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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

Francis Watkins
Kimiko Hibri Pedersen
[Name protected]

Evaluation of ILO Road to Jobs (R2J), Afghanistan

Final Report

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Authors: Francis Watkins, Kimiko Hibri Pedersen and [Name protected]

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SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Address: SE-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm
Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64
E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: http://www.sida.se

Table of contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAED	Adopt, Adapt, Expand and Respond
	[Name protected]
DCED	Donor Committee for Enterprise Development
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LED	Local Economic Development
MRM	Monitoring and Results Measurement
MSA	Market Systems Analysis
MSD	Market System Development
PACA	Participatory Appraisal for Competitive Advantage
R2J	Road to Jobs
RMA	Rapid Market Assessment
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SLRC	Sustainable Livelihoods Research Consortium
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference

Preface

This assignment, an Evaluation of ILO Road to Jobs (R2J), was commissioned by the Afghanistan Unit at Sida through the framework agreement on evaluation services. The evaluation has been conducted by a team from NIRAS consisting of Francis Wat-kins, Kimiko Hibri Pedersen and [Name protected]. Kristoffer Engstrand managed the evaluation process from the head office, and quality assurance was conducted by Niels Dabelstein.

The evaluation was undertaken June through October 2018. It included a two-week field visit to Afghanistan and was complemented by further interviews and document reviews.

We would like to thank Sida, ILO and other stakeholders for allocating the time to speak to the evaluation team and for the openness to provide information and participate in frank discussions.

Executive Summary

The objectives of the evaluation were to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the project and formulate recommendations on how to improve and adjust implementation and to serve as an input to the decision to whether the project should receive continued funding or not. The evaluation questions proposed were organised into three overarching questions, which were drawn from the questions suggested in the terms of reference, broadening the relevance and effectiveness questions in scope:

- To what extent is the programme and the project interventions still relevant?
- To what extent are the programme outcomes likely to be achieved?
- To what degree are the project results likely to be sustainable beyond the project's lifetime at the levels of individuals, enterprises and market system?

The evaluation consisted of three phases:

1. Inception phase, June to August 2018, which included a detailed document review that was used to develop the evaluation questions, a theory of change and a stakeholder analysis to guide the field visit;
2. Data collection phase, August and September 2018, which included interviews in Kabul and field visits to Samangan and Balkh provinces to meet with partners and beneficiaries and to interview provincial stakeholders;
3. Data analysis and reporting phase, September and October 2018, to analyse the data and to prepare the evaluation report.

The ILO Road to Jobs Programme (R2J) has worked since December 2014 in two northern provinces of Afghanistan, Balkh and Samangan Provinces. R2J aimed to facilitate change in a small number of sectors that are important to the economic livelihoods of these target groups. The overall goal of the Road to Jobs project has been: more and better jobs in selected Northern Provinces contribute to improved livelihoods and poverty reduction. The three-year and 60 million SEK (USD 7.46 million) project was scheduled to run 2015-2017, but due to delays in the first year of project implementation ILO requested a no-cost extension and the activity period now runs until the end of 2018.

The R2J Project has used a market system development (MSD) approach. Typically, an MSD approach encompasses a core value chain and its surrounding business environment. The latter includes a range of support functions and the rules and regulations of that specific sector. Working with a market system development approach means that the different spheres of the value chain are simultaneously addressed, in a manner

that all stakeholders who influence the value chain are involved to jointly optimise how the sector works.

In response to the three main evaluation questions the following conclusions are reached:

Relevance - The R2J team has developed a thorough understanding of the context in Balkh and Samangan provinces, which are recorded and have been further developed and elaborated in the Intervention Guides. Perhaps the most important aspect of these analyses is that they continue to be developed and that they form the basis of the project implementation process. In other words, understanding the context is an ongoing task that informs the process of implementation and ensures that the interventions undertaken remain relevant.

The range of interventions and connections with partners that have been developed by the project team is impressive. It is particularly notable that the team members working on the interventions have been able to make this range of connections and have been able to encourage collaboration between different stakeholders. The relationships developed and maintained, the participatory approach used and the levels of trust built have all contributed to ensuring that the interventions undertaken have been specific and relevant both to the context and to the partners chosen.

Effectiveness - Significant progress has been made in achievement of the programme outcomes, particularly in the last 9-10 months. The approach that has been used and proven through the Quick Wins interventions, working in specific core value chains – identifying a problem, seeking proposals from stakeholders and then working collaboratively to develop and implement these proposals – have ensured the effectiveness of the interventions and have made a significant contribution to potential sustainability. However, while the approach has been demonstrated as effective in these core value chains, there is less evidence that the project interventions have brought about systemic change in the value chains. There is, as a result, still some way to go in encouraging other market actors and in influencing change in policy, although the R2J team have made efforts in this area.

The approach taken to developing responses by the R2J team has been flexible and shows a willingness to consider new ideas. ILO as a global organisation has worked hard to ensure both that the R2J project has remained on track and to ensure that the rights skills and capacity have been available. The approach used to monitoring and evaluation is particularly exemplary and has been used as a means to track progress both to guide implementation and as the basis of reporting.

Sustainability - The ways in which the R2J Project have worked have aimed to build the potential for sustainability from the start. Time and effort was invested upfront

and has continued to be invested in further developing this understanding of agriculture, economic development and the context through looking in detail at individual interventions. In the language of the MSD approach, partners have already adopted these innovations and there are examples where there is adaptation.

There are three main recommendations, each aimed at a different set of stakeholders:

- The first is to Sida, that further support to the next phase of the R2J Project should be seriously considered, with the next phase giving the opportunity to further develop and test the approach.
- The second is to Sida and the ILO, that the next phase of the project should focus all of the resources on the Grapes and Raisins and Cotton value chains, in order to further test whether linked interventions across two value chains can have a wider impact on the sectors as a whole.
- The third is to ILO, that the main areas for improvement in the remainder of the current project and in a next phase are mainly in communicating how the project has worked and both what progress has been made and where there are areas for improvement.

1 Introduction

1.1 EVALUATION SCOPE

The objectives of the evaluation, as set out in the ToR (Annex 1), were to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the project and formulate recommendations on how to improve and adjust implementation and to serve as an input to the decision to whether the project should receive continued funding or not. This was further developed with a statement that, the purpose or intended use of the evaluation were to:

- Help Sida and ILO to assess progress of on-going project R2J to learn from what works well and less well. The evaluation will be used to inform decisions on how project implementation may be adjusted and improved;
- Provide Sida with an input to upcoming discussions concerning the preparation of a new phase 2 of project R2J
- Serve as an input for Sida to the decision on whether project R2J shall receive continued funding or not.

The evaluation questions proposed were organised into three overarching questions (drawn from the questions suggested), broadening the relevance and effectiveness questions in scope – see Table 1.

Table 1 – Evaluation Questions

Overarching Evaluation Question	Detailed Evaluation Questions
Relevance	
To what extent is the programme and the project interventions still relevant?	Did the selection of target groups and geographical areas for the project seem relevant? Is the programme in line with partner government policy and operations and to what extent does the project coordinate and collaborate with relevant public bodies? Does the programme interact with other employment generation projects and initiatives in order to avoid overlaps and contradictions?
Effectiveness (and Efficiency)	
To what extent are the programme outcomes likely to be achieved?	To what extent do development changes in the target area reconcile with the planned outputs, purpose and goal of the evaluated intervention? Are there concrete signs of systemic change in the market systems targeted by the intervention? Partner's satisfaction with results from the project

	Partners possess the organisational capabilities and human resources to continue the practice changes introduced. To what extent has the programme been effective in achieving the stated objective of reduced levels of conflict among its target groups? Has the project had any positive or negative effects on gender equality? Could gender mainstreaming have been improved in planning, implementation or follow up? Beneficiary groups are satisfied with and benefiting from the effects of the partner's behaviour/practice changes. Have staffing arrangements proven to be adequate in terms of quality and quantity? Has ILO allocated the necessary resources, (human and financial) to achieve the project purpose? Has the use of resources been value for money? Has the programming proved perceptive and flexible along the way? To what extent are activities implemented as planned? To what extent has lessons learned from what works well and less well been used to improve and adjust project/programme implementation?
Sustainability	
To what degree are the project results likely to be sustainable beyond the project's lifetime at the level of individuals, enterprises and systemic change at market system level?	If the project left now: • Would partners return to their previous way of working? • Would partners build upon the changes they've adopted, without the project? Would target group benefits depend on too few people, firms, or organisations? • Would the system be supportive of the changes introduced (allowing them to be upheld, grow, evolve)?

The Evaluation Questions formed the basis of the Evaluation Matrix, which is set out in full in Annex 2.

1.2 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

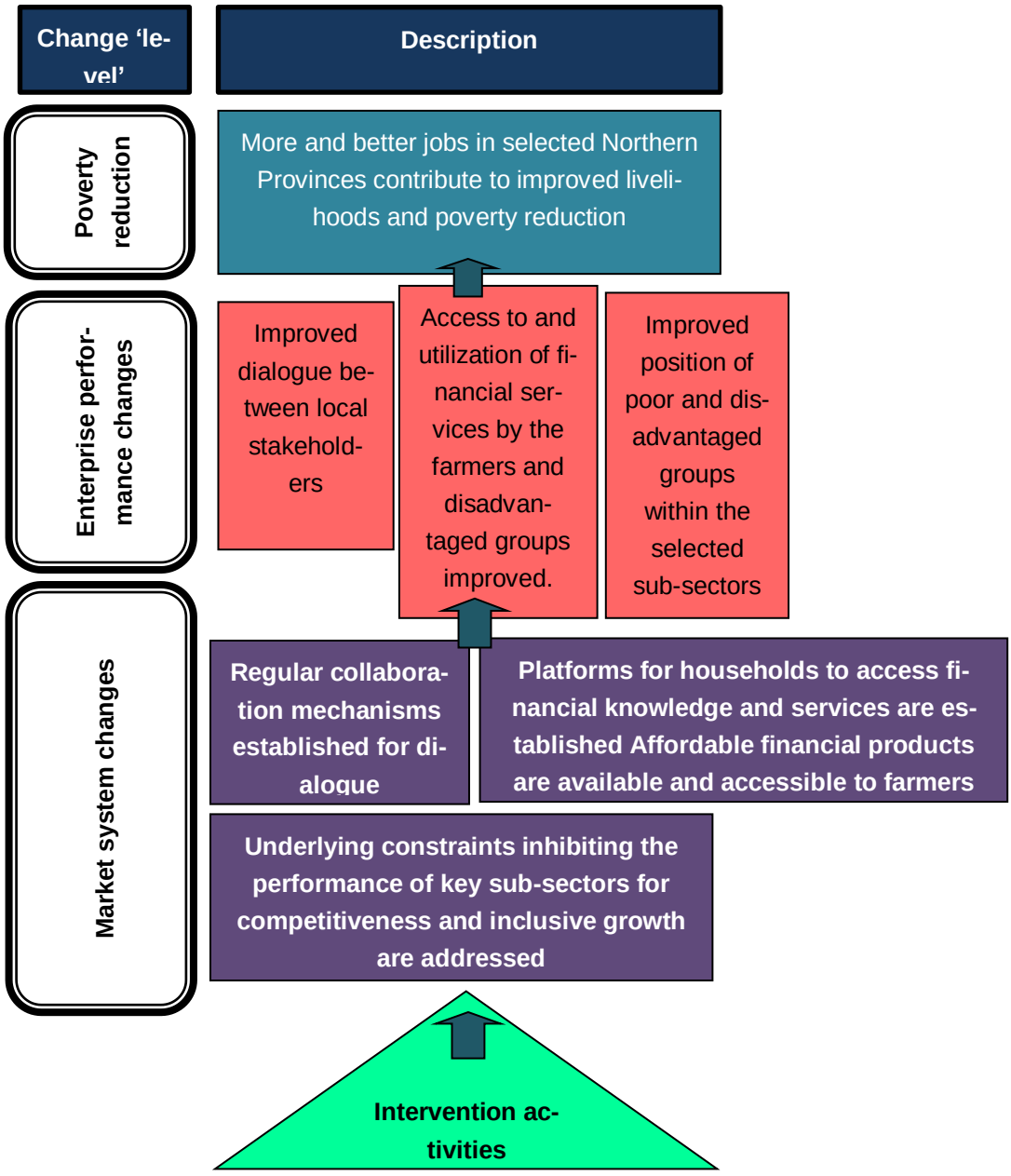
The evaluation consisted of three phases:

1. Inception phase, June to August 2018, including: a preliminary briefing and a detailed document review (see Annex 3 – Documents Reviewed), which was used to develop the evaluation questions, a theory of change and a stakeholder analysis to guide the field visit.
2. Data collection phase, August and September 2018, including: a preliminary visit to Kabul and field visits to Samangan and Balkh provinces to meet with partners and beneficiaries and to interview provincial stakeholders (see Annex 4 – People and Partners Interviewed); and, follow up interviews and document collection in order to validate project data.
3. Data analysis, reporting, validation phase, September 2018, including analysis of interviews and financial data and consolidation of the findings.

The main limitation in carrying out the evaluation was that security in Afghanistan impacted on the interviews and field visits that could be carried out, so that it was not possible to carry out interviews with beneficiaries. The evaluation relied on the detailed monitoring data that has been collected by the project team, where a series of surveys has been carried out by research organisations covering a significant number of beneficiaries for more detail see Section 2.4.

A key element of the development of the methodology was to explore the project Theory of Change (ToC). The Toc is described in the Monitoring and Results Measurement (MRM) Manual (February 2016) and is visualised in a simple diagram (see Diagram 1. The ToC is very briefly presented and assumes that if regular collaboration is improved among local economic development stakeholders while the underlying constraints of the performance of targeted value chains are addressed concurrently with those affecting access to finance, then improved collaboration/coordination and position of poor and disadvantaged groups within selected value chains will generate a positive impact on their income and jobs, thereby contributing to better livelihood and a reduction in poverty.

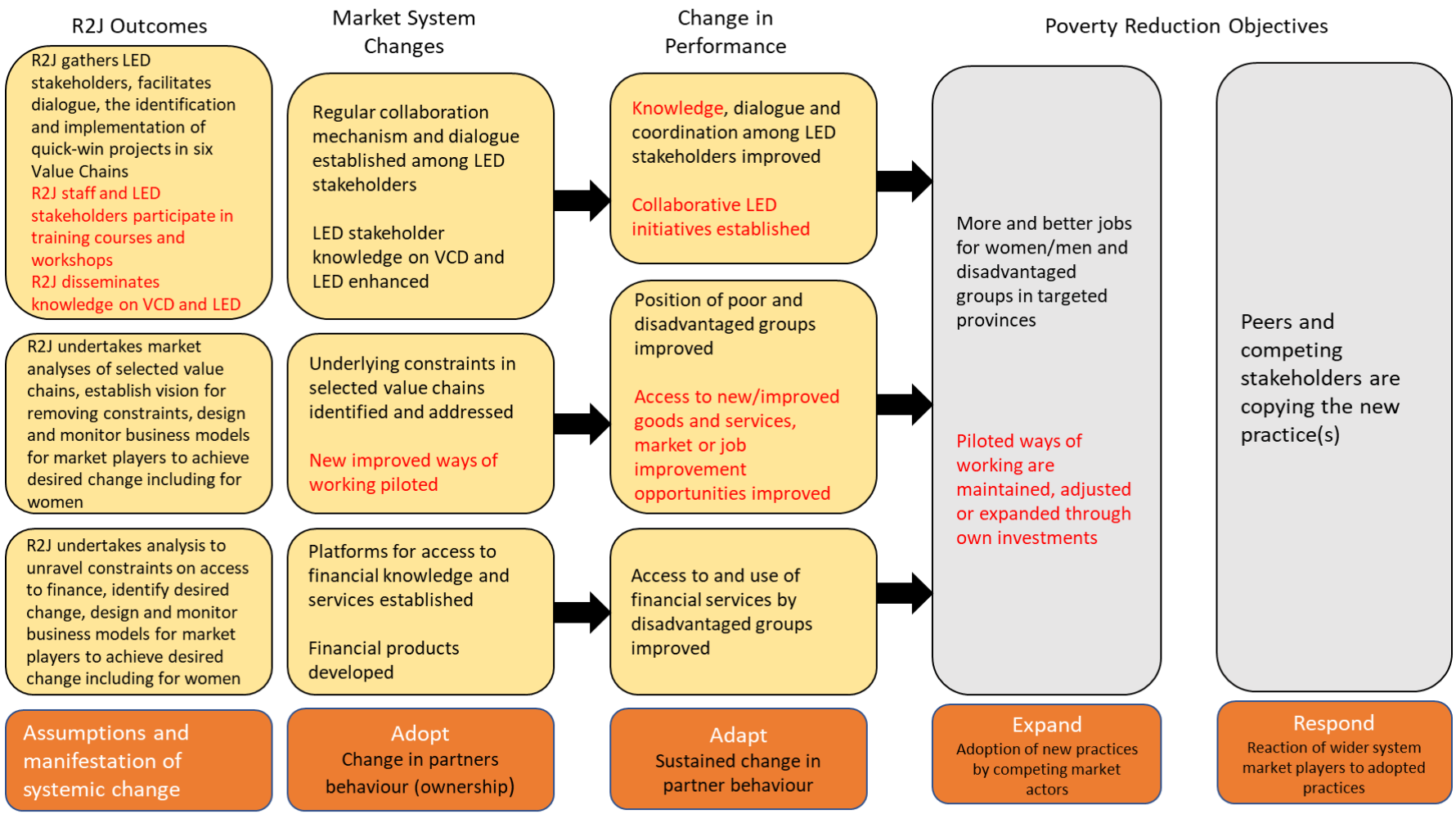
Diagram 1 – Original Programme Theory of Change



The initial document analysis, using the project documentation and the research produced by the project team was used to develop a more detailed ToC diagram for the evaluation. The diagram shows the project ToC, as set out in the programme documents, with a set of assumptions that have been identified as a result of this analysis set out in text in red font. The ToC is mapped approximately onto the main elements of the Market Systems Development Approach[1] - the brown boxes on the bottom row.

[1] D Nippard et al (March 2014) Adopt-Adapt-Expand-Respond: a framework for managing and measuring systemic change processes: Briefing Paper

Diagram 2 – Theory of Change for the Evaluation.



2 Evaluation Findings

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The ILO Roads to Jobs Programme (R2J) has worked since December 2014 in two northern provinces of Afghanistan, Balkh and Samangan Provinces. R2J targets poor and vulnerable rural households and income earners who work either in rural communities, or in urban centres and other major centres of employment[2]. R2J aimed to facilitate change in a small number of sectors that are important to the economic livelihoods of these target groups.

The overall goal of the Road to Jobs project has been: more and better jobs in selected Northern Provinces 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, through three outcomes. Progress in implementation has been tracked through indicators at both the goal and outcome levels. These indicators were set out in a logframe and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 – Project Goal, Outcomes and Indicators

Goal and Outcomes	Indicators
Goal	
More and better jobs in selected Northern Provinces contribute to improved livelihoods and poverty reduction	Number of people recording positive change in working conditions and/or incomes as a result of the programmei (male/female) Percentage of beneficiaries who are from disadvantaged groups (women, poor, migrant workers) (male/female) Net additional income accruing to target enterprises as a result of the programme Net additional employment created and sustained as a result of the programme (male/female)
Outcomes	
Outcome 1: Collaboration and co-ordination among local stakeholders for local economic development is improved	Number of local economic development initiatives resulting from dialogue among stakeholders

[2] The poor are defined as those living on less than 1.25 USD/day, and disadvantaged/vulnerable groups include women, internally displaced people (IDPs), and migrant workers.

	Number of initiatives that aim at increasing participation of women in value chains
Outcome 2: The position of poor and disadvantaged groups within selected sub-sectors is improved	Number of farmers accessing new/improved goods, services or market-selling opportunities (male/female) Number of workers reporting greater access to job improvement opportunities (male/female)
Outcome 3: Access to and utilisation of financial services by the farmers and disadvantaged groups improved.	Number of households had access to financial services Number of households utilized financial services

The three-year and 60 million SEK (USD 7.46 million) project was scheduled to run 2015-2017, but due to delays in the first year of project implementation ILO requested a no-cost extension and the activity period now runs until the end of 2018.

The R2J Project has used a market system development (MSD) approach. Typically, an MSD approach encompasses a core value chain and its surrounding business environment. The latter includes a range of support functions and the rules and regulations of that specific sector. Working with a market system development approach means that the different spheres of the value chain are simultaneously addressed, in a manner that all stakeholders who influence the value chain are involved to jointly optimise how the sector works.

The approach taken in the analysis of the evidence and the presentation of the findings has been to seek to answer the detailed evaluation questions (see Table 1 above). The responses are presented under the three overarching evaluation questions, looking in turn at relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability, in this section of the report. On the basis of these responses, the evidence has then been drawn together to provide a higher level set of Conclusions in the following section. The final section of the report sets out a number of Recommendations, based on the Findings and Conclusions, for going forward.

2.2 CONTEXT

While Afghanistan has grown economically, recovery is slow as continued insecurity has restricted private investment and consumer demand. Growth remains principally driven by agriculture. Poverty has increased since 2011: the poverty rate increased to 39.1% in 2013-14 (latest available survey data), up from 36% in 2011-12, meaning that 1.3 million people fell into poverty over this period. Rural areas, where most of the population lives, saw the biggest increase in poverty levels, from 38.3 to 43.6%.

According to the World Bank[3]: Long-term, sustained economic growth requires a structural economic transformation and new sources of growth. Increased human capital investment and improved agriculture productivity could provide significant opportunities.

Swedish development cooperation with Afghanistan aims to help people living in poverty – particularly women and girls – to improve their living conditions in a peaceful and democratic society. As part of this overall objective, Sweden has the aim to create opportunities for people to support themselves, to strengthen the private sector and to contribute to rural development. In addition to contributing to supporting maintenance and repair of roads in northern Afghanistan, Sweden has provided support to the ILO Road to Jobs Project. In the same period there have been a number of initiatives working to promote private sector development in Afghanistan, focusing on SMEs and value chains. These include the Afghanistan Rural Enterprise Development Program (AREDP)[4], the Afghanistan New Market Development Project (ANMDP)[5] and the Assistance in Building Afghanistan by Developing Enterprises (ABADE) for small and medium enterprises (SMEs)[6], and the Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development - Facility (CARD-F)[7] for agro value chains, RADP-N[8] and the GIZ[9] Project.

The security situation in the country has continued to worsen. Civilian casualties are at their highest since 2002, with an unprecedented level of conflict-induced displacement. In 2017, The United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded 10,000 civilian casualties. During the same period, more than 202,000 Afghans were internally displaced by conflict and 44,000 others were displaced by natural disasters. A surge in returnees from Iran and Pakistan (over 296,000 in 2017) has brought mounting pressure on humanitarian assistance.

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[3] World Bank (October 2017) Afghanistan: Country Snapshot - http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/530601507879562372/pdf/120414-WP-PUBLIC-CountrySnapshotAfghanistan-CompleteFinal.pdf

[4] This programme is also working in Balkh province on SME development. AREDP is financed through World Bank/IDA grants, and through bilateral donors, UK DFID, the Government of Denmark and SIDA

[5] Funded by the World Bank, this programme is working in Mazar-e-Sharif, among other urban areas, to provide technical assistance to private firms for market intelligence, product quality, processing technologies and securing export markets.

[6] ABADE was a USAID project that helped SME business growth with the aim of increasing investment, stimulating employment and improving sales of Afghan products. The project ended in December 2016.

[7] CARD-F works to increase legal rural employment and business opportunities through creating viable value chains. It is funded by DFID.

[8] USAID's Rural Agricultural Development Project, North, working in six northern provinces to increase the sustainability and profitability of selected value chains for wheat, high-value crops, and livestock.

[9] Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit- the German Society for International Development

2.3 RELEVANCE

Considerable work was undertaken in the first year of the project to fully understand the economic and agricultural context in Balkh and Samangan provinces. Consultants were commissioned to produce a number of reports, including:

- A Participatory Appraisal for Competitive Advantage (PACA) assessment in the rural districts of the Balkh Province, which provided the initital identification of the main sectors with promising potentials and identified a number of Quick Wins interventions, proposed as pilots for the approach;
- A series of six Rapid Market Assessments (RMA) for the Goat and Sheep, Dairy, Poultry, Cotton, Grapes and Raisins, and Almonds sectors (all produced in 2015), which provided the basis for the selection of both the value chains for further investigation;
- Two more detailed Market Systems Analyses (MSAs) for the Grape and Raisin value chain in 2015, a Mapping of Financial Services in the two provinces in 2016 and the publication of a report on the cotton value chain in 2017[10]; and,
- A Child Labour Assessment Report (2015) and a Gender Assessment Report (2016), which provided the basis for a Gender Strategy for the project.

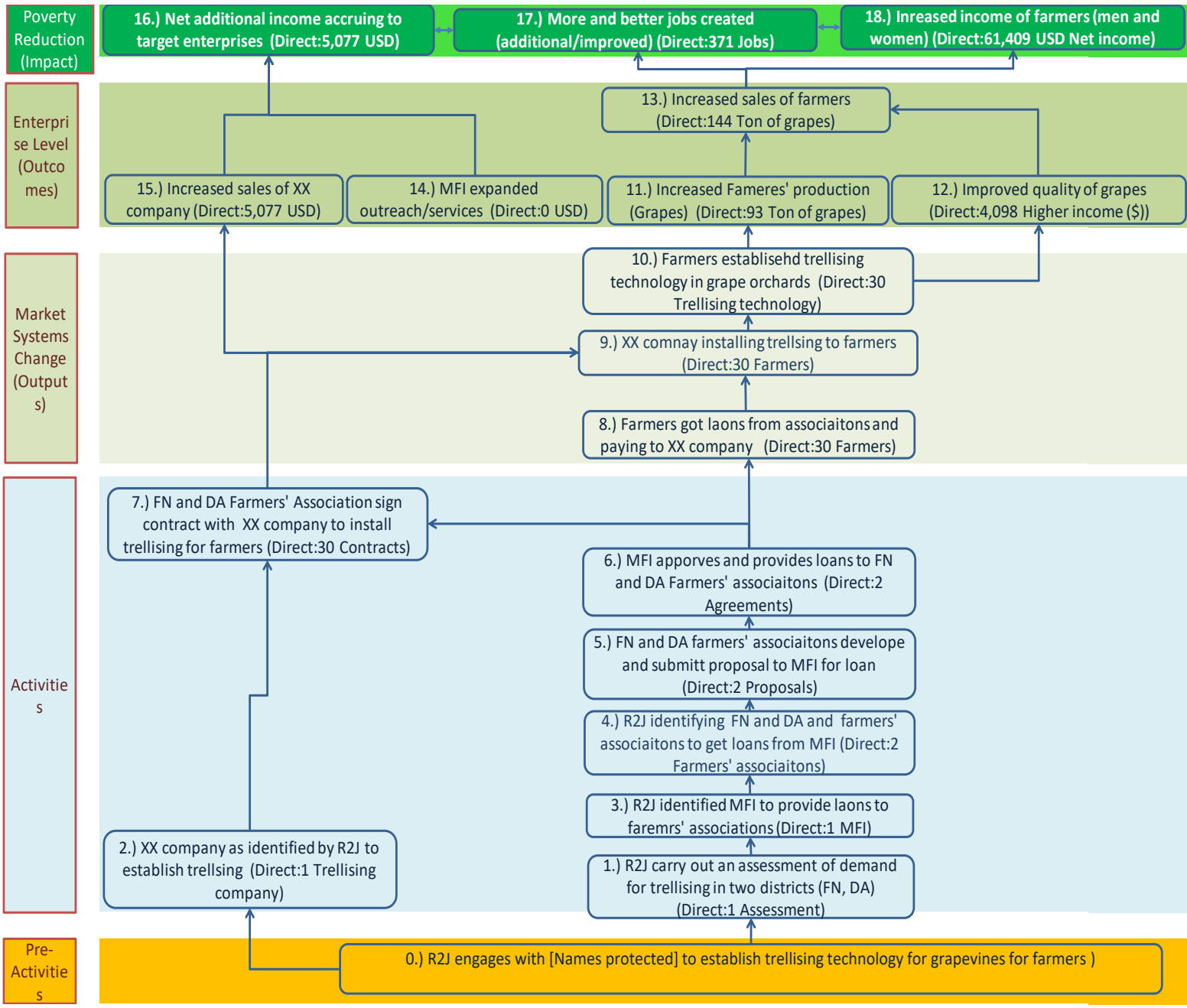
As part of this process the project engaged with key stakeholders both as part of the research and as a means to discuss the findings and to map out a way forward. The Sector Selection Report (2015) provides a description of the various stages in this process where the project team engaged with stakeholders and potential beneficiaries, including: training stakeholders as PACA facilitators and the presentation of findings and ideas for interventions to market actors and stakeholders; and, extensive stakeholder consultations to identify interventions in agricultural sub-sectors and a similar process to bring together stakeholders in the selection of interventions in the grape and raisin and cotton value chains. At this stage of implementation the project team worked to ensure that the interventions were in line with and supported government policy, looking at areas such as: safety and hygiene regulations, availability of inputs, and the links between taxation and imports. In the interviews with partners, many mentioned their engagement in these processes in terms of building their understanding of the approach that the project team took.

The understanding of the core value chains has continued to be built through the implementation of the interventions. The understanding of the context that has been developed has been recorded in Intervention Guides, which are used to develop and assess the progress in implementation of individual interventions. These Guides provide a wealth of information covering: a section setting out a summary of the intervention and the expected result in the form of a story; a more detailed results chain for the intervention, linked to the project ToC and, detailed assumptions and indicators for all

[10] Further research on the cotton value chain was carried out as initial work showed how complex the value chain was, particularly with regard to the regulation and supply of seed.

levels of the results chain. A key element of the Guides has been the results chain (Diagram 3 is an illustrative example from the Grape Trellising intervention), which develop the broad ToC in more detail for the specific interventions. The analysis in these Guides have been the basis for a series of Case Studies, which record in an open way both the successes and the continuing challenges of the interventions that have been implemented so far. The Guides and the Case Studies provide clear evidence that R2J is a learning organisation, which learns both through research and through the process of implementation.

Diagram 3 – Grape Trellising Intervention Results Chain



The R2J project has made extensive use of knowledge sharing events and exhibitions from the start of implementation to continue to engage with a range of stakeholders. Knowledge sharing events have included: collaborative workshops to present and discuss the MSA findings for cotton; events to update stakeholders on progress in the project interventions; and, service launch events, such as for agriculture extension messages that are accessible through a mobile phone service. There have also been regular exhibitions and job fairs in both Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul, organized in partnership with the [Name protected] and others as a means to bring a range of stakeholders together. From interviews it is clear that these events are both appreciated by partners and have been used as an effective way to spread the word.

Overall the project team has built up a thorough understanding of the economic and agricultural contexts in Balkh and Samangan provinces, working closely with a range of stakeholders. The project team has used this understanding to identify effective partners and interventions that are within the scope of the project's resources, with a particular focus on improving production, such as with more efficient irrigation and climate adaptive seeds. The project team have also continued to build this understand-ing as the interventions have been developed and implemented. A great deal of this knowledge has been recorded and published in the PACA and MSAs, with the pro-cess of recording the knowledge accumulated by the project continuing with the pro-duction of Case Studies focused on individual interventions - this is an area that will be explored further in Section 2.4.

From the inception of the project and through research processes described above col-laboration has been key to the way that the project operated. The primary collabora-tion has been with stakeholders and partners in the private sector, but collaboration and cooperation with other donors working in the sector has been given equal promi-nence. The Sector Selection Report includes a section on donor programmes, men-tioning CARD-F, ABADE and ANMDP and states that: "There are many other pro-grammes working in the region and several are following a value chain development approach. All seem to have significant funds for cost-sharing grants to individual en-terprises. The project will take this into account when developing its own approach and will consider coordinating closely with the projects concerned if needed."

This commitment has been followed through, as was evident in a number of the interviews, with examples of both partners being linked to other projects and of other projects beginning to take up the project approach. For example, in the visit to the [Name protected] a Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) representative was present as a group of recent refugee returnees to the province were arriving to begin training for new jobs interviews a number of other examples of cooperation with other donor projects were brought up, including: working with USAID and GIZ to share the R2J approach to entrepreneurship development for the RADP-N project; and, working with UNHCR and UNODC to share the technical experience and existing partnerships for pro-grammes working with refugee returnees.

Both the range of relationships that the project team was engaged in and the levels of trust that had been built were particularly notable through the interviews. To try and illustrate just a part of this range of relationships, Diagram 4 shows some of the networks for the two main Value Chains, Grapes and Cotton.

Diagram 4 – Partners for the Grape and Cotton Value Chains

[Names in figure protected]

Coordination and collaboration are central to the way that the project team works. The project team have worked with a range of market actors, including suppliers, those involved in support functions and those overseeing rules and regulations to make them central to the implementation of interventions. As part of this engagement, the team have provided support to build the capacity of these actors, with a view to sustainability. The team has also worked since the start of implementation to ensure effective linkages to other donors and projects to spread the approach developed and to leverage further resources for partners. All of these efforts have the potential to contribute to the overall sustainability of the interventions undertaken, something that will be explored further in Section 2.5.

2.4 EFFECTIVENESS

Over the original three year implementation period of the project there has been a considerable shift in the tenor of the progress reporting of the R2J project, from reporting research and capacity building of staff in 2015 and 2016, to reporting of tangible results in a number of interventions in 2017 – this is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3 – Highlights from R2J Technical Progress Reports

Year	Reporting Highlights
2015	The project was launched among stakeholders in the northern provinces of Balkh and Samangan. Consultants were brought in to facilitate the stakeholder consultative processes through two Participatory Appraisal of Competitive Advantage (PACA) each at the provincial level, six Rapid market Appraisals (RMA) and the in-depth Market Systems Analysis (MSA) of the grape and raisin value chain.
2016	The project invested considerable resources in capacity building of both internal staff, local consultants and partners in order to ensure that there is a common understanding of project philosophy, approach and objectives. The efforts have already begun to bear fruit because there is a considerable improvement in private sector companies' attitude towards the project's approach to work. The team's ability to broker and structure market deals using inclusive business models has also improved considerably.
2017	The implementation in 2017 has led to several successful interventions that the project would like to consolidate and consider for scaling up and replication in the next phase. The project invested in building many partnerships with key market actors and players. Attributed Income generated by market actors in 2017 – Total USD 2,079,869 Attributed Jobs generated by the project in 2017 – Total Full-time equivalent new jobs, 605; Improved jobs[11], 48,748. These figure for created jobs come from the regular monitoring and from surveys that are carried out by third party researchers

[11] The R2J Project defines Improved jobs as those resulting from interventions to improve workers skills and conditions, sustainability of employment and increased wages.

The figures reported have a solid basis in the tracking of progress in interventions, through the Intervention Guides, and have been backed up with the collection of survey data from partners and beneficiaries, carried out by local research organisations, in response to the poor security situation in the provinces. The methods used in collecting data for the interventions, and for the project as a whole, and the monitoring data are of high quality and have been subject to internal scrutiny and quality checks by ILO Specialists at HQ. Each of the Intervention Guides includes projections for all of the indicators, from output and outcome to impact levels and records results achieved, also recording where the supporting evidence comes from. Since 2016 surveys have been carried out by research organisations trained by the project team for specific interventions, including: grape trellising and mobile phone extension services in 2016, grape extension services, paravetenarian services and Radio Azad extension messages in 2017 and, cotton extension services, dairy market linkage and entrepreneurship training in 2018. The figures against the impact level indicators – particularly income and jobs generated – have been subject to scrutiny by ILO technical staff in Geneva, to both ensure there has been no double counting and consistency in the way that figures are counted, and have then been aggregated for the period 2015-18 to provide the basis for the figures presented in the technical progress reports.

To achieve these results the R2J Project has developed, and proved, an effective way of working with a range of market actors in Balkh and Samangan. The approach has been proved in part through the Quick Wins interventions, which have worked primarily in the core value chains identified early in project implementation. However, these 'Quick Wins' did prove to take longer to implement than originally envisaged, as the main actors took time to be convinced about the project approach. The Intervention Guides were used to develop the Results Chains and, importantly, to identify companies that could play the role of main actors. The Quick Wins interventions have worked with companies that both provide inputs and carrying out processing, including the [names protected]. The key features of the approach have been:

- These companies have directly provided the technical training to the farmers and producers as a means to improve both quality and the volume of production.
- The companies have invested themselves either in infrastructure, such as the milk collection centres, or in the necessary inputs such as seeds and fertiliser and chicks, while beneficiaries have invested further in equipment and inputs in order to expand their production.
- The Companies have also contracted with farmers and producers to buy milk, chickens and cotton, generally at a price agreed between the companies and producers, thus guaranteeing a market to farmers and producers.

At the same time, there has been less success in the work to provide greater access to financial services, despite the publication of the mapping report in 2016[12]. Progress has been made in identifying appropriate financial service providers, [names protected][13] and [names protected][14], and in negotiating potential intervention partnerships. However, delays in coming to agreements on these interventions, due in part to ILO's centralised ap-proval system, has meant that these interventions have not yet been implemented. At the time of the evaluation negotiations were continuing with the two service providers to agree on new intervention partnerships.

In both the project monitoring surveys and in the interviews carried out with partners for the evaluation, partners expressed considerable satisfaction with the support that they have received from the project. It was particularly notable in the fieldwork surveys that partners have clearly made the innovations and support that they have received a central part of the way that they work and that there were no requests for further support, either technical or financial. This is further borne out in some of the Case Studies that have been published[15], with examples primarily from the interventions in the core value chains, including:

- The [names protected] now being in the position to take on a further 45 trainees, working in partnership with NRC, in addition to the 45 men and women workers trained with support from R2J;
- The [names protected] set up two milk collection centres and trained 1500 femal farmers with support from R2J and subsequently set up two additional cen-tres and trained a further 750 farmers in order to expand the approach; and,
- The [names protected] established a buy-back scheme[16] with 60 farmers who would participate as out-growers with the support of R2J and has adopted the scheme as part of its operations, with plans to increase the number of outgrowers to 150.

The surveys carried out as part of the monitoring process look, where relevant, at beneficiaries' satisfaction with the support that they have received, while the Case Studies and the surveys provide evidence of how these beneficiaries benefit from changes in partners practices. In the survey data looking at the support and training received, the large majority, over 50% of respondents, expressed high levels of satisfaction, with the remainder expressing satisfaction, with the main caveats being that the timing of training could be better to fit with planting or harvesting for example. In a

[12] Social Finance (April 2016) Report on Mapping of Financial Services in Balkh and Samangan Provinces, Afghanistan

[13] [names protected] is a nonprofit microfinance organization and an affiliate of [names protected]

[14] [names protected].

[15] The case studies have been published on the following link: [names protected]

[16] [names protected] provided inputs on credit to the farmers and bought back the chicken once they attained slaughter weight. Now a finance services provider has taken the role to give individual loans to the farmers for purchase of inputs thereby increasing farmers choice of inputs and demand of quality.

number of the interventions, alongside the training and support provided, the partner organisations contracted to buy produce from the farmers trained. Drawing on the Case Studies, there are a number of examples where farmers and producers have continued to benefit primarily from the interventions in the core value chains:

- [names protected] had around 30 contract cotton farmers in 2016 and after completing the GAP training and providing awareness to farmers about contract farming it successfully contracted with 80 farmers during 2017;
- While initially 1500 women were trained, [names protected] now regularly purchases milk from 2250 at an increased rate per kilo; and,
- As a result of the training of paravets, the surveys have estimated that animal losses have been reduced by up to 50%, with $1,160,529 net income saved annu-ally by the farmers as a result of reduced livestock mortality.

Since the start of implementation gender has been central to the project, specifically with efforts to ensure that interventions benefit men and women equally, that there are specific interventions targeting women, and that the monitoring tracks progress in gender across the project. All of the interventions undertaken have included an assessment of gender issues, with the intention clearly set out in the intervention summary. In some cases, such as the [names protected], the interventions have successfully involved women as the main beneficiaries, while in others, such as [names protected], the interventions have been unsuccessful. One encouraging feature of the R2J project is that such failures are used as the basis for further reflection, so that the Case Study for the poultry buy-back scheme records that women had dropped out because they had been unable to reach expected outputs, in part because they were unable to access loans for equipment and in part because they participated as individuals, while the men tended to join in groups, which were more profitable and productive. There have also been interventions that have specifically targeted women, including: the [names protected], which has started training women in carpet and kilim weaving and provides other women with opportunities in washing and processing wool; and, [names protected] for women in tailoring and jewellery design, which links trainees up with national level designers. Finally, all monitoring data is sex dis-aggregated as a matter of course, so that it is possible to track progress in the gender specific interventions and to track progress in the project as a whole.

To achieve all of this whilst working in the complex and insecure context of northern Afghanistan has required considerable focus and flexibility from ILO in terms of human and financial resources. The first and second progress reports emphasise both, the problems in recruiting and retaining international and national staff, and the ways in which ILO has managed resources to deal with these issues. In ensuring continuity in the implementation of R2J ILO has drawn on global and regional staff resources, consultants and staff to build and maintain momentum, including:

- The initial use of consultants to carry out the PACA and MSAs and to lead in the process of sector and value chain selection;

- An emphasis on building the capacity of project staff to be able to understand and use the MSD approach, something that has continued with the involvement of staff in international workshops[17];
- Support from the ILO Lab Project staff at key stages in the project development and implementation, such as the sector selection and more recently further developing the approach to monitoring, through the Intervention Guides; and,
- Drawing on other regional and global support to address issues as they have emerged, such as support from Decent Work specialists in focusing on child labour and support from regional specialists and the Turin centre in work on communications in 2018.

At the same time, a number of R2J project staff members, both national and international, have been key to continuity through the period of implementation. Several staff members have been with the project since the early days of implementation in 2015 and have overseen the development of the overall project vision, have built relationships of trust with key partners, have maintained important networks with other stakeholders and have ensured that the approach to monitoring progress has been used effectively. Another important aspect of this continuity is that these staff members have taken on additional roles where necessary and have worked to ensure that capacity with new staff members has continued to be built.

With regard to the use of financial resources – Table 4, Project Expenditure - the initial two years of project implementation were a considerable investment of resources (recruiting and training staff, project set up and the use of consultants), where the results are only beginning to be seen in the latter part of the third year of implementation. Given the initial delays in implementation, resources were invested upfront in consultants and ILO staff from HQ carrying out the research that underpins the interventions. These initial high costs can be put down, in part, to the project working in a complex and conflict affected environment, something which is frequently noted in many projects being implemented in Afghanistan. Another contributory factor has been ILO's centralised systems for budgeting and financial management that have contributed to (but not caused) delays in project implementation – a new, more decentralised financial management system has been put in place and things have started to improve. At the same time, the approach used has been deliberate to a certain extent, with considerable effort being invested upfront in both convincing partners of the approach being used and demonstrating the effectiveness of the approach in order to influence other, bigger projects working in the same field. This is consistent with other market systems programmes in other parts of the world.

Table 4 – Project Expenditure, 2015-17

	2015	2016	2017	Total

[17] One staff member attended the DCED-BEAM Exchange Seminar on Measuring Results in Market System Development Programmes organized in Feb 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya.

International & National Staff	368,166.00	767,826.90	815,981.22	1,951,974.12
Consultants, Travel, Sub-contracts, Seminars & Training	326,990.00	523,764.42	554,482.13	1,405,236.55
Project Costs	133,280.00	665,399.50	284,875.33	1,083,554.83
Programme Support Costs	107,696.66	311,612.61	215,225.32	634,534.59
Total	**936,132.66**	**2,268,603.40**	**1,870,564.00**	**5,075,300.09**

In terms of the question of whether the use of resources been value for money, an initial very broad comparison can be made with two similar, but much larger projects, ANMDP and CARD-F. CARD-F has been implemented across Afghanistan and a report presenting midline data was published in 2017[18]. A project completion report for ANMDP, again implemented in a number of provinces, was published in 2018 and records internal monitoring data for the project[19]. The results are compared with the results for the R2J Project in Table 5.

Table 5 – Comparison of Results for R2J, CARD-F and ANMDP

Results and Issues	R2J Project	CARD-F	ANMDP
Project Cost & Implementation	USD 7.46 million Balkh and Samangan 2014-18	USD 21.6 million Kabul, Herat, Kandahar and Nangarhar 2015-18	USD 22 million Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalabad and Herat 2011-17
Jobs Created	Total Full-time equivalent new jobs, 605[20]; Improved jobs[21], 48,748	Modest increases in additional rural jobs	1,516 new jobs created – 30% for women
Rural Income Increases	Total USD 2,079,869	Increases in rural incomes	Average increase in sales – 24%

[18] Upper Quartile (October 2017) Midline 1 Report: Evaluation of the Comprehensive Agricultural and Rural Development Facility (CARD-F)

[19] World Bank (May 2018) Implementation Completion and Results Report for the Afghanistan New Market Development Project (ANMDP)

[20] Figures come from the regular monitoring and from the surveys that are carried out by third party researchers.

[21] The R2J Project defines Improved jobs as those resulting from interventions to improve workers skills and conditions, sustainability of employment and increased wages.

Issues in Implementation	Recruitment and retention of staff Building understanding and trust in the approach	Slower roll-out than originally planned Issues raised about the resilience of sectors and value chains to shocks	Significant delays in implementation in first two years Slow beneficiary uptake

Two things are notable in this comparison:

- The relative success that R2J has been able to achieve both in terms of contribution to new jobs and rural income and the solidity of the figures recorded; and,
- The similarities of the issues that have been faced in implementation.

Through the three years of initial implementation the R2J Project team and the ILO have shown themselves to be committed to effective monitoring and a learning organisation. The basis for the approach has been the project monitoring and evaluation, as laid out clearly in the Monitoring and Results Measurement (MRM) Manual and implemented through the Intervention Guides. The MRM approach was judged to be in line with the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) Results Measurement Standard in the pre-audit carried out in October 2017[22]. The Guides in particular provide an active means of monitoring the progress of intervention implementation and the basis for decision-making and learning within the project. The key features of the Intervention Guides for these purposes are:

- The Results Chains, which develop and link with the overall project ToC
- The indicators, baselines and measurement plans, which are used to ensure that progress against the projected targets is tracked as implementation takes place and to improve implementation, and
- The collection of data from partners and beneficiaries against these indicators, which provides data from partners on whether interventions have changed business practices and from beneficiaries on access to jobs and additional income.

The use of the Intervention Guides provides the basis for project implementation, through regular updates to the Guides and regular meetings of the project team. As set out in the MRM Manual: “Intervention managers review progress against their results chains informally on a monthly basis, and formally every three months during the portfolio review meeting with the whole R2J team. Progress updates from these meetings are used as the basis for project reporting and strategic decision making related to intervention implementation. At the end of each portfolio review meeting, all intervention guide sections are updated with checks and approvals from the MRM Officer

[22] ILO (October 2017) Pre-Audit Report on Compliance with DCED Standard of Results Measurement

and/or the Chief Technical Adviser." The use of the Guides is evident in the progression seen in the technical progress reports and also provides the basis for beginning to communicate what has been learned through the project, with a set of Case Studies[23] and Success Stories[24] being prepared for publication.

2.5 SUSTAINABILITY

The Market Systems Development approach sets out four 'degrees' of systemic change:

- **Adopt** occurs when a R2J partner successfully adopts a new practice/behaviour - with the direct support of the project.
- **Adapt** occurs when the market actor that adopted the behaviour/practice changes continues independent activities linked with the original practice change.
- At the **expand** stage other system actors who have not directly partnered with the project adopt the new practice/behaviour.
- At the **respond** stage, the increasingly mainstream practice change triggers a secondary response from actors in the wider system, or in adjacent systems, which perform different roles.

In terms these four degrees there is a varying level of evidence of some changes against the first three, as follows:

- **Adopt** - there is good evidence that innovations supported by R2J have become part of partners ways of working, such as for [names protected]. In addition, in the interview with the BCCI it was stated that, with the support from the project, the organisation now has the capac-ity to be able to support its members effectively, with the result that membership has grown.
- **Adapt** – there is some evidence that partners have expanded or plan to expand the new ways of working, such as the development of further milk collection centres by [names protected], [names protected] taking on further trainees and [names protected] planning an expansion of the buy-back scheme. This is an area where there is the need for continued monitoring.
- **Expand** – the R2J Project has been working to influence the work of others, including CARD-F, NRC, UNHCR and UNODC. There is, however, no evidence yet of the wider uptake of innovations introduced with the support of the project, so that this is another area where there is a need for continued monitoring.
- **Respond –** this is the area where there is least evidence at this stage, as in other MSD projects, and where there is a need to work across the value chains in order to make change.

[23] Ten Case Studies are in draft for: [names protected]

[24] Four Success Stories are in draft for: [names protected]

In interviews with project partners all of them brought up wider challenges that are outside the scope of the R2J Project to influence. These include:

- Cheap imports from neighbouring countries, including Iran and Pakistan, that, along with the effects of corruption in the import process, make it hard for local businesses to compete effectively
- A local tax systems that charges between 2-4% on local industries, as well as the introduction of systems that require businesses to keep records for five years, which again make it hard for businesses with limited capacity to compete
- Other wider challenges including the continuing lack of security and weak infrastructure, such as a limited and unreliable power supply.

These wider challenges in particular affect agriculture and the economy and limit the scope for further expansion and growth, both in individual businesses and in the sectors and value chains.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) has recently produced a number of papers drawing on detailed research on rural markets across Afghanistan, which set out some interesting conclusions for development programmes seeking to support market systems in the country. One paper summarising the main findings of the research[25] states that: In our view, understanding of markets in Afghanistan has to move beyond these simplistic and abstract models that bear little relation to reality. The overall conclusion is that: Greater recognition and analysis of the complexity of Afghanistan's market systems is an important step forward towards economic transformation.

A more recent paper[26] seeks to draw out the main Policy Implications, all of which are relevant to the ways in which the R2J Project works, as set out in Table 6, and all of which contribute to the greater potential for sustainability.

Table 6 – SLRC Policy Implications and R2J Ways of Working

SLRC Policy Implications	R2J Ways of Working
Team up early, invest in understanding the rules of the game and translate them in feasible programming - It is vital to invest in understanding what the 'real' rules of the game are.	PACA and MSA research processes were carried out with the extensive participation of stakeholders, in order to understand the real rules of the game – see Section 2.3.
Supplement standard economic development approaches with tools that address social barriers to economic opportunities and test them in the field.	Quick Win interventions worked closely with partners to understand the problems that they faced and to develop innovations to seek to resolve these problems – see Section 2.4.

[25] Giulia Minoia and Adam Pain (July 2017) Understanding rural markets in Afghanistan. SLRC Working paper 58

[26] Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (April 2018) No more standard programming: economic development in fragile settings. SLRC Policy Paper 1

Engage with institutions for what they do rather than for what they resemble - The most important lesson we can draw from Afghanistan is the necessity to engage with personalised networks and actors for successful development.	R2J has built trust and developed close relationships with a range of partners and has developed and implemented innovations with a joint investment to ensure sustainability – see Section 2.5 above.

3 Conclusions

To what extent is the programme and the project interventions still relevant?
The R2J team have developed a thorough understanding of the context in Balkh and Samangan provinces, through the PACA and MSAs and through working closely with stakeholders. These are recorded in various reports and have been further developed and elaborated in the Intervention Guides, which set out detailed results chains and associated indicators for each of the main interventions. Perhaps the most important aspect of these analyses is that they continue to be developed and that they form the basis of the project implementation process. In other words, understanding the context is an ongoing task that informs the process of implementation and ensures that the interventions undertaken remain relevant.

The range of interventions and connections with partners that have been developed by the project team is impressive, ranging from government departments to the private sector organisations, to civil society and other donor projects. It is clear that the focus on the provinces of Balkh and Samangan, and the town of Mazar-i-Sharif, and the relative security of the area have helped in making this range of connections. However, it is particularly notable that the team members working on the interventions have been able to make this range of connections and have been able to encourage collaboration between different stakeholders. The relationships developed and maintained, the participatory approach used and the levels of trust built have all contributed to ensuring that the interventions undertaken have been specific and relevant both to the context and to the partners chosen.

To what extent are the programme outcomes likely to be achieved?
Significant progress has been made in achievement of the programme outcomes, particularly in the last 9-10 months. There is good evidence that most of the Quick Wins interventions, working in specific core value chains, have been successfully supported and are already showing signs of being sustained. The interventions that are part of the work on the Grapes and Raisins and Cotton value chains are showing signs of good progress and there is evidence of the potential for them to be sustained. There are other interventions where there has been less progress, such as in ensuring access to financial services. As a result of the effective monitoring system, the R2J Project have been able to assess the factors affecting progress and are working to address the ongoing challenges. There is, at this point, less evidence that the project interventions have brought about systemic changes across value chains. What is worth noting at this point is that, all of this has been achieved in a very challenging security context, where progress is often fragile.

The approach to working in core value chains that has been used and proven through the Quick Wins interventions – identifying a problem, seeking proposals from stakeholders and then working collaboratively to develop and implement these proposals – have ensured the effectiveness of the interventions and have made a significant contribution to potential sustainability. From the visits and interviews with a range of intervention partners it was notable that these partners have adopted the interventions proposed so that they have become part of their ways of working, ensuring a degree of sustainability. The model of working with existing companies to make links to producers, paired with packages of technical support, is a model that has worked well in a context where there are limitations to the government support that is available and again ensures a degree of sustainability. The focus on both gender and inclusion are clearly set out in the project approach and have been followed through consistently in the model of working used. Again, while the approach has been demonstrated as effective in the core value chains, there is still some way to go in encouraging other market actors and in influencing change in policy, although the R2J team have made efforts in this area. These additional and broader efforts will be needed to ensure that the potential for sustainability is fully achieved.

The approach taken to developing responses by the R2J team has been flexible and shows a willingness to consider new ideas. The interventions supported have been responsive to what already exists, rather than seeking to impose solutions to problems. In addition, the relative modesty of the financial support provided (between $20-35,000), has meant that these interventions are thoughtful and specific to the problems in question.

ILO as a global organisation has worked hard to ensure both that the R2J project has caught up after initial project delays and to ensure that the rights skills and capacity have been available, although the lack of financial delegation and a centralised approval process have contributed to delays. A new, more decentralised financial management system has been put in place and is beginning to address some of the issues of lack of responsiveness. The R2J project has received considerable and effective support from ILO both globally and regionally: from the Lab Project in carrying out the initial analyses and in developing and implementing the M&E system; and, regionally in technical areas, such enterprise development, and in developing communications..

The approach used to monitoring and evaluation is particularly exemplary, with the key features set out clearly in the R2J MRM Manual, including:

- The overall clarity and relative simplicity of the project Theory of Change
- The use of detailed intervention guides that include Results Chains (linked to the Theory of Change), detailed indicators at output and outcome levels, and projections and regular monitoring of progress and actual results

- The use of the intervention guides to maintain records of beneficiaries, which is then supported by the collection of data in the field through survey, providing a solid basis for the overall assessment of results.

To what degree are the project results likely to be sustainable beyond the project's lifetime at the level of individuals, enterprises and systemic change at market system level?

The ways in which the R2J Project have worked have aimed to build the potential for sustainability from the start. Time and effort was invested upfront in building a thorough understanding of agriculture in Balkh and Samangan and has continued to be invested in further developing this understanding through looking in detail at individual interventions. In the main part this understanding has continued to be built up through the development and implementation of interventions, so that the project team have worked closely with partners to identify innovations to address specific problems and have ensured that partners have jointly invested in implementing innovations. This approach to joint investment in these innovations has further built the potential for sustainability, with the R2J Project providing capacity building in the main, while partners have invested in the necessary equipment and credit for producers. In the language of the MSD approach, partners have already adopted these innovations and there are examples where there is adaptation. While there continue to be significant challenges in the wider context, the R2J Project has begun to develop specific and potentially sustainable interventions to address the more immediate challenges faced.

4 Recommendations

There are three main recommendations, each aimed at a different set of stakeholders.

The first recommendation is to Sida, that **further support to the next phase of the R2J Project should be seriously considered**. The next phase of the project is already under preparation and will give the opportunity to further develop and test the approach. Another phase of the project will also give the opportunity to further spread the influence of the innovative approaches that have been used, both in the provinces and nationally.

The second recommendation is to Sida and the ILO, that **the next phase of the project should continue with the agreed greater focus on the Grapes and Raisins and Cotton value chains**, in order to further test the approaches working across the value chains with a wider range of market actors .

There is an opportunity to look beyond individual interventions, to assess whether linked interventions across two value chains can have a wider impact on the sectors as a whole. There are opportunities to work with other development stakeholders to continue to spread the approach that has been developed and demonstrated so effectively. There are also opportunities to continue to work with existing partners to scale up and realise the potential for sustainability in the interventions that have been established.

Work has already begun in the current phase of the R2J Project to understand how the market systems in Grapes and Raisins and Cotton work for each of the value chains, work that shows that these value chains extend nationally and internationally, for example in the supply of seeds and the export of cotton. Work has already begun to look at the national level supply of seed for cotton and the provision cold storage facilities for grapes. It is, therefore, recommended that the next phase of the project should continue with this more national level focus, looking at how the value chains that start in Balkh and Samangan are affected by wider issues and at what interventions might be required to address any challenges identified. There is, at the same time, a need to continue to take environmental and climate concerns into account in this next phase of work.

The third recommendation is to ILO, that the main areas for improvement in the remainder of the current project and in a next phase are mainly in **communicating how the project has worked and both what progress has been made and where there are areas for improvement**. There are three specific areas where there is a need to communicate:

More effort should be focused on explaining the strategic approach of the project to an audience of development stakeholders. There is an opportunity at this stage of implementation to publish to explain in clear terms both how the Quick Wins interventions have been used as pilots and how interventions have been used and to set out how the approach will be used in the Grapes and Raisins and Cotton value chains.

Again, there is an opportunity to set out in clear broad terms the ways in which the partnership approach has been used in implementation. This should focus on the range of partners that R2J has worked with, the approach to ensuring sustainability and the focus on systemic change, all of which are inherent in the project documentation, but are not yet clearly set out in project documentation.

Finally, there is scope to better set out how the M&E approach has been used in the project and how M&E has been central to the development and implementation of the project. In particular, the use of the intervention guides and their role in the overall MRM system should be explained to a wider audience, focusing on how the approach has been used in the Quick Wins interventions and setting out how it will be used in the work to focus on the Grapes and Raisins and Cotton value chains.

Annex 1 – Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of ILO-Road to Jobs Project

Bringing decent work to rural households of the Northern Provinces in Afghanistan
Date: 2018-04-16

1. Evaluation object and scope

Road to Jobs (R2J) follows a market systems approach to address important underlying constraints inhibiting better growth and employment outcomes, which in turn contribute to improving livelihoods and poverty reduction in two provinces in northern Afghanistan. The three-year and 60 MSEK project was scheduled to run 2015-2017, but due to project delays ILO requested a no-cost extension and the activity period now runs until 20181231. In early 2017 the ILO Evaluation Unit carried out a midterm evaluation of the project. The main purpose of that evaluation was to assess the continued relevance of the invervention and the progress made towards achieving its planned objectives.
The impact indicators for the R2J are:

• 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 programme
• The net additional employment created and sustained as a result of the programme

R2J targets poor and vulnerable rural households and income earners who work either in rural communities, or in urban centres and other major centres of employment. The poor are defined as those living on less than 1.25 USD/day, and disadvantaged/vulnerable groups include women, internally displaced people (IDPs), and migrant workers. R2J aims to facilitate change in a small number of sectors that are important to the economic livelihoods of these target groups. The overall goal of the Road to Jobs project is "more and better jobs in selected Northern Provinces 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:

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
Outcome 3: Access to and utilisation of financial services by the farmers and disadvantaged groups improved"

The evaluation object is [ILO Roads to Jobs Programme (R2J) in two northern provinces of Afghanistan, Balkh and Samangan Provinces.

For further information, the project/programme proposal is attached as Annex D.
The scope of the evaluation and the intervention logic or theory of change of the project/programme shall be further elaborated by the evaluator in the inception report.

2. Evaluation rationale

The current first phase of the R2J project was planned to run for 3 years, budgetet at 60 MSEK and to end by 2017-11-30. However, ILO started the project with a 6-month delay, and as a result put forward 3

a request to Sida for a no cost extension. The activity period now ends by 2018-12-31. The ILO Evaluation Unit conducted an independent Midterm Evaluation of the project during February-March 2017. Briefly the evaluation shows that the ILO has done well in preparation, planning, analysis, contacts with authorities and some other parties – but this has taken a long time and therefore it has also taken a long time before concrete results has been achieved. Initial assessment points to some uncertainty whether the results achieved are sufficient and whether the ILO has the capacity (resources, local anchoring and contextual customisation, etc.) to deliver this type of program in this difficult environment. Due mainly to logistical challenges around security, Sida staff at the Embassy in Kabul have not been able to visit project sites and talk to intended beneficiaries. The evaluation is therefore needed to verify whether intened outcomes have been achieved according to plans. ILO maintains a positive outlook regarding the possibilities for the programme to support sustainable positive changes to the targeted market systems and have discussed the possibilities of a second phase of the progamme. Given the substantial delays both in implementation and in generating tangible results, the most important rationale behind the evaluation is to establish whether ILO as a cooperation partner has the adequate competence and resources to implement this type of programme in the Afghan context.

3. Evaluation purpose: Intended use and intended users

The purpose or intended use of the evaluation is:

• Help Sida and ILO to assess progress of on-going project R2J to learn from what works well and less well. The evaluation will be used to inform decisions on how project implementation may be adjusted and improved;
• Provide Sida with an input to upcoming discussions concerning the preparation of a new phase 2 of project R2J
• Serve as an input for Sida to the decision on whether project R2J shall receive continued funding or not.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are Sida's AFG Unit, ILO and the Embassy of Sweden in Afghanistan.
The evaluation is to be designed, conducted and reported to meet the needs of the intended users and tenderers shall elaborate in the tender how this will be ensured during the evaluation process. Other stakeholders include:

• Agriculture, Inclusive Financial Services, UNHCR, MoLSAMD, MoCI, BCCI & ACCI, NUAWE, private companies in Balkh and Samangan, farmers' groups, ILO's Lab Project (HQ Backstopping implementation of R2J), PACA Facilitators, SIYB and Get Ahead Trainers in Afghanistan, Project Advisory Committee(PAC)
• Provincial Governor's offices in Balkh and Samangan

During the inception phase, the evaluator and the users will agree on who will be responsible for keeping the various stakeholders informed about the evaluation.

4. Evaluation criteria and questions

The evaluation should address the OECD/DAC criteria relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability.
The specific issues and aspects to be addressed in the evaluation will be guided by the preliminary consultations with the users. Other aspects can be added as identified by the evaluation team in accordance with the given purpose and in consultation with the evaluation manager.

The objective of this evaluation is to:
The objective of the evaluation is to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the project and formulate recommendations on how to improve and adjust implementation and to serve as an input to the decision to whether the project should receive continued funding or not.

Relevance:

- Is the intervention logic or theory of change upon which the programme rests relevant and does it clear and does it adequately describes the expected pathway to change, how programme activities will combine with other factors to achieve change, and the associated assumptions? ○ Comment: Previous ILO midterm evaluation indicated that R2J aimed for more interventions than manageable and expected results to be overly ambitious, and the evaluation recommended that R2J should better clarify the nature, aim and objectives of the project.

- Is the programme in line with partner government policy and operations and to what extent does the project coordinate and collaborate with relevant public bodies?
- Did the selection of target groups and geographical areas for the project seem relevant?
- Does the programme interact with other employment generation projects and initiatives in order to avoid overlaps and contradictions?

Effectiveness

- To what extent do development changes in the target area reconcile with the planned outputs, purpose and goal of the evaluated intervention? Are there concrete signs of systemic change in the market systems targeted by the intervention?
- Have staffing arrangements proven to be adequate in terms of quality and quantity? Has ILO allocated the necessary resources, (human and financial) to achieve the project purpose?
- Has the programming proved perceptive and flexible along the way? To what extent are activities implemented as planned?
- To what extent has lessons learned from what works well and less well been used to improve and adjust project/programme implementation?

Sustainability

- To which degree are the project results likely to be sustainable beyond the project's lifetime at the level of individuals, enterprises and systemic change at market system level?

Additional questions of a more general character that should be kept in mind during the course of the evaluation, and be answered to the extent possible, should also be considered:

- To what extent has the programme been effective in achieving the stated objective of reduced levels of conflict among its target groups?

• Has the project had any positive or negative effects on gender equality? Could gender mainstreaming have been improved in planning, implementation or follow up?

Questions are expected to be developed in the tender by the tenderer and further developed during the inception phase of the evaluation.

5. Evaluation approach and methods for data collection and analysis

It is envisioned that the evaluation will use a theory-based approach. Market systems programmes aims at stimulating change at multiple levels, therefore no single evaluation method is appropriate for assessing change at all the different levels. A theorybased approach provides a framework within which different levels can be observed but also empirically tested. The evaluators are expected to thoroughly analyse the theory of change upon which the programme is designed. The evaluators are expected to check that it adequately describes the expected pathway to change and how progamme activities in combination with other factors will lead to the desired change, as well as test the validity of the underlying assumptions.
Evaluability assessment: during the inception phase it is envisaged that the evaluators by careful consideration of the different interventions that the programme consists of (including scrutiny of the their respective theories of change) form an opinion of their evaluability. It is expected that the evaluator describes and justifies an appropriate evaluation methodology and methods for data collection in the tender. The evaluation design and methods for data collection and analysis are expected to be fully developed and presented in the inception report.
Sida's approach to evaluation is utilisation-focused, which means the evaluator should facilitate the *entire evaluation process* with careful consideration of how everything that is done will affect the use of the evaluation. It is therefore expected that the evaluators, in their tender, present i) how intended users are to participate in and contribute to the evaluation process and ii) methodology and methods for data collection that create space for reflection, discussion and learning between the intended users of the evaluation.
Evaluators should take into consideration appropriate measures for collecting data in cases where sensitive or confidential issues are addressed, and avoid presenting information that may be harmful to some stakeholder groups.

6. Organisation of evaluation management

This evaluation is commissioned by Sida, and the intended user is Sida's Afghanistan Unit and the Embassy in Kabul. As the evaluation will serve as an input to the decision on whether the ILO-Road to Jobs project shall receive continued funding or not, the intended user is the commissioner. The evaluand ILO has contributed to the ToR and will be provided with an opportunity to comment on the inception report as well as the final report, but will not be involved in the management of the evaluation. Hence the commissioner will evaluate tenders, approve the inception report and the final report of the evaluation. The start-up meeting and the debriefing/validation workshop will be held with the commissioner and the evaluand.

7. Evaluation quality

OECD/DAC's Quality Standards for Development Evaluation[1] and use the OEDC/DAC Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility: Improving Learning for Results[2]. The evaluators shall use the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation[3]. The evaluators shall specify how quality assurance will be handled by them during the evaluation process.

8. Time schedule and deliverables

It is expected that a time and work plan is presented in the tender and further detailed in the inception report. The evaluation shall be carried out June 4 and August 20, 2018. The timing of any field visits, surveys and interviews need to be settled by the evaluator in dialogue with the main stakeholders during the inception phase.

The inception report will form the basis for the continued evaluation process and shall be approved by Sida before the evaluation proceeds to implementation. The inception report should be written in English and cover evaluability issues and interpretations of evaluation questions, present the evaluation approach, methods for data collection and analysis as well as the full evaluation design. A clear distinction between the evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection shall be made. A specific time and work plan, including number of hours/working days for each team member, for the remainder of the evaluation should be presented. The time plan shall allow space for reflection and learning between the intended users of the evaluation.

The final report shall be written in English and be professionally proof read. The final report should have clear structure and follow the report format in the Sida Decentralised Evaluation Report Template for decentralised evaluations (see Annex C). The executive summary should be maximum 3 pages. The evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection used shall be clearly described and explained in detail and a clear distinction between the two shall be made. All limitations to the methodology and methods shall be made explicit and the consequences of these limitations discussed. Findings shall flow logically from the data, showing a clear line of evidence to support the conclusions. Conclusions should be substantiated by findings and analysis. Recommendations and lessons learned should flow logically from conclusions. Recommendations should be specific, directed to relevant stakeholders and categorised as a short-term, medium-term and long-term. The report is recommended to consist of no more than 35 pages excluding annexes (including Terms of Reference and Inception Report). The evaluator shall adhere to the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation[4].

The evaluator shall, upon approval of the final report, insert the report into the Sida Decentralised Evaluation Report for decentralised evaluations and submit it to Nordic Morning (in pdf-format) for publication and release in the Sida publication data base. The order is placed by sending the approved report to sida@nordicmorning.com, always with a copy to the Sida Programme Officer as well as Sida's Chief Evaluator's Team (evaluation@sida.se). Write "Sida decentralised evaluations" in the email subject field and include the name of the consulting company as well as the full evaluation title in the email. For invoicing purposes, the evaluator needs to include the invoice reference "ZZ610601S," type of allocation "sakanslag" and type of order "digital publicering/publikationsdatabas.

9. Resources and budget

The maximum total budget, including fees and reimbursable costs, of the evaluation shall not exceed 700,000 **SEK**. The maxium budget for security related costs (including insurances) shall not exceed 300,000 SEK. Payments from the security budget will be made to consultants only for incurred costs. The security budget will not be evaluated as part of the call-off price.

The contact person at Sida/Embassy of Sweden is Niklas Eklund, Program Manager, Afghanistan Unit. The contact person should be consulted if any problems arise during the evaluation process.

Relevant Sida documentation will be provided by Niklas Eklund, Program Manager, Afghanistan Unit.

Contact details to intended users (cooperation partners, Swedish Embassies, other donors etc.) will be provided by Niklas Eklund, Program Manager, Afghanistan Unit.
The evaluator will be required to arrange the logistics for example booking interviews, preparing visits, including any necessary security arrangements. Costs for security arrangements should be included in the tender budget, however these costs will not be included in the evaluation of price.

10. Requirements

The evaluation shall be carried out by a team of 3-5 consultants. It is hightly recommended that consultants with deep regional experience ("local consultants") are included in the team. One team member shall have the role as the Team Leader (core consultant – level 1) with the overall responsibility for the evaluation. In addition to the qualifications already stated in the framework agreement for evaluation services, the evaluation team shall include the following competencies:

- Academic degree in economics/business administration or related field
- Excellent writing and verbal communication skills in English, and where at least one consultant based in Afghanistan have excellent level of Dari

11. Evaluation of the call-off responses

It is desirable that the evaluation team includes the following competencies:

- Extensive experience on evaluating market systems development (MSD) projects and private sector development projects
- Experience working in contexts characterised by fragility, violence and conflict scenarios like Afghanistan
- Experience in gender analysis and women economic empowerment

A CV for each team member shall be included in the call-off response. It should contain a full description of relevant qualifications and professional work experience.
It is important that the competencies of the individual team members are complimentary. It is highly recommended that local consultants are included in the team if appropriate.
The evaluators must be independent from the evaluation object and evaluated activities, and have no stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

Annex 2 – Evaluation Matrix

Questions raised in ToRs	Detailed Question and Indicators to be used in Evaluation	Methods	Sources	Availability and Reliability of Data /comments
Relevance				
To what extent is the programme and the project interventions still relevant?	Did the selection of target groups and geographical areas for the project seem relevant? Is the programme in line with partner government policy and operations and to what extent does the project coordinate and collaborate with relevant public bodies? Does the programme interact with other employment generation projects and initiatives in order to avoid overlaps and contradictions?	Document Analysis of project reporting and reporting of other donor projects Interviews with project stakeholders and other donors	Analysis of project planning and monitoring data and documentation, including: revisions to project proposal and logframe, regular project reporting and mid-term evaluation report Analysis of background project documentation, including: Participatory Appraisal for Competitive Advantage (PACA) Reports; Rapid Market Assessments (RMA) Reports; Market Systems Analysis (MSA) Reports; Child Labour Assessments; Gender Assessment and Project Strategy Collection & analysis of national and district data, including: Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey, 2016-2017; Humanitarian Response data on returnees and IDPs; Afghanistan Post-Harvest Seasonal Food Security Assessment, 2017 Collection & analysis of reporting and evaluations of complementary programmes, including: RAIP – UNOPS; ARDEP – WB; ANMDP – WB; ABADE – USAID; CARD-F - DFID Project Advisory Committee members Other donors – USAID, World Bank, DFID, UN	There is a range of reporting data available from other donor projects, which may provide useful comparisons with the R2J project. It should be possible to make comparisons between the analysis of the programme documentation, interview data and consideration of other donor programmes.

Effectiveness				
To what extent are the programme outcomes likely to be achieved?	To what extent do development changes in the target area reconcile with the planned outputs, purpose and goal of the evaluated intervention? Are there concrete signs of systemic change in the market systems targeted by the intervention? *Partner's satisfaction with results from the project* *Partners possess the organisational capabilities and human resources to continue the practice changes introduced.*	Document analysis of progress reports and data collected by the project Interviews with project stakeholders and beneficiaries	Project monitoring data and reporting Interviews with beneficiaries, including: dairy farmers, grape farmers and poultry farmers; milk collection centre users; those trained in businesss development; and, users of the mobile phone information services. Ensuring interviews cover the full range of beneficiaries, including women and men. Interviews with project stakeholders: Agriculture, Inclusive Financial Services, UNHCR, MoLSAMD, MoCI, BCCI & ACCI, NUAWE, private companies in Balkh and Samangan, farmers' groups, Provincial Governor's offices in Balkh and Samangan; other donors and international and local NGOs Interviews with project implementation stakeholders: ILO's Lab Project (HQ Backstopping implementation of R2J), PACA Facilitators, SIYB and Get Ahead Trainers in Afghanistan, Project Advisory Committee (PAC)	Whilst there is a good range of project research and monitoring data, it is not clear how in-depth the monitoring data in particular is. There will be a need to collect detailed interview data from beneficiaries and project stakeholders in order to supplement this. The main source for triangulation should be comparisons between the data collected through interviews beneficiaries and project stakeholders and comparisons with the analysis of the programme documentation.
	To what extent has the programme been effective in achieving the stated objective of reduced levels of conflict among its target groups? Has the project had any positive or negative effects on gender equality? Could gender mainstreaming have been improved in planning, implementation or follow up? *Beneficiary groups are satisfied with and benefiting from the effects of the partner's behaviour/practice changes.*			
	Have staffing arrangements proven to be adequate in terms of quality and quantity? Has ILO allocated the necessary resources, (human and financial) to achieve the project purpose? Has the use of resources been value for money?	Document analysis of progress reports Interviews with project implementation staff and partners	Project monitoring data and reporting Project Advisory Committee members Project implementation partners Evidence that: Project outputs are being achieved Gender equality strategy has been integrated into project implementation Flexibility and responsiveness to changing context	

	Has the programming proved perceptive and flexible along the way? To what extent are activities implemented as planned? To what extent has lessons learned from what works well and less well been used to improve and adjust project/programme implementation?		and through lesson learning Risk assessment, mitigation and response. Evidence that the underlying causes of poor market systems performance are being addressed and of progress towards 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 Outcome 3: Access to and utilisation of financial services by the farmers and disadvantaged groups improved.	
Sustainability				
To what degree are the project results likely to be sustainable beyond the project's lifetime at the level of individuals, enterprises and systemic change at market system level?	*If the project left now:* *Would partners return to their previous way of working?* *Would partners build upon the changes they've adopted, without the project?* *Would target group benefits depend on too few people, firms, or organisations?* *Would the system be supportive of the changes introduced (allowing them to be upheld, grow, evolve)?*	Document analysis of progress reports and data collected by the project Interviews with beneficiaries and project stakeholders	Project monitoring data and reporting Project beneficiaries, individual and institutional Project Advisory Committee members Project implementation partners Collation of evidence against 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 programme The net additional employment created and sustained as a result of the programme	The main data is likely to come from interviews, so that conclusions are likely to be tentative. It will, however, be possible to make comparisons with the consideration of other donor programmes.

Annex 3 – Documents Reviewed

Project Documents

ILO (November 2015) Revised Project Document - Road to Jobs: Bringing decent work to rural households of the Northern Provinces in Afghanistan

ILO (November 2015) Draft Inception Report – Roads to Jobs Project

ILO (February 2016) Road to Jobs Project - Monitoring and Results Measurement Manual, version 3

ILO (March 2016) Progress Report – Roads to Jobs Project, April 2015 to December 2015

ILO (February 2017) Progress Report – Roads to Jobs Project, January to December 2016

[names protected] (March 2017) Independent Mid-term Evaluation of the Road to Jobs Project

ILO (October 2017) Pre-Audit Report on Compliance with DCED Standard of Results Measurement

ILO (March 2018) Progress Report – Roads to Jobs Project, January to December 2017

ILO R2J (various dates, 2017-18) Intervention Guides for sample of project interventions

ILO R2J (undated) Draft Project Case Studies and Success Stories

Project Research Documents

ILO (August 2015) Report on

Participatory Appraisal for Competitive Advantage (PACA) Assessment in Balkh Province of Afghanistan

The Lab (August 2015) Sector Selection Report of the Road to Jobs Project in Northern Afghanistan

ILO and JICA (September 2015) Afghanistan Competitiveness for Job Creation: Agricultural Value Chains – Summary Report

ILO (October 2015) Report on Market System Analysis of Grape and Raisin Sector in

Balkh and Samangan provinces of Afghanistan

ILO (December 2015) Child Labour Assessment in Balkh and Samangan Provinces, Afghanistan

(June 2016) R2J Gender Report and Strategy

(2016) Strategy and implementation plan for promoting gender equality in the ILO's R2J project, Balkh and Samangan Provinces, Afghanistan

Social Finance (April 2016) Report on Mapping of Financial Services in Balkh and Samangan Provinces, Afghanistan

Tanin Consulting Service Company (December 2016) Market Feasibility Study: Taifi variety of table grape

ILO (February 2017) Cotton Sector Market Systems Analysis Report in Balkh and Samangan provinces, Afghanistan

Other Documents

D Nippard et al (March 2014) Adopt-Adapt-Expand-Respond: a framework for managing and measuring systemic change processes: Briefing Paper

Erin Markel (July 2014) Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment in Private Sector Development: Guidelines for Practitioners

Adam Kessler (August 2015) Assessing Systemic Change: Implementation guidelines for the DCED Standard

Ben Fowler and Adam Kessler (February 2015) Measuring Achievements of Private Sector Development in Conflict-Affected Environments: Practical Guidelines for Implementing the DCED Standard

Giulia Minoia and Adam Pain (July 2017) Understanding rural markets in Afghanistan. SLRC Working paper 58

Upper Quartile (October 2017) Midline 1 Report: Evaluation of the Comprehensive Agricultural and Rural Development Facility (CARD-F)

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (April 2018) No more standard programming: economic development in fragile settings. SLRC Policy Paper 1

World Bank (May 2018) Implementation Completion and Results Report for the Afghanistan New Market Development Project (ANMDP)

Annex 4 – People & Partners Interviewed

ILO
Steve Hartrich and Daniela Martinez – The Lab Project, ILO, Geneva

[names protected]

[names protected]

Sweden
Mattias Lindstrom – Swedish Embassy, Kabul

Niklas Eklund- Afghanistan Unit, Sida, Stockholm

R2J Partners

[names protected]

Evaluation of ILO Road to Jobs (R2J),Afghanistan

The evaluation of ILO Road to Jobs (R2J), was commissioned by the Afghanistan Unit at Sida. The objectives were to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the project and formulate recommendations on how to improve and adjust implementation and to serve as an input to the decision to whether the project should receive continued funding or not. The evaluation found that in terms of relevance, the R2J team has developed a thorough understanding of the context they are operating in, which they continue to develop. Further, the team has made notable progress in making connections with partners, encouraging work between stakeholders and developed a range of interventions, relevant to partners and context. In terms of effectiveness, significant progress has been made in programme outcomes in the last 9–10 months through a flexible and collaborative approach. However, some evidence is lacking that there has been systemic change in all relevant value chains. There is potential for sustainability as it has been considered from the start, and there is evidence of partners adopting innovations and there are examples of adaptation. More elaborate conclusions and recommendations are available in the executive summary of the report.

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY
Address: SE-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm
Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64
E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: http://www.sida.se

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