



► EIP Technical Brief

December 2022

► Employment Intensive Investment Programme: Improving informal urban settlements through local infrastructure development

Summary

- This brief was developed by the Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to provide an overview of EIIP activities in urban areas specifically to support the urban poor with the provision of local infrastructure whilst creating job opportunities and promoting productive decent work.
- For more general information about the EIIP, please visit: [Employment intensive investments \(ilo.org\)](https://www.ilo.org/employment-intensive-investments)

► Introduction

The UN Habitat has projected a substantial increase in the global urban population with an expected rise from 56 percent in 2021 to 68 percent in 2050.¹ While all regions of the world are expected to urbanize, about 90 percent of this rapid urbanization trends are largely concentrated in the Africa and Asia regions.

With an increasing population, many cities are not prepared for and able to manage the impact of urban growth as rapid urbanization leads to slum/informal settlement growth. By 2020, the proportion of informal settlement residents amounted to 24 percent (more than 1 billion persons) with 85% situated in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia.² This increasing number of informal settlement inhabitants is due to urban population growth outpacing

the planning and construction of affordable housing, with governance being a key factor. This rapid pace of urbanisation leads to overburdened infrastructure and services (waste collection, water, sanitation, and transportation) as well as leading to people living in more hazardous and polluted environments.

Moreso, employment creation has struggled to keep up with the pace of urbanisation and many cities face high levels of unemployment. Urban inhabitants are thus, forced into the informal or vulnerable job market with 1.4 billion³ people (women and children more exposed) in developing countries working in the informal sector. In Asian economies informal employment constitutes 40-60% of urban employment⁴. In sub-Saharan Africa the informal sector employs 60% of the urban labour force at extremely low incomes. In Latin America 83% of all new urban jobs created between 1990-93 were in the informal sector, mostly poorly remunerated.

¹ UN Habitat 2022 "World cities report 2022: Envisaging the future of cities"

² United Nations Statistics Division – SDG indicators (n.d)

³ European Commission 2019 Employment and decent work (2019, October 14). European Commission

⁴ Urban Poverty in Asia (2014) ADB

► ILO and EIIP Contributions

The ILO's call to address rapid urbanization is not a new one. In a presentation for HABITAT II in 1996⁵, the ILO called for a labour-intensive approach to building municipal infrastructure, providing services and construction of low-cost housing using labour-intensive methods. The EIIP thus, addresses the issues of informal settlements including unemployment, poverty, as well as poor living conditions by facilitating access to employment through investment in infrastructure.

The EIIP recognises that infrastructure investments boost economic productivity and that the construction industry accounts for 7.7% of global employment.⁶ Through investment in infrastructure, cities offer significant potential for achieving the SDGs, advancing a development model that is more inclusive and sustainable.

EIIP's work in the areas of informal settlements is, therefore, an ideal means to put into practice and promote the principles of SDG goals 8 (on inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all), goal 11 (on Inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities) and the ILO centenary declaration for the future of work which notes that ILO should direct efforts towards sustainable development, promotion of skills, decent work opportunities, workers' rights, gender equality and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

While, the rapid rate of urbanization creates various challenges, it has the potential to offer opportunities for economic growth, social development as well as improving quality of life. EIIP promotes this by ensuring that the urban poor are granted access to basic services including, clean water, safe shelter, education and health services.

With over 50 years' experience applying employment intensive investment approaches and technology, the EIIP has accumulated experience across 60 countries especially in low- and middle- income countries in rural and urban areas. EIIP's Cities with Jobs Policy Paper (2012 through three country case studies, provided an overview of the global employment crisis, described the employment activities of local authorities and presented an integrated approach for urban job creation. Through this research, the

EIIP presented the potential for cities to deliver sustainable development and fight urban poverty through job creation and decent work.



► EIIP Experience in the Urban Context

Upgrading Informal Urban Settlements

The EIIP supports the upgrading and development of infrastructures that ensure that the needs of informal settlement dwellers are addressed (see box 1). These infrastructures include:

Community Buildings which include classrooms, pre-school buildings, health centres, markets etc.

Drainage systems to drain away water from houses and access paths as well as to avoid flooding and pools of stagnant water e.g., lined open drainage channels, culvert crossings and small bridges

Access roads and footpaths to provide access to housing, markets as well as public facilities for example improved footpaths and handcart paths, small bridges, concrete block or stone paving, gravelling

Sanitation and solid waste management, to provide hygienic safe disposal sites for waste including public toilets, appropriate sewerage schemes, emptying pit latrines, sedimentation ponds, cleaning of public areas, household garbage collection, separation and recycling and composting of solid waste

⁵ ILO (1996). The future of urban employment. Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II)

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Flood protection to protect the communities from flooding and prevent damage to housing

Environmental and green areas including recreational areas, and beautification of cities and towns

Water supplies including water distribution schemes, water storage tanks, water kiosks, wells, public washing facilities.

Electricity and street lightening for security



Through its local resource based (LRB) approach, EIIP ensures that the community is involved in the improvement and maintenance of their infrastructure. It considers the materials and expertise utilized are sourced from within the community including labour, knowledge, technologies, materials etc. EIIP's LRB approach thus supports communities to develop and maintain small-scale community infrastructure like the access roads, footbridges, water supply, irrigation, drainage systems and other local facilities.



► **Box 1 Lebanon: EIIP Projects**

The EIIP projects in Lebanon targets the most vulnerable municipalities that host the most deprived Lebanese and Syrian refugees. They include a significant amount of urban works that is centred around a local resource-based approach including drainage, garbage clearing, sidewalks and kerbs, disabled access, traffic control features and stormwater drainage. The projects have been running since 2017 and have provided short term employment opportunities for vulnerable persons from the host countries and refugees. The projects employ a significant proportion of women and Persons with disabilities (PWDs) and include contractor training.

EIIP further uses community participation and planning as well as small-scale and community contracting to improve and develop these infrastructures. In this regard, the community concerned is involved at all stages of the planning and design of the project to ensure that the infrastructure works refer to the needs of the community (see box 2). This not only grants the community access to improved services and infrastructure but also promotes capacity building and skills development in the community as well as developing partnership with the government.

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► **Box 2: ILO Urban Poverty Infrastructure Project – Battambang, Cambodia**

The Chamka Samrong Muoy Settlement is an informal settlement located in Battambang, Cambodia. The area has suffered from poor drainage and sanitary conditions especially during the rainy season which has led to the area breeding mosquitoes and posing health hazards for the residents.

EIIP interventions supported the improvements of physical infrastructures including roads and streets, storm water drainage, sanitation, potable water, solid waste disposal, rainwater harvesting, recreational facilities and street lighting.

The community was involved in all stages of the project and were also provided with training and tools and facilities to burn solid waste on a sustainable basis. Moreso, EIIP sourced materials such as bricks, cement, pipes and hand tools to the extent possible from Battambang. Women accounted for 52% of the workforce, in terms of workdays and a total of 5,216 workdays of employment was created.

Moreso, the EIIP incorporates participatory approaches that integrates women, vulnerable groups and youth in infrastructure development. This ensures that all segments of the community equally benefit from the jobs that are created (see box 3).



► **Box 3: Cameroon: Urban Infrastructure and Decent Jobs**

This urban infrastructure development project aims to create decent jobs for young people in the cities of Maroua and Bamenda, using labour-intensive methods to rehabilitate and maintain urban infrastructure whilst promoting SMEs. The project targets the head of technical services in the communes, young people from the municipalities and youth association.

The project creates two labour-intensive technical units with these teams being responsible for carrying out the planned infrastructure work by organizing young people into cooperatives in various construction trades. A second component includes training in theoretical and practical techniques of labour-intensive methods including the design, execution and control of infrastructure works (roads, buildings, crossings and sanitation works).

A third component concerns the organisation of young people into cooperatives or economic interest groups, promoting their access to employment through the provision of the new public procurement code which allows access to community organisations. A fourth component concerns ILO technical monitoring and decent work.

Urban Eco-construction

As the impact of climate change continues to negatively affect the environment, EIIP intervention in infrastructure development has expanded to include green works in both the rural and urban areas. In this regard, EIIP ensures that its projects have a positive environmental impact, including through land management, flood control, sustainable transport, and reforestation. Its interventions equally promote the application of eco-friendly construction materials (see box 4). For example, localised production of green construction materials to reduce emissions (less cement, less transport and avoiding burning bricks using wood).

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► Box 4: The Gaza Project

The ILO interventions in Gaza were implemented to address the skills deficit in the construction sector; promote emergency employment; and enhance youth employment opportunities through employment intensive approaches. The EIIP ensures that the methods used in the projects have a positive environmental impact using eco-friendly materials.

Through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) engineers in Gaza, the project provided training for local people to equip them with new skills that increase their chance of finding (green) jobs in an evolving construction market. In particular, the ILO supported the construction of manually operated compressed earth blocks (CEBs) presses, as this provides the most labour-intensive option for producing blocks, and thus provides more jobs for the Gaza construction industry. The CEBs are known to be environmentally friendly, use very little energy for production and transportation, are totally recyclable, and they are thermally efficient in the summer and winter.

Emergency Employment

Natural disasters, climate change and conflict often result in people moving to cities and this can create conflict and tensions with newcomers being perceived as taking even the lowest paid jobs. The application of EIIP methods can aid in improving social cohesion and reducing tensions as demonstrated in Lebanon. In emergency situations a rapid response is required – and EIIP for example was able to

divert existing resources from ongoing work in Beirut as a quick response to the blast. The ILO has been able to respond quickly to natural disasters in Haiti (earthquake), Kerala (India – floods and landslides), Nepal (earthquake) and Philippines (typhoon), amongst other countries. Immediate job creation through emergency employment schemes can support the response to a crisis by rehabilitating destroyed assets and offering income earning opportunities.

► Box 5: Philippines: Haiyan Response

In November 2013 a category 5 typhoon hit the Philippines devastating 36 provinces. Poverty, inequality, and rapid urbanisation (including poor quality of construction) exacerbated the impact of the typhoon. ILOs response supporting the Philippine government and local communities affected aimed at supporting the recovery of livelihoods of poor and vulnerable workers and their families in the affected areas

Key activities included rapid assessments on damages and losses on employment and livelihoods, immediate emergency employment through clearance, cleaning and rehabilitation of community assets, infrastructure and the environment including skills and enterprise development.

Urban activities included reconstruction of schools, debris clearance, housing construction (including labour-based manufacture of stabilised compressed soil blocks) and skills training in small engine repairs, carpentry, and masonry.

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Recommendations

- ▶ Green works and youth employment are themes that can run through all urban development works. EIIP can promote its experience in this area – including use of public employment programmes, skills training, localised production construction materials, climate proofing of infrastructure, non-motorised transport system and greening of urban areas.
- ▶ EIIP promotes engagement in housing construction and green construction technologies – lack of affordable and safe housing is a key issue under SDG 11. Infrastructure provision and the low-carbon green construction technologies contribute to climate change adaptation in communities.
- ▶ The increasing number of crises due to climate change and conflict presents an opportunity to apply EIIP approaches, where, with the extensive humanitarian funding available, the benefits of jobs, infrastructure and social cohesion can be promoted.
- ▶ Relationships with key agencies are important, (World Bank Group, UN Habitat and others). Complementary partners can scale up and engage in city wide planning, while focussing on employment creation, LRB, decent work and promoting the particular advantage of EIIP in urban areas.
- ▶ EIIP can also be promoted through engagement with networking organisations including the WUF, Cities Alliance and particularly groups of secondary cities, where the needs may have been overlooked, where decentralisation gives greater responsibilities and where a contiguous link to rural development is possible.

Key ILO Resources and Publications

Atkinson, A. 2012. *Employment Sector Employment Working Paper No. 131 Cities with Jobs: Confronting the Employment Challenge* ILO [Cities with Jobs: Confronting the Employment Challenge; Policy paper \(ilo.org\)](#)

ILO 2018. *Creating jobs through public investment* [Creating jobs through public investment \(ilo.org\)](#).

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