



# SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A MECHANISM TO EMPOWER FORCIBLY DISPLACED WOMEN AND MEN IN AFGHANISTAN

BUILDING CAPACITIES FOR THE ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION  
OF VULNERABLE BENEFICIARIES



# SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A MECHANISM TO EMPOWER FORCIBLY DISPLACED WOMEN AND MEN IN AFGHANISTAN

Building capacities for the economic  
reintegration of vulnerable beneficiaries

## **Case Holders:**

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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
IMPROVING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY FOR POLICY APPROACHES TO MIGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT. . . . .	6
BUSINESS TRAINING AND MENTORING FOR ECONOMIC INCLUSION. . . . .	7
THE IMPACT OF THE ITCILO PROJECT ON MS SULTANI A RETURNING REFUGEE. . . . .	8
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	10
List of interviewees . . . . .	10
FIND OUT MORE... . . . .	11

## THE CHALLENGE AND THE ITCILO APPROACH

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Afghanistan has been affected by political instability, violent conflict and socio-economic crisis for decades, which has had a negative impact on the economy and the livelihoods of Afghan women and men. The conflict has resulted in population displacement, poverty, unemployment and severe institutional capacity constraints in supporting economic and social growth and development.

It is estimated that over the last forty years, 33 percent of the Afghan population, or one in three (i.e. 12 million) Afghans, have been forcibly displaced, either internally or externally, by war or its socio-economic consequences (MoRR, 2018). Afghan mobility is fluid and complex, with intersecting channels of emigration, regular and irregular immigration, circular movements, forced internal and external displacement and refugee movements (IOM & UNHCR, 2017).

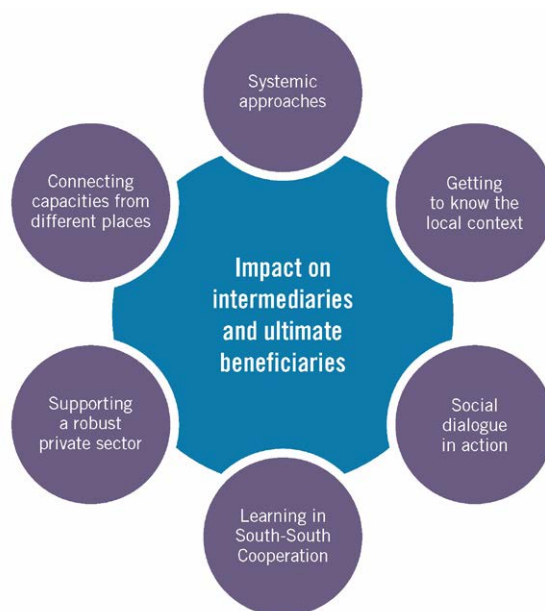
One of the factors that increases fragility is population movements. This combined with other contributing drivers in Afghanistan such as climactic events, socio-political instability (unemployment and low political trust) and socio-economic inequalities (poverty, gender inequality and child labour) multiply fragility. The worsening of one fragility driver exacerbates other factors simultaneously. Despite a fragile security situation in many parts of Afghanistan, as well as complex socio-economic and political challenges, between 2002 and 2018 over six million Afghans returned to the country (UNHCR, 2018). As returnees seek to reintegrate and create a livelihood for themselves there is an increasing need for support from the government and humanitarian actors.

### Fast Facts

- Estimated 2 million conflict induced, and drought affected IDPs are displaced across Afghanistan (new and protracted) (UNHCR, 2018).
- Some of the primary reasons for returnees returning back to Afghanistan relate to employment opportunities, reunion with family and incentives to return home (IOM & UNHCR, 2017).
- In 2017 over 619,000 Afghans returned from the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan (MoRR, 2018).

The ITCILO project took a two-pronged approach in developing the capacity of constituents to be able to support the economic reintegration of forcibly displaced women and men. Working on both an institutional and entrepreneur level. The figure below illustrates the elements applied by ITCILO to strengthen the capacities of ILO constituents and business development service providers for economic reintegration of forcibly displaced women and men.

### Elements with most impact for Migrants and Refugees



## IMPROVING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY FOR POLICY APPROACHES TO MIGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT

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The ITCILO project built institutional capacity to support constituents in developing and implementing policies that create an enabling environment for private sector development (social dialogue in action). During a 1-year, 8 module, training programme tailored by the ITCILO for Afghan constituents, participants attended sessions on a wide array of topics, among which exploring issues and policy approaches to migration and employment. **The training programme also included South-South dialogue** on skills and migration practices with special sessions for sharing experiences and perspectives from South Asia and the Middle East. The exchanges were an opportunity to share information on relevant programmes, identify common challenges and responses, and develop interventions for consideration at country level.

## BUSINESS TRAINING AND MENTORING FOR ECONOMIC INCLUSION

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Promoting entrepreneurship and livelihoods is increasingly viewed as an effective approach to overcoming some of the challenges of economic and social inclusion for migrants and internally displaced people (UNCTAD, 2018). The ITCILO project has been promoting enterprise development (private sector development) as a strategy to address some of the barriers refugees face when engaging in economic activity. Facilitated by the ITCILO project, the methodology of the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) package was key in mobilising, training and developing market linkages for 1,300 entrepreneurs (See box 1 for SIYB description). By coordinating with ILO constituents and other stakeholders the ITCILO project identified displaced people who would benefit from enterprise development training. The project:

- Purposefully included displaced people based in Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif into SIYB training activities.
- Supported the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to roll out SIYB training directly in Herat Province, Western Afghanistan.

### ILO Constituents in Afghanistan

**Government:** Ministry of Labor, 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 migrants and refugees who started their businesses with the support of ILO constituents and SIYB training reveal increases in confidence, acquisition of new skills and access to enterprise support networks as a direct result of the capacity building process. The entrepreneurs have seen visible impacts in growth, turnover and job creation in their businesses. The beneficiaries of the ITCILO project display positivity about their future and opportunities in Afghanistan and show that with the right support displaced women and men can start and grow businesses in fragile states.

## THE IMPACT OF THE ITCILO PROJECT ON MS SULTANI A RETURNING REFUGEE

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*The SIYB “boosted and skilled me”*

*Ms. Massoma Sultani’s Mushroom Cultivation*

Ms. Massoma Sultani left Afghanistan with her husband and 5 children as a refugee to Iran. Whilst living in refugee camps in Iran she learnt how to preserve vegetables from other women. This new skill sparked her interest in agriculture and agri-processing. When she returned to Afghanistan to rebuild her life, and with the preserving knowledge she had learnt in the Iranian refugee camp, she started to explore her options in agriculture. She realized quickly that there was an increasing demand for mushrooms by hotels, restaurants, and by private households. Mushroom cultivation is supported by the Afghan government as they are nutritious, easy to grow and require lower levels of start-up capital. They are a viable crop for Afghan women farmers to cultivate in their kitchen gardens or within their household compounds, contributing to the livelihood of their vulnerable and food insecure households.

For Ms Sultani, learning about mushroom cultivation came with a steep learning curve. Her business start-up failed twice, once in 2015 and subsequently in 2017. In 2018, she heard about the SIYB training while at an agricultural exhibition and enrolled. Through the training she not only learnt business skills, through mentoring she also gained knowledge and insight about the agricultural equipment and processes needed to help her make her business sustainable.

The training gave Ms Sultani the capacity to better plan and cost her business idea. It gave her the confidence to reach out to those involved in the industry and research better farming practices. She developed a list of equipment requirements (to increase productivity of the mushroom farm) and through the NRC she applied for and received an equipment grant. Since receiving the equipment and applying the lessons learned from SIYB, her business has been growing, she is making a profit and has created 3 jobs. She is also assisting the Afghan government to train other women in mushroom cultivation. The SIYB training was the missing link for her to better understand her business needs and to use her networks to raise the capital required to establish and grow her business.



## The SIYB Programme

The SIYB programme is structured into different separate training packages, which are designed to respond to the progressive stages of business development (ILO, 2019). In the case of the entrepreneurs supported in Afghanistan the following packages have been used, namely:

**Generate Your Business Idea (GYB)** is intended for people who would like to start a business, and who, through the training, develop a concrete business idea ready for implementation.

**Start Your Business (SYB)** is for potential entrepreneurs who want to start a small business and already have a concrete business idea. The programme is a combination of training, field work and after-training support, and helps participants assess their readiness to start a business and to prepare a business plan and evaluate its viability.

**Improve Your Business (IYB)** introduces already practising entrepreneurs to good principles of business management. Its six modules (marketing, costing, buying and stock control, record keeping, planning for your business, and people and productivity) can be taught individually or all combined in a full course of SIYB.

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### List of interviewees:

- Ms. Massoma Sultani

## FIND OUT MORE...

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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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