

Terms of Reference

Consultancy for conducting needs assessment for cooperative development in Iraq under “Prospects” and “Enhancing Labour Governance, Inspection and Working Conditions in Response to the COVID-19 in Iraq” projects

April - June 2021

1. Introduction

Iraq is emerging from conflict resulting in the defeat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and transitioning to a sustainable development period. Years of conflict uprooted millions, eroded social cohesion, disrupted access to basic services, destroyed businesses and livelihoods and increased protection risks. With widespread humanitarian and development concerns, weak central and local governance and limited progress towards recovery and development, the situation in Iraq remains unstable and has become protracted. There are an estimated 4.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance across the country, of whom 1.77 million are in acute need. As of February 2020, 1.4 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs) (with a significant majority in Ninewa governorate) were identified, in addition to 4.66 million returnees and 247,440 refugees of whom 250,000 are Syrian refugees, (50.3% in Erbil, 35% in Dohuk, the rest in other governorates) (148,642 out of camps and 98,798 in camp).

The unemployment rate is reported to have increased from 6.5 per cent before 2014 to 13.8 per cent as of July 2018, due to the influx of IDPs and refugees, compared to an already high rate of 10% among members of the host community. IDPs were also more likely to work in non-wage jobs – which offer far less stability and continuity of income – while IDP women were far more likely to be out of the labour force altogether. IDPs also earned significantly less income. About 57% of IDPs reported earning less than 500 Iraqi dinars a month, compared to an already significant but lower share of 51% for members of the host community. IOM reported in 2019 that Ninewa (81 %) and Erbil (68 %) were the locations where most individuals have no jobs. IDP employment rates were 43 % on average, but even lower in Ninewa (23%) .

While public sector jobs are favoured by host community members, the sector does little to stimulate economic growth or job creation. In recent years, the Governments in KRI and Baghdad have put forward efforts to attract private sector investment to stimulate the economy and generate jobs. This includes subsidies and tax exemptions for foreign companies and establishing regional investment boards. The Kurdistan Board of Investment highlighted Dohuk as one of the top three regional governorates for investment, particularly in agriculture.

In 2020, Iraq was also hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and its social and economic consequences. A rapid assessment of the impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable populations and small-scale enterprises in Iraq¹ undertaken by the ILO and Fafo in June 2020, revealed that younger workers and those in the informal economy were disproportionately affected. According to the assessment, about a quarter of workers lost their jobs and 36 percent of those in the age group 18-24 were permanently laid-off. Moreover, the average monthly wage-income for those who kept

¹ ILO, Fafo: Rapid assessment of the impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable populations and small-scale enterprises in Iraq, July 2020.

their jobs declined by 40 per cent. In the case of micro and small enterprises, employing less than 5 workers, only one-third of them operated as before the pandemic, only few of them have laid-off employees, however, the majority of them were not paying employees who were not able to be at the workplace. Although about a half of the surveyed enterprises were confident that they would survive the crisis, the others estimated that they would remain operational for the next one to six months only.

2. Project Background

In response to the considerable education, employment and protection challenges in Iraq, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank (WB) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have joined forces through the PROSPECTS Partnership, funded by the Government of Netherlands. The partnership focuses on three pillars targeting Nineveh and Dohuk to address the needs of forcibly displaced persons and vulnerable host communities through equitable and inclusive education, employment and protection interventions that aim to improve sustainable livelihoods for all.

The Employment pillar of the partnership focuses on enhancing access to employment opportunities and livelihoods for vulnerable forcibly displaced and host communities, including youth and women. It further supports the government and key stakeholders in promoting a business environment that encourages investment, entrepreneurship and innovation. The ILO's comparative advantage in strengthening labour markets, promoting access to improved working conditions and fundamental rights at work complements those of the other partners, to ultimately improve employment prospects for forcibly displaced and host communities.

Additionally, the International Labour Organization, with support from the European Union (EU), is implementing a project to enhance Labour Governance, Inspection and Working Conditions in Iraq, in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The project addresses a number of labour market challenges imposed by the pandemic, as well as some of the longer-term decent work priorities of Iraq. In relation to this ToRs, emphasis will be placed on compliance with decent work in the agricultural sector. Pilot interventions on farms will help farmers move towards compliance with labour standards, which are a pre-requisite for access to foreign markets. Interventions will provide trainings and guidance on labour standards to build their knowledge and capacity, while supporting workers to enhance their employability through skills development and help labour inspectors carry out their functions.

In the inception phase of the Prospects partnership, the ILO identified sectors and value chains with the greatest potential to generate jobs for displaced populations and host communities. Additionally, the project "Enhancing Labour Governance, Inspection and Working Conditions in Response to the COVID-19 in Iraq" has revealed some economic sectors and sub-sectors during its inception phase that have potential for growth and job creation. Among key sectors, the rapid assessment of markets (RAM) recommended greenhouse vegetable production, tomato, milk production and dairy processing for a full value-chain assessment, which will identify bottlenecks and constraints that prevent the value chains from reaching their full employment creation potential. In this regard, cooperative structures can help address some identified constraints and play an enabling role in employment creation. Small and medium size enterprises may form collective organizations to leverage market linkages, improve bargaining power and access information. In the context of forced displacement, cooperative structures strengthen and

generate social cohesion through their functioning principles, their social purposes intended to benefit members and the community, and their impact at the local level. In this regard, the ILO will support an institutional capacity needs and strengths assessment of:

- a) Cooperatives, farmer/producer groups, and other similar organizations involved in the project value chains activities including: community development groups, self-help groups, local development associations (LDAs); and
- b) Public and private organizations that provide support to the above mentioned organizations including: government institutions, secondary cooperatives, social partners, refugee/IDP run organizations, cooperative business development service providers, training institutes, NGOs etc.

The assessment will inform the interventions required to tailor the capacity development to the identified needs of the above organizations.

Box 1: What is a cooperative?

A cooperative is defined by the International Co-operative Alliance and the International Labour Organization as “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.”

Source: The ILO Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002 (No. 193)

3. Scope of the assignment

The consultant is expected to conduct a needs assessment of cooperatives, farmers/producers groups, and other similar organizations engaged in the project value chain activities, and explore the role and performance of public and private support organizations (i.e. government institutions, secondary cooperatives, social partners, refugee/IDP run organizations, cooperative business development service providers, training institutes, NGOs etc.) operating in the project target governorates Nineveh, Basra and Dohuk. The needs assessment will also analyse potential of these informal farmers/producers groups and similar organizations to coalesce into cooperative enterprises and formal organizations. Particular attention will be given to the following value chains identified by the project:

- *Greenhouse vegetable production*
- *Tomato*
- *Dairy processing and milk production*

The main objective of the assessment is to understand the current situation of cooperatives, farmers/producers groups, and other similar organizations in the target governorates and value chains, particularly their capacities, strengths, weaknesses and needs.

The assessment should consider the following components:

- Identification of relevant stakeholders in the project target areas: cooperatives farmers/producers organizations and other similar organizations including community development groups, self-help groups, local development associations (LDAs), and their support organizations, with a particular focus on those run by or serving displaced populations;
- The relevance of the cooperatives and other similar organizations (as referred above) to the needs of their members especially on how they contribute directly to their livelihoods;
- The assessment of cooperatives, farmers/producers groups and other similar organizations will include, if possible: management, governance, compliance with decent work aspects, gender inclusion, etc., using disaggregated data per gender and age;
- Identify major challenges that are specific to cooperatives, farmers/producers groups and other similar organizations in market-oriented agricultural development in Iraq;
- Provide a set of recommendations on ways of strengthening cooperatives, farmers/producers groups, and other similar organizations in the target governorates of Iraq.
- Identify and analyse skills gaps and specific training needs for cooperatives, other producers' organizations, and cooperative support organizations. This will include a review of ILO tools such as Think.Coop, Start.Coop, and MyCoop9 to assess their relevance.

Specific tasks to be covered by this assessment include:

- Review existing relevant literature on cooperatives in Iraq (KRI, Ninawah, and Basra), and provide a brief overview of the state of cooperatives in the country, policy and legislation regarding cooperatives, highlighting specific challenges. The review should look at whether refugees are allowed by legislation to establish or become members of cooperatives ;
- Map all relevant stakeholders, in particular rural cooperatives, farmers/producers groups, community development groups, self-help groups, local development associations (LDAs), and their support organizations in the selected value chains in the target governorates (Dohuk, Basra and Nineveh). With possibility to include other governorates through desk review and conducting selective remote interviews, subject to assessment requirements; ²
- Identify relevant public and private support organizations for cooperatives, farmers/producers groups and other similar organizations (i.e. government institutions, secondary cooperatives, social partners, refugee/IDP run organizations, cooperative business development service providers, training institutes, NGOs etc.);
- Prepare standard interview questionnaires for relevant cooperatives, groups, organizations and other necessary tools (e.g. for focus group discussions with producers);
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the cooperatives, farmers/producers groups, and other similar organizations in terms of leadership, membership, infrastructure, participation in the markets, and their economic viability;

² The mapping will provide basic information such as the main crops and produce of each organization, type of organization, membership (disaggregated by sex), production capacity etc.

- Provide an assessment of the challenges and opportunities for cooperatives, farmers/producers and other similar organizations in the selected value chains in the target areas;
- Assess whether cooperatives have access to financial services and whether this practice is legally possible in Iraq.
- Identify and discuss concrete opportunities for cooperative development for producers (with a special focus on women/youth producers and people with disabilities);
- Identify and analyse skills gaps and specific training needs for cooperatives, farmers/producers groups, other similar organizations, and their support organizations. This will include a review of ILO tools such as Think.Coop³, Start.Coop⁴ and MyCoop⁵ to assess their relevance;
- Assess the involvement on IDPs, returnees and refugees within existing cooperatives or their own formed cooperatives following their displacement. Analyse whether IDPs and refugees are allowed to join or establish a cooperative.
- Produce a needs assessment report based on the above objectives, which includes but is not limited to desk review, stakeholders mapping, analysis of challenges, opportunities, strengths and weaknesses for cooperative development and recommendations for improving the performance of cooperatives including capacity building, and to guide future ILO's interventions in related value chains.

4. Methodology

The methodology to be followed by the consultant will include the following components:

- a. A desk review of relevant documents related to the cooperative legal framework, selected value chains and performance of cooperatives, farmers/producers groups and other similar organizations in the target areas in particular and in the country in general. The project is to provide documentation it may have available.
- b. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) with relevant stakeholders such as cooperatives, farmers/producers groups, other similar organizations as well as their support organizations either governmental or non-governmental, business and financial service providers (particularly those serving displaced populations), among others if they exist. The main objective of the interviews will be to gather in-depth information, including perceptions, views and factual information on the current situation and potential for cooperative and farmer/producers groups development and the integration of displaced populations, youth and women in existing cooperatives and farmer/producers groups, (as members or

³ Think.Coop: Training module to raise awareness on the cooperative business model:
https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/publications/WCMS_616148/lang--en/index.htm

⁴ Start.Coop: Training tool to guide on the establishment of a cooperative:
https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/publications/WCMS_644711/lang--en/index.htm

⁵ My.COOP is a training package published in 2011, covering managerial challenges that many agricultural cooperatives face, and based on the idea that strong cooperatives are necessary for a more equitable distribution of income, democracy, and for economic and social development. For more information please visit
<http://moodle.itcilo.org/mycoop/?lang=en>

employees). The consultant should take specific measures to ensure the inclusion of forcibly displaced persons, women, people with disabilities and youth as interviewees.

An interview/FGD plan as well as the draft interview guide / FGD guide questionnaire should be included in the inception report. The interviews could be done either face to face or remotely. Measures should be taken to ensure that interviews and/or focus group discussions are conducting safely and are in compliance with recommendations and guidance related to COVID19 in the country.

The consultant will work under the overall supervision of the ILO Regional Chief Technical Advisor of PROSPECTS, with inputs from the PROSPECTS Iraq Enterprise Technical Officer, and the Chief Technical Advisor of the Labour Governance project with inputs from the project Sr. National Project Officer. The CTAs will coordinate the implementation of this assignment and seek inputs from the ILO's Cooperatives Unit and Regional Crisis Response and Resilience Specialist, as well as other DWT Specialists as deemed necessary and relevant.

5. Outputs

The final output expected from the consultant is a needs assessment report of a maximum of 40 pages in English and Arabic.

Specific deliverables expected from the consultant include the following:

Deliverable	Explanation	Time frame	Time required
Inception report / work plan	This document should include: - A detailed outline; - Work plan; - Information on the stakeholders to be interviewed; - Specific research questions interview and FGD guide / questionnaire; - Initial bibliography for the literature review.	Second week after signature of the contract.	7 days
Draft report in English	The report should have a separate section for each governorate and each "governorate" section should include: - A literature review; - Identification of actors: cooperatives, farmers/producers groups, other similar organizations as well as their support organizations - Assessment of cooperatives, farmers/producers groups and other similar organizations and their strengths,	Within six weeks after signature of the contract.	24 days (including filed visits)



	weaknesses and needs based on assessment scope defined above ; - Assessment of capacity building needs of cooperatives, farmers/producers groups, other similar organizations as well as their support organizations - Recommendations on the way forward including concrete opportunities for cooperative development for producers; - Complete list of interviews; - Bibliography; - Annexes with list of organizations and interviewees; interview questionnaires; list of stakeholders identified during the mapping exercise		
Presentation of the the initial findings	A presentation of the results will be made on zoom or Skype to partner organizations after the submission of the initial version of the report	Within six weeks after signature of the contract.	1 day
Final report in English	Report revised on the basis of the comments provided to the initial report	Within seven weeks after signature of the contract.	4 days
Final Report in Arabic	Translation of the final report into Arabic	Within eight weeks after signature of the contract.	4 days
Total			40 days

6. Qualifications

Required qualifications include:

- University degree in social sciences or other relevant subjects
- Knowledge and experience in working in the country
- Specific knowledge on participatory research methods
- Experience in cooperative development and agricultural development
- Good facilitation, presentation and analytical skills, as well as ability to elaborate high quality research documents
- Language skills: fluency in Arabic and English
- Familiarity with ICT tools that can be used for regular data collection

7. Payment schedule

The Consultant will receive a total net fee for an effort estimated at 40 days which will be conducted within two months. It will be paid in the following ways:

- A first payment of 30% following the submission of the inception report, to the satisfaction of the ILO;
- A second and last payment: of 70% following the submission of the final report (in English and Arabic) to the satisfaction of the ILO.

8. Application submission

Interested applicants should submit their technical and financial proposals in English that should clearly outline:

- Cover letter, explaining why the applicant is suitable for the assignment
- Information about the applicant's relevant experience (CV). The information provided shall clearly show that the qualifications required are met.
- Understanding of the task and approach/methodology suggested carrying out the assignment
Description of and timeline for actions to be taken by the potential consultant to fulfil the assignment.
- The financial proposal should outline an estimated budget for the overall assignment including professional fees. Cost estimates with breakdown by necessary budget lines.
- Please mention **"Consultancy for conducting needs assessment for cooperative development in Iraq"** in the subject of the email.

The technical and financial proposal together should not exceed three pages excluding annexes. Proof of similar assignment (incl. papers produced if possible) and CV(s) of people to be involved is required as an annex.

Submission of proposals to: hamad@ilo.org , jradi@ilo.org by **30 April 2021**.