmental objectives.

### Green Works

Green Works refers to infrastructure and agricultural and forestry works at the community level that have direct agricultural or environmental benefits or are in response to a specific environmental context such as changes in climate and extreme weather events.

Forests and trees provide many different services and the importance of reforestation and forest protection are significant to mitigate the effects of climate change and improve the resilience of agricultural systems. Reforestation create job opportunities and is a good example of Green Works



Reforestation work in Ajloun governorate

### Takeaways

The project enables increased agricultural production with productivity gain through water and soil conservation, as well as the expansion of arable lands, the project also increases green areas through forest trees planting

Dialogue with local partners is key to identify best practices locally, then coordinate and reinforce activities (e.g. use of machines to extend terraces, and, active delivery of agricultural extension services for farmers).

The participation of local government entities is critical for implementation and to ensure local ownership and sustainability.

Technical support and networks are necessary to exchange lessons and to provide peer support, between local directorates for forestry and within farming communities.

Decent working conditions increase motivation, commitment and productivity.



Installation of an Irrigation system in Jerash Governorate

### Local Resource-based Approach and Public Investments

Public investment programmes represent key government policy instruments to promote employment opportunities and pro-poor growth.

Local resource-based approaches use a cost-effective mix of labour and equipment that gives a higher priority to labour, supplementing it with appropriate equipment only where necessary for reasons of quality or cost. This approach has been successfully used for construction, improvement and maintenance works without increasing costs or compromising quality.

The process optimizes the use of local resources in general increasing social and economic impact by ensuring that investments are channelled through the local economy. This in turn, maximizes the long-term impact of investments by creating local job opportunities and stimulating local markets, entrepreneurship and community participation. It also represents an effective approach to reduce dependence on foreign imports of equipment and material.

## Key ILO resources

Employment Intensive Investment Programme – Creating Jobs through Public Investment. ILO 2018

Capacity Building for Contracting in the Construction Sector. Geneva, Employment-Intensive Investment Programme. 1999

Employment-Intensive Investment In Rural Infrastructure for Economic Development, Social and Environmental Protection and Inclusive Growth. Geneva, International Labour Office. 2015

Local Resource-Based Approaches for Infrastructure Investments – Source Book. Employment-Intensive Investment Programme, Advisory Support Information Services Regional Programme for Africa. 2009

The ILO Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis, ILO. 2018

Job creation for Syrian refugees and host communities: Employment Intensive Investment strategies in Jordan and Lebanon, ILO 2018

Decent Work and the Agriculture Sector in Jordan: Evidence from Workers' and Employers' Surveys, ILO, 2018

Lessons Learned and Emerging Good Practices of ILO's Syria Crisis Response in Jordan and Lebanon, Beirut, 2018

Final Evaluation Norway project – Jordan. ILO 2018

Local Investments for Climate Change Adaptation, ILO Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, Bangkok. 2011

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