



EMPOWERING ILO CONSTITUENTS TO DEVELOP SOLUTIONS TO AFGHANISTAN'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES

REDUCING FRAGILITY MULTIPLIERS: IMPACTS AND SUCCESSES OF
ITCILO CAPACITY BUILDING FOR ILO CONSTITUENTS

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Reducing fragility multipliers: Impacts and successes of ITCILO capacity building for ILO constituents

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SUMMARY OF PROJECT FOCUS

The Project '*Promoting rural youth employment in Afghanistan through Entrepreneurship education and Vocational training*' is a capacity development initiative facilitated by the ITCILO and financed by the Government of Norway under the Norway-ILO Programme Cooperation Agreement 2018-2019. Reflecting global practices in countries affected by fragility, the Project aimed to strengthen the institutional capacity of ILO constituents, social partners and other stakeholders in Afghanistan to tackle youth employment challenges through appropriate policies and programmes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE CHALLENGE AND THE ITCILO APPROACH.	5
EXPERIENCES OF THE ITCILO APPROACH.	6
LEARNING IN SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION	7
SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN ACTION AND CONNECTING CONSTITUENTS' CAPACITIES	8
GETTING TO KNOW THE LOCAL CONTEXT.	9
WHERE TO FROM HERE...	9
BIBLIOGRAPHY	10
List of interviewees	10
FIND OUT MORE...	10

THE CHALLENGE AND THE ITCILO APPROACH

Afghanistan has been affected by political instability, violent conflict and socio-economic crisis for decades. The conflict has had a negative impact on the economy and the livelihoods of Afghan women and men. It has contributed to poverty, unemployment and capacity constraints in supporting economic and social development. With 610,000 refugees returning home to Afghanistan in 2017 alone (IOM & UNHCR, 2017) and 400,000 people entering the labour market annually, the country's ability to meet the increasing demand for employment is limited. Particularly, youth unemployment is on the rise in Afghanistan, where, in 2017 over 42 percent of young women and men were not in education, employment, or training (ILO, 2019). These factors, together with weakened institutional capacity and legitimacy, have made developing and implementing consistent and commonly shared strategies for youth employment and entrepreneurship challenging for policymakers.

Underlying the ILO's work in fragile states is the importance of self-driven change and adaptation in promoting decent work. ILO constituents (Ministries of Labour, Employers' and Workers' organisations) play an important role in promoting youth entrepreneurship and employment. However, in crisis situations they can lack the knowledge, skills, tools, political legitimacy and trust to develop and implement coordinated approaches. To address some of these capacity gaps the ITCILO designed and implemented a 1-year, 8 module training programme to support constituents to:

- Increase the knowledge of key concepts relating to youth employment policy with an emphasis on situations of fragility;
- Improve the capacity of constituents to participate actively in formulation of gender-sensitive employment policies;
- Improve constituents' capacity to implement employment policies through action plans;
- Enable constituents to advocate, coordinate and integrate employment policies in national development strategies.

ILO Constituents in Afghanistan

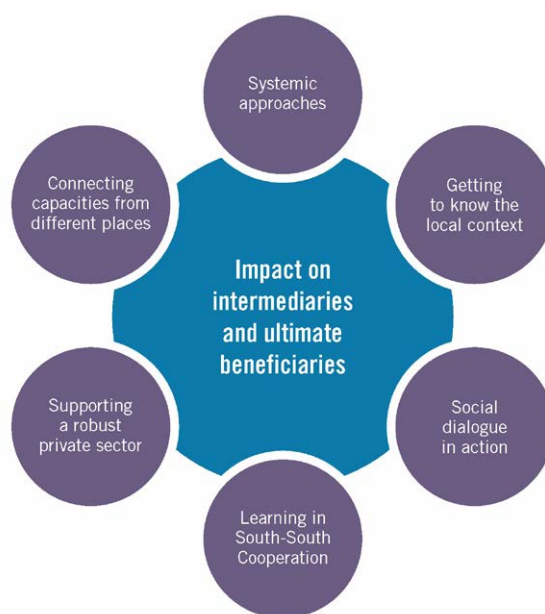
Government: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD)

Workers Organisations: The National Union of Afghanistan Workers and Employees (NUAWE)

Employers Organisations: Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI)

The ITCILO's capacity building programme was based on the ILO's framework for promoting employment and decent work for peace and resilience. It focused on policy development and practical tools in the promotion of youth employment in fragile situations (ITCILO, 2012). This case study looks mainly at the impact of the ITCILO 1-year, 8-module, training programme on ILO constituents in Afghanistan (Employers' Organisations, Workers' Organisations and Ministry of Labour). Figure 1 illustrates the elements applied by ITCILO to strengthen the capacities of ILO constituents to stimulate more responsive youth employment and entrepreneurship programmes.

Figure 1: ILO constituents – ITCILO capacity building elements with most impact



EXPERIENCES OF THE ITCILO APPROACH

The 8 module training aimed at building up capacities of ILO constituents for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of effective national employment policies and other related subjects. It was structured as a learning journey that blends eight face-to-face modules with distance-learning activities. The training was learner-centred and highly participatory, and used various learning techniques to facilitate a collaborative build-up of knowledge and experience-sharing among participants. This included lectures, case studies, role plays, debates and interactive group exercise, in addition to study visits over several weeks of the programme promoting south-south collaboration with India.

Throughout the programme a distance-learning component has linked each face to face module to the next by means of distance-learning activities administered through a dedicated e-learning platform. Participants have extensively used the e-learning space to complete the assignments, to share ideas, challenges, good examples and practices, and to explore through creative thinking how such challenges could be addressed in a innovative way.

Over the training participants were required to work in groups, under the guidance of a tutor, to design and develop a project on topics related to the contents of the training and connected with their daily work.

The support for constituents has strengthened their understanding and skills in good governance, managing socio-political risks, reducing socio-economic inequalities and to keep mitigating the factors that drive fragility. The 8-module training programme has built the capacity of constituents to use their knowledge and skills to self-organize and act, resulting in an improved ability to plan, decide, and engage collectively for better service provision for youth employment in Afghanistan. A representative from the National Union of Afghanistan Workers and Employees (NUAWE) suggests the training programme has allowed the organisation to move “from a place of fragility to resilience”.

LEARNING IN SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION



Learning from others during the training programme (between participants, trainers and through the South-South collaboration) was transformative for all the constituents and was key to the programme’s success. For example, South-South collaboration allowed the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) and Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) to share experience and approaches with their counterparts in India. One area that was particularly favorable for ACCI and BCCI was to see the benefits and approaches to promoting gender equality and observe the impacts of reduced socio-economic inequalities.

“It was a great exchange programme between us and people in India”, says Mr. Parwiz Ahmad Faizi from Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD). The participants of the 8 module training programme were able to observe the challenges India faces with gender equality and youth unemployment and the impact of the applied solutions. Mr. Ebadullah Ahmadi indicates that the training and exposure have increased the MoLSAMD’s capacity to implement gender training and to mainstream gender into the implementation of government policy, thereby strengthening the criteria for inclusive governance. “Wherever I go, it (gender) is now with me, so whenever I design a project, I have to consider this – this knowledge came from the ITCILO project”.

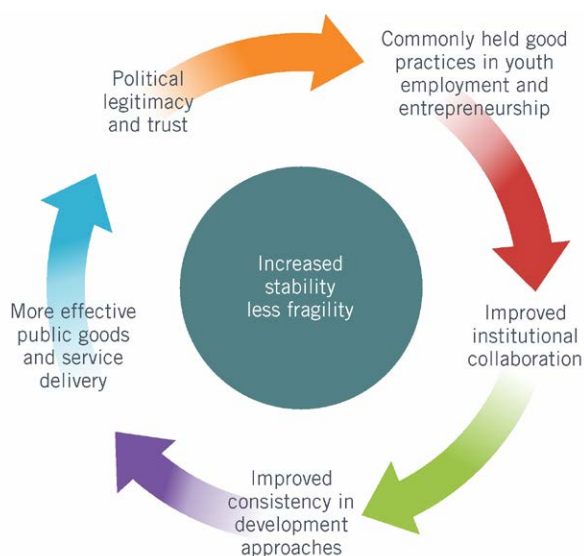


SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN ACTION AND CONNECTING CONSTITUENTS' CAPACITIES

The capability to establish supportive relationships, to create and manage linkages and partnerships with others in order to leverage resources and actions and build legitimacy, in the eyes of key stakeholders is an important factor in reducing fragility (Berkenhof, 2007).

Figure 2 illustrates the virtuous cycle that the ITCILO capacity building programme stimulated in Afghanistan. It shows how the ITCILO worked to develop a shared understanding of good practices in youth employment and build the constituents' ability to cooperate, improve public goods/services and encourage political legitimacy. The ITCILO South-South collaboration and learning built the participants' capacity to consider different viewpoints between 'economy and labour', which encouraged better labour market analysis and resulting employment and entrepreneurship development policies. Participants were able to observe and share the impact of these policies in other contexts.

Figure 2: Connecting capacities: a virtuous for reducing fragility



Ms Fatema Kashefi, from the MoLSAMD, indicated that her knowledge of the importance of social dialogue and the need for public and private sectors to work together has substantially increased. The training allowed her to see the value of balancing different interests through dialogue and the benefits of expertise in social, environmental, labour and economic analysis in these discussions. Parwiz Ahmad Faizi, previously with the MoLSAMD, says he used the knowledge gained from the training to technically

advise on labour rights, gender-based policies, and monitoring in a new position in the Ministry of Finance, thereby strengthening decent work principles across government departments. On a personal level, two of the government representatives, indicated that the programme has been extremely beneficial to the extent that they are now pursuing complementary labour economics Masters Degrees. Both representatives aim to further develop their skills and improve the situation of young women and men through their work.

GETTING TO KNOW THE LOCAL CONTEXT

The learning that had the biggest visible influence in the work of all the constituents is in their understanding of the Afghan-specific challenges in youth unemployment, migratory flows and the impact of emigration of qualified youth on the economy. The 1-year training programme has built capacities of constituents to develop analytical research and assessment frameworks in youth employment and entrepreneurship that will support the country to break out of fragility cycles. The constituents stress that these frameworks have assisted in designing programmes based on analysing local context and implementation through local relationships. Mr. Ebadullah Ahmadi from the MoLSAMD says: “I am very comfortable to identify and design a project now whereas I wouldn’t have been before (the ITCILO training)”. He also now supports his department by writing concept papers for skills development projects with confidence. After the 1-year training programme, the MoLSAMD, ACCI, BCCI, NUAWA all have developed entrepreneurship and skills projects and programmes (collaborating with other constituents, partners and donors) which focus on youth. The youth employment programmes resulting from the ITCILO capacity building in Afghanistan are all in different stages and have differing nuanced approaches, however at the core, they all benefit from the use of ILO knowledge, methodologies and tools.

WHERE TO FROM HERE...

Although the long-term impacts of the 1-year, 8 module, and training programme will be visible in the coming years, the anecdotal evidence obtained reflects substantial results in empowering constituents to be able to develop and deliver sustainable solutions for youth unemployment. These positive gains would become increasingly sustainable if the scope of the capacity building interventions could include more individuals from constituents as well as other key partners such as other ministries and non-governmental organisations working in youth employment.

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List of interviewees:

- Mr. Ebadullah AHMADI: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled
- Mr. Ahmad Nawid BARAT: BCCI
- Mr. Parwiz Ahmad FAIZI: National Skills Development Program, Communication Specialist
- Mr. Mohammad Nabi HAKIMI: ACCI
- Mr. Nasir Qasimi: CEO BCCI
- Mr. Masoud Saqib: SIYB Company: Mazar i Serif
- Mr. Tamim: NUAWE
- Mr. Habib: NUAWE
- Ms Fatema KASHEFI: MoLSAMD

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The ITCILO provides training and related services that develop human resources and institutional capabilities contributing to achieving the ILO's goal of decent work for women and men.

Visit our website if you want to find out more on how the ITCILO works to contribute to peace building, national reconciliation and social cohesion through employment generation and decent work opportunities for women and men in conflict-affected and disaster prone countries.

INFO

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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