

# Promoting inclusive employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in Iraq

Creating employment prospects for refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities

## The context

Many young people in Iraq are looking for jobs. Especially for people affected by conflict and displacement, it is challenging to attend necessary technical and vocational training classes and secure a job. Refugees and IDPs are either excluded from the labor market or exploited, while women and persons with disabilities remain underrepresented.

Yet, having an income is the basis for building a livelihood, and peaceful and stable societies. With the right skillsets, jobseekers and future entrepreneurs can boost economic growth. Nearly 60 percent of the country's 45.4 million population is under the age of 25. They are ambitious and motivated to find decent jobs or start their own businesses.

Although the government has intensified efforts to enhance access to education and skills development, increased efforts are needed to address the access to training opportunities and to adapt curricula to the labour market needs. To allow everyone to access and participate in the labour market inclusive labour market policies are needed.

## Our approach

The project takes an integrated approach to promote inclusive employment opportunities. It focuses on four key areas:

**Policy advocacy:** at macro-level, raising awareness among state actors through evidence-based findings to improve the integration of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and marginalised groups in host communities into labour market policy.

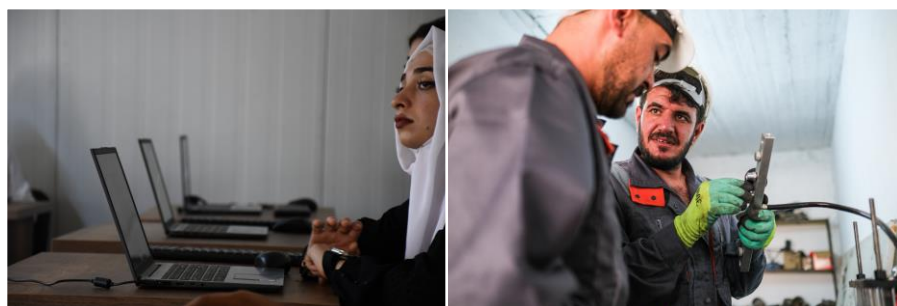
<b>Project name</b>	Employment Prospects for Socio-economic Integration of Refugees, IDPs and Host Communities in Iraq (EPSI)
<b>Commissioned by</b>	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
<b>Project region</b>	Iraq (Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Halabja, Ninawa, and Anbar)
<b>Lead executing agency</b>	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) in Iraq
<b>Duration</b>	15.06.2023 – 31.05.2026

**Skills for employment:** at meso level, developing technical and vocational training curricula that allow participants to gain market-relevant skills. This enhances students' employability. Teachers at vocational training and career development centres participate in training to understand and apply the new curricula.

It will provide training for 1,800 participants, of whom 1,300 will take part in internship opportunities.

**Fit for business:** at micro-level, building and developing entrepreneurial and business skills as well as providing financial support to (future) entrepreneurs. This helps creating an income for the business owners and potentially their employees as well as developing businesses. The project supports 1,400 micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

**Short-term employment opportunities:** similarly at micro- level, providing temporary employment opportunities, such as Cash for Work, for 1,100 people, to generate and stabilise income opportunities that address the immediate financial needs of the target groups.



*Photo left: a Syrian refugee girl takes part in a computer skills training in Domiz Camp, Duhok, (2024).*

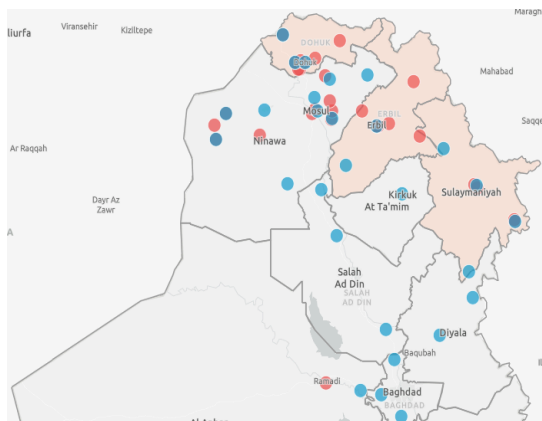
*Photo right: a trainer explains a car part to a participant of vocational training in mechanics in Zakho, Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) (2024).*



*Photo left: a woman takes part in a Business Management Training in Zakho, KRI (2024).*

*Photo right: an intern works on a smart phone in KRI (2024).*

Monitoring the recent return of IDPs to their places of origin, the project works in close coordination with relevant international organisations and local authorities, to determine the needs of the marginalised group in relation to income generation opportunities after their basic and immediate needs are addressed by other actors. Concurrently, within the host communities, the project is continuing and expanding its measures to support the integration efforts of IDPs. Thus, these complementary measures contribute to the implementation of the Iraqi National Plan to Resolve Displacement.



*Blue circles on the map show IDP movement while the red circles indicate EPSI project's ongoing measures in response to the changes.*

*\*IDP movement data as of 12.2024 is courtesy of International Organization for Migration (IOM).*

## The benefits

As Iraq's needs shift from short-term stabilisation to long-term sustainable employment creation, the project supports relevant government actors through sensitisation and facilitation of discussions to promote the inclusion of marginalised groups into the labour market. Understanding the bigger role that private sector and other relevant actors have, the project gives special attention to increasing the collaboration between relevant actors in

working towards a more inclusive employment policy. To support participants in gaining practical knowledge, the project offers a minimum of two months of internship following market-relevant vocational training. Moreover, to create sustainable income generation, the project similarly supports MSMEs to provide employment opportunities in various fields, including agriculture as well as the digital and the green sector. Business Management Training, covering financial management, marketing and customer service are provided along with business grants to start, expand or reactivate enterprises that are mainly led by women, IDPs and refugees. Through market-linkage events, graduates of vocational training and supported business owners are provided with networking opportunities to connect with private sector. This approach helps participants to acquire the much-needed experience to find sustainable employment opportunities.

## An example from the field

More than 1,100 participants have taken part in business management trainings so far while 811 business owners have received business grants to start up, expand or reactivate their enterprises. One of the inspiring stories out of the supported MSMEs is of Sima Saman, a young woman from Halabja in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, who established Gula Hero, an organic compost producer and seller. The business idea goes back to her observations of daily dumping of tons of methane-emitting organic waste, such as pomegranate peels and olive pomace. With the help of GIZ, she bought a grinder machine, with which to process the organic waste that is sourced from olive-oil-producing factories as well as households. This allowed her to develop and introduce new products. After packaging, she sells them directly to nurseries as well as landscaping companies. "I have been working hard to get my project started. It makes me very happy when I see small successes. Despite the hard work and sometimes discouraging comments, I will not give up," Sima said.

"My next endeavor is to expand my business by producing a diverse range of products," she added.

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