

# Support Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility (SALAM)

## Midterm Evaluation Report

Final Report

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## Acronyms

ANPDF	Afghan National Peace and Development Framework
ASDP	Afghanistan Skills Development Project
BLA	Bilateral Labour Agreement
CTA	Chief Technical Adviser
DiREC	Displacement and Return Executive Committee
DSWG	Durable Solutions Working Group
DOLSAMD	Directorate of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOLSAMD	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled
MTE	Midterm Evaluation
NLMS	National Labour Migration Strategy
NSDP	National Skills Development Program
NTA	National Technical Assistant
PLACED	Placing Labour Abroad project
PMRS	Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Specialist
SALAM	Support Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility Project
ToC	Theory of Change
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

## Executive summary

The Support Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility (SALAM) project is a joint project of UNDP, ILO and UNHCR in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MOLSAMD).

The Framework project was designed in 2016 in the wake of massive returns of refugees from Pakistan and failed asylum seekers from Europe. Its stated aim is to support the government to develop comprehensive, coherent and integrated national and sub-national policy and institutional approaches for enhancing livelihoods in a time of crisis and protracted conflict. The intended funding of \$120 million did not eventuate but the Government of Finland kick-started SALAM as a €4.5 million subproject. It started in January 2017 and will conclude in December 2019 with the aim of seeking durable solutions in line with the Government of Afghanistan's vision and strategies for employment generation and labour migration.

The [purpose of the midterm evaluation](#) is to provide a comprehensive, independent assessment of project performance and governance arrangements, and to provide recommendations for the remainder of project implementation. A major limitation of the evaluation was the official non-participation of MOLSAMD during the field mission and the relative absence of the voice of government in the Draft Report. This was partially addressed for the Final Report.

### Findings

[Relevance](#) SALAM was a highly relevant project at the time of design in 2016. By 2018, slow progress in implementation, the presence of larger and more sustainable interventions, and a less urgent political environment have reduced SALAM's relevance. The strength of the design was that it recognised the need to support job creation and sustainable livelihoods through a strategy of local economic development. A weakness was continuing with the same outputs and staffing structure that were set for a much larger intervention.

The intended target group of SALAM was returnees to prevent repeat migration. For reasons of conflict sensitivity and inclusion, this has expanded to include IDPs, host communities, women, youth and disabled people. With such wide criteria and a very large pool of potential beneficiaries, the focus on sustainable reintegration will be lost and impact will be diluted.

[Effectiveness](#) SALAM is not yet demonstrating effectiveness. There were no results against targets for 2017 and not yet for 2018 although activities are underway. In output 1 most activities relate to long term institutional development. In output 2 the activities of most interest to Finland is delivery of competency-based training programs for priority trades. This has only just begun in Nangarhar and there are complications because the contracts issued to private sector providers may undermine the programmatic role of DOLSAMD and MoLSAMD.

Many factors are affecting achievement. The most important are: clarity of purpose and scale of ambition; capacity addition rather than capacity development; the absence of a system of certification and standards; challenges achieving gender equity; and insufficient time to achieve developmental objectives.

[Efficiency](#) SALAM has faced a number of efficiency challenges: the project structure is oriented to UNDP and does not adequately reflect the leadership role of government; there has been no project manager who could provide direction and manage relationships for most of the duration; there have been capacity weaknesses in MOLSAMD but also in UNDP and ILO; and the timeframes set for delivery

of results are unrealistically short. All partners are frustrated with the slow pace of progress. The inception period lasted the whole of 2017 with delivery only 19 percent against target. In 2018 financial delivery has improved but some targets will be transferred to 2019. Establishing relationships of trust between the UN partners and MOLSAMD has been difficult and project management has been severely hampered by the failure to recruit and retain a project manager.

SALAM is implemented through UNDP's National Implementation Modality (NIM). However, the Ministry has had little say in the allocation of the budget and has repeatedly expressed concern about the high proportion allocated to international staff costs. At up to 25 percent in 2018, value for money is questionable. The tension was inflamed when the number of beneficiaries in Nangarhar was cut by 42 percent because of the increased unit cost of contracting to the private for-profit sector. When UNDP undertook procurement on behalf of MOLSAMD and then continued to manage the contract, the programmatic authority of MOLSAMD was further undermined. At this point of the project relationships are at a low point and government has withdrawn aspects of cooperation.

**Sustainability** No comment can be made about sustainability as activities are still in their very early stages.

## **Conclusions**

In its current form SALAM is less relevant than it was at national level owing to the presence of the large World Bank-funded PLACED, which is working on labour migration on a far greater scale with a much larger budget. In skills development, GIZ is also better placed and more sustainable in the long term. However, at provincial level the intention to work at the interface between humanitarian and development interventions and to work as One UN with government in the driving seat continues to be highly relevant.

Many factors have made implementation more difficult and slower than expected. The outputs were set at an unrealistically high level and the reluctance to review and revise the indicators was a missed opportunity to develop a clear line of sight from activities. Currently the number and level of spread of activities suggests the project is trying to move in too many directions.

Misunderstandings about the National Implementation Modality (NIM), along with a project management structure that undermines MOLSAMD's role as Project Director, and a recent tendency for UNDP to operate in direct implementation mode, have affected government ownership. There are capacity gaps and weaknesses in international and national technical assistance at national and provincial level.

The original focus on job creation has been largely lost and the training activities in Nangarhar have weak linkages to job opportunities. With the benefit of hindsight, the balance of effort and spend at national level, where results are harder to demonstrate in the short term, now appears excessive compared with subnational level where returnees, IDPs and host communities face extreme challenges establishing livelihoods. As a new entrant and with inexperienced contracted partners, SALAM is less well placed to make a difference than the humanitarian actors such as IOM who have long engaged in skills training. In bypassing government on the grounds of low capacity there is a risk of substituting one low quality skills training with another.

## **Recommendations**

1. Of equal priority, confirm the leadership role of the Project Director and recruit a Project Manager.

2. Develop and Annual Workplan for 2019 with realistically achievable indicators of activities so that SALAM can come to a satisfactory conclusion.
3. Revisit the governance arrangement especially the purpose and membership of the Technical Working Group, paying attention to appropriate hierarchy.
4. Revisit the role of the international staff so that MOLSAMD can re-establish ownership
5. Develop an exit strategy and consider the future beyond SALAM

## Lessons

1. Experimentation is important and necessary – SALAM’s theory of change was well worth testing even if results are disappointing.
2. Funding and timeframes need to reflect the nature of development – annual funding and the inability to carry over unspent funds sets up a fundamental contradiction between spend and development objectives
3. When NIM is the basis of the agreement, all partners need to support the principle and practice of government ownership however difficult
4. Delivering more of the same is not effective – decades of investment in vocational training and income generating activities have not delivered results in the past and will not do so in the future. Something different is needed
5. No project can reach all beneficiaries without losing focus
6. Delivering results for beneficiaries requires a strong and consistent focus at provincial level from the outset.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The project

The Support Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility (SALAM) project is a joint project of UNDP, ILO and UNHCR in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD)<sup>1</sup>.

SALAM was designed in 2016 in the wake of the massive return of over 600,000 Afghan refugees from Pakistan and the simultaneous returns from Europe of irregular Afghan migrants. In 2015 the influx of more than a million migrants to Europe in 2015, of which Afghans were the second largest group, had created significant political concern.

The project aims to support the government to develop comprehensive, coherent and integrated national and sub-national policy and institutional approaches for enhancing livelihoods in a time of crisis and protracted conflict. It aims to work with the private sector and other partners to seek durable solutions in line with the Government of Afghanistan's vision and strategies for employment generation and labour migration.

## 1.2. Purpose of the evaluation

The **purpose** of the midterm evaluation (MTE), as stated in the TOR (Annex 1), is to provide a comprehensive, independent assessment of project performance and governance arrangements and to provide recommendations for the remainder of the project implementation.

The **objectives** are to: assist the government and partners to improve the relevance, effectiveness efficiency, and sustainability of the project; and to ensure accountability for results to the project's financial backers, stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The **scope** of the evaluation is the entirety of the sub-project from inception in January 2017 to the time of the evaluation in October/November 2018. Evaluation of the overarching SALAM Framework is outside the scope although one use of the MTE will be to reflect on the duality of the framework and the project being implemented in Nangarhar, with particular reference to implications for scaling up and resource mobilization. Therefore, in assessing relevance and theory of change, the design of the framework project is considered alongside that of the Nangarhar project.

Evaluation of impact is outside the scope because the period of implementation is too short to expect results at the level of impact and the evaluation is formative rather than summative.

The **audience** for the review is all partners involved in delivery (MOLSAMD, UNDP, ILO, UNHCR) and the donor (Government of Finland).

## 1.3. Evaluation methodology

The MTE is a formative evaluation. This implies a greater focus on process than summative evaluation, paying attention to the likelihood of achieving the desired outputs and assessing any change that is necessary in order to increase the chance of success. This is important in SALAM because, although the project is at midterm in duration, implementation is still at a very early stage.

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<sup>1</sup> The Ministry has recently restructured and will be known as MoLSA. Responsibility for Martyrs and Disabled will be with a new agency.

The approach to the MTE is utilisation-focused<sup>2</sup> and participatory. Utilisation focus emphasises the importance of generating evidence that is not only practically useful but is also within the power of stakeholders to influence. In the simplest terms it aims to answer three questions:

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| What?     | What are we seeing? What does the data tell us? What are the indicators of change? What patterns are emerging?                                |
| So what?  | What sense can we make of the findings? What does it mean now and in the future? What effect does the current situation have on stakeholders? |
| Now what? | What are the options? What are the resources? When and how does action need to be taken to optimise opportunities?                            |

## Key questions

The 26 questions of the TOR were analysed and clustered into a smaller number of high-level questions to guide the evaluation process and keep it on track to meet the purpose and objectives and allow a logical process of enquiry.

The key evaluation questions (EQs) and sub-questions were:

Key question (EQ)	Sub questions
<b>Is the design coherent and adequate?</b> ( <i>Relevance</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the design adequately address the policy priorities of partners?</li> <li>What substantive need does the project aim to meet?</li> <li>How plausible and realistic is the theory of change?</li> <li>Are activities sufficient to meet the needs of target beneficiaries?</li> </ul>
<b>What is influencing achievement of results?</b> ( <i>Effectiveness</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What results are being achieved?</li> <li>Are the intended beneficiaries being reached?</li> <li>What contextual factors are supporting or preventing achievement?</li> <li>How likely is it that the project will achieve the desired outputs?</li> </ul>
<b>What are the implementation challenges?</b> ( <i>Efficiency</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the institutional and governance arrangements working?</li> <li>Is delivery of activities consistent with plans and timelines?</li> <li>What are the main influences on efficiency?</li> </ul>
<b>What are the implications?</b> ( <i>Sustainability</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How committed and engaged are the main partners?</li> <li>What is the likelihood of sustainable results?</li> </ul>

Full details of the methodology can be found in the Inception Report.

## Limitations

The major limitation to the evaluation during the data collection stage was the absence of the voice of government. MOLSAMD declined to participate because they had not been adequately consulted. UNDP had not shared the evaluation inception report, for example, so they had no opportunity to comment on the process. In Nangarhar a meeting with DOLSAMD was granted, which enabled the evaluator to understand the provincial-level issues. The draft report could therefore only represent the views of government in so far as they were recorded in Project Board and Technical Working Group minutes. However, following submission of the draft report MOLSAMD provided substantive comment during a skype presentation of the findings, making it possible to include the voice of government in the final report.

<sup>2</sup> Utilization-Focused Evaluation. Michael Quinn Patton. 2008



## 1.4. Background

### Country context

Afghanistan has been in a state of conflict for almost 40 years. Governance has been contested at least since the beginning of the twentieth century, with historic internal tension between traditionalists and modernisers. The Soviet intervention of 1979-1989 placed Afghanistan at the centre of the Cold War era and led to around six million Afghans fleeing as refugees to the neighbouring countries, Iran and Pakistan, as well as further afield. After the collapse of the Soviet government in 1992 and the mujahideen-led government that followed, the country descended into civil war and lawlessness, creating another round of refugees and internal displacement.

In 2001, in the aftermath of the attacks in the United States of America, the US-led War on Terror brought about the collapse of the Taliban regime. During the transitional government and through the first Presidential election in 2004 there was a sense of hope and large numbers of refugees returned. However, by 2005 the insurgency had revived and governance has continued to be violently contested despite a huge international military presence until 2014. Power changed hands in a disputed election in 2014 and a Government of National Unity emerged. By 2017, civilian losses reached an all-time high since 2001, Taliban continued to increase their territorial control and the Islamic State–Khorasan group (Daesh) had emerged as a new actor.

Between March 2002 and September 2018, over 5.2 million refugees returned to Afghanistan, with a spike of 693,000 in 2016 and 561,000 in 2017.<sup>3</sup> Additionally there are an estimated 2 million IDPs in the country as of September 2018. Of the total people forced into movement, more than 300,000 are estimated to be located in the eastern province of Nangarhar. In global terms Afghanistan remains the second largest country of origin of refugees after Syria with almost 2.4 million registered refugees (some 1.4 million in Pakistan and 950,000 in Iran) as well as some 3 million undocumented Afghans estimated to be living in Pakistan and 2 million in Iran.<sup>4</sup>

The political economy of Afghanistan is very challenging. The massive inflow of aid - estimated at over USD 57 billion in official development assistance – has brought benefits but at the same time fuelled corruption, hampered development of state institutions, reduced government legitimacy and reinforced the fragmentation of actors. The Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework 2017-2021 (ANPDF) identifies four interrelated challenges – conflict, corruption, criminality and unemployment – as the key tests of the government's reform agenda. It states that, without a big increase in jobs, Afghans may continue to resort to desperate measures such as illicit narcotics production, out-migration, and joining violent criminal networks.

Afghanistan is committed to achieving the SDGs and there is capacity to achieve progress in certain sectors. However, widespread insecurity and the absence of a peace settlement means that developing sustainable solutions for the complex problems, including sustainable return of refugees and IDPs, is extremely challenging. The government identifies three main barriers: financing in an unstable and aid dependent economy; formalizing dedicated partnerships between the Government,

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<sup>3</sup> Solutions Strategy For Afghan Refugees 2018-2019. UNHCR

<sup>4</sup> People on the Move: Return and Reintegration (Whole of Community Approach). Concept Note to the Geneva Conference, 27 November 2018.

civil society organizations, private sector actors, the United Nations, and international partners; localizing the SDGs by adjust the national targets and indicators at provincial level.<sup>5</sup>

## Project rationale

The **problem statement** in the design of SALAM is that the lack of a comprehensive and integrated labour and migration framework, along with limited institutional capacity, weak labour skills, and an underdeveloped private sector have contributed to inadequate job creation and a lack of livelihood opportunities in Nangarhar, an area experiencing unprecedented inflow of returnees from Pakistan.<sup>6</sup>

The project **theory of change** (ToC) is that, if regular migration options are managed and regulated, vocational and entrepreneurial training and employment opportunities in selected municipalities enhanced, and women and men are aware of available services and local and international job opportunities, then many Afghans will have an improved quality of life and a self-sufficient livelihood. Each output has its own ToC.<sup>7</sup>

The expected **project outcome** is improved economic livelihoods, especially for vulnerable populations and women.<sup>8</sup>

The two **outputs** relate to developing institutional structures and increasing employment:

- Output 1** Formalized institutional structures in support of regular labour migration for Afghan women and men are established
- Output 2** National and international employment opportunities for women and men IDPs and returnees in Nangarhar province increased

The **main interventions** of the project aim to promote an enabling environment for generating livelihood alternatives in Nangarhar with a special focus on the needs of IDPs, migrant returnees, disabled, young people, and women as well as the host communities. These involve close participation of national and international private sector actors in project implementation.

## Project status

The SALAM framework project, signed with the Afghan Government in March 2017, covered five provinces with an overall budget of USD 120 million and a timeframe to 2021. The only contribution to date is EUR 4.5 million from the Government of Finland, which was agreed in December 2016. This has been defined as a subproject and is specific to Nangarhar province. It reduces programmatic scope to two outputs compared with three in the overarching framework and has a reduced timeframe of three rather than five years. The total budget is USD 5,315,000 with a USD 100,000 contribution from UNDP TRAC.

The project commenced in January 2017 and the inception phase lasted from March to December 2017. This was longer than anticipated and required a no-cost extension. The implementation phase commenced in January 2018 and, at the time of the MTE, has been operational for less than one year.

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<sup>5</sup> 2017 SDGs Progress Report. Government of Afghanistan

<sup>6</sup> From the 2017 revised SALAM project document

<sup>7</sup> These are utilised in the reconstructed ToCs which have been developed as tools (see Annex 3)

<sup>8</sup> Corresponding to CPD Output 6 at the time

## 2. Relevance

### 2.1. Policy context

The policy context for SALAM was the massive returns of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers from Pakistan and Europe which was at its height in 2016. How to absorb the very large numbers of returnees and how to regularise the opportunities for legal labour migration were high on the agenda of the Afghan government.

At the Geneva Conference in November 2018 the Afghan Government acknowledged that a number of large-scale, multi-partner reintegration programmes are being implemented around the country in line with the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF). These efforts have been appreciated by the principal countries hosting Afghans, which have long maintained that voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration is the preferred solution for Afghans residing on their territories. However, it was also noted that, given the current humanitarian context and systemic development challenges facing Afghanistan, return and sustainable reintegration is a task that will require long-term interventions and investments, and which cannot be accomplished by the Governments in the region alone.

#### Afghan government policy

The overarching framework of the ANPDF (2017 to 2021) includes a vision to build a productive and broad-based economy that creates jobs. It recognises that investment will not come without peace and that, with chronic and ongoing conflict, a realistic strategy and a long timeframe are necessary.

Economic Growth and Job Creation is one of four priorities, including investment in vocational education to help align skills with market demands. The potential positive contribution of returning migrants and IDPs is recognised as well as the importance of integrating the generation of Afghan youth raised in exile into the labour markets. There is a commitment to improving the quality assurance of training institutions using an outcomes-based education model and to restructure curriculum and assessment to ensure quality of learning.

#### One UN for Afghanistan

SALAM is framed by the *One UN for Afghanistan* approach.<sup>9</sup> One UN recognises the ANPDF and the development planning system that underpins it as the single coordinating structure for development assistance and commits UN agencies to working as one program.

One of the thematic areas represents the core responsibility of the UN agencies in norm and standard-setting and dissemination of public policy lessons and best practice. Of the thematic areas and outcomes, two are relevant to SALAM.

UNDAF Outcome	One UN thematic area	One UN Outcome
Economic growth is accelerated to reduce vulnerabilities and poverty, strengthen the resilience of the licit economy and reduce the illicit economy in its multiple dimensions.	Food security, nutrition and livelihoods	Outcome 3.5: People have improved private sector-led opportunities for income, employment and trade, including through value-added activities and value chains
	Return and reintegration	Outcome 5.3: Access to livelihoods and jobs enhanced through market based programmes

<sup>9</sup> One UN supersedes the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which was the basis for the design of SALAM at outcome level

A key element of the UN effort is providing capacity support to the Government to establish the required regulatory framework and strategy and promote the transition to productive employment and decent work. The mandates of the UN partner agencies in SALAM are anchored in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and committed to the principles of universality, equality and leaving no one behind.

### Government of Finland policy

Finland's program in Afghanistan is delivered through a partnership agreement on bilateral cooperation signed in April 2013.<sup>10</sup> The goal is to help Afghanistan develop into a country that poses no threat to international or regional security and will not be an international hub for the production of illegal narcotics. Among the factors that are important for Finland in supporting sustainable development are to develop the foundation for the Afghan economy in diverse manners according to the principles of sustainable development.

Article 6 on Migration states that the Parties will work in partnership to tackle the trafficking and smuggling of human beings and will continue to engage in close cooperation aimed at preventing illegal immigration and the illegal presence of physical persons of Afghan and Finnish nationality in the other Party's territory and will facilitate the return of such illegally present persons to their country of origin.

### 2.2. MOLSAMD

MoLSAMD is mandated to work on labour affairs, social protection and welfare. For labour policy the Ministry has worked with ILO on employment strategies, Labour Law reform, international labour standards, migration, skills development, child labour and social dialogue.

For skill development the framework is the National Skills Development Project (NSDP), which was one of the first National Priority Programs (NPPs) commencing in 2004. It preceded but was included in the 2008 Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and retained in the 2017 ANPDF.

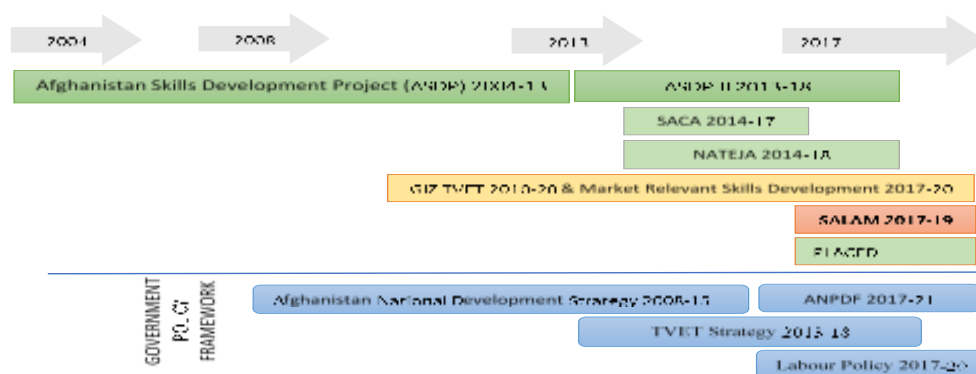
Government policy is that other initiatives on skills development are supposed to be anchored within NSDP. The main and ongoing support to NSDP has been the World Bank-funded Afghan Skills Development Project (ASDP). There have been various projects in MOLSAMD that have skills development as an objective. The diagram below situates SALAM among these within a 14 year timeframe starting in 2004 with the launch of NSDP up to the present in 2018 and in the context of the Afghan government's policy framework. It also shows the World Bank-funded PLACED, which is a project in preparation on managed labour migration.<sup>11</sup>

### Diagram: SALAM within the context of Afghan policy and MOLSAMD

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<sup>10</sup> Partnership Agreement Between The Islamic Republic Of Afghanistan And The Republic Of Finland. 2013

<sup>11</sup> There may be other significant projects that did not arise in the course of the MTE



Two other projects are relevant to SALAM: Skills Assessment and Certification for Afghanistan (SACA) (2014-17) and Non-Formal Approach to Training, Education, and Jobs in Afghanistan (NATEJA) (2014-18).

SACA was funded by the World Bank and implemented by ILO with the immediate goal to improve labour market access by strengthening TVET programmes and increase employers' confidence in the related certification procedures. It aimed to build a unified TVET system with internationally benchmarked National Occupational Skills Standards (NOSS) and curricula, as well as standards relating to assessment, certification and accreditation of TVET institutes. One activity was analysis of roles and mandates between the Deputy Ministry for TVET (DM-TVET) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the NSDP of MOLSAMD and recommendations on the appropriate division of roles.

NATEJA was based on lessons learned during the implementation of ASDP and had the development objective to increase the potential for employment and higher earnings of targeted young Afghans through non-formal skills training. It aimed to improve the quality of non-formal training and the labour market outcomes of trainees by incentivizing training providers to provide quality training and improve job placement rates. It also sought to build capacity in MOLSAMD and pilot entrepreneurship among unskilled and illiterate young Afghans. At design the project was rated as high risk and, approaching conclusion, progress towards objective and implementation are both rated unsatisfactory.<sup>12</sup>

GIZ has been engaged in formal TVET since 2010, mainly through MoE, and with informal TVET since 2017 in the Market Relevant Skills Development (MRSD) project. This apprenticeship training is specifically mentioned in the ANPDF.

These other programs are important because, although MOLSAMD is a new partner for UNDP, other partnerships have been in place for some years and there are lessons to be learned.

### 2.3. SALAM design

At the time of design in 2016, SALAM was a highly relevant project seeking to respond to a significant and urgent problem. It was designed jointly by UNDP, ILO, UNHCR and MOLSAMD and, at the point of signing the agreement, there was a strong sense of ownership and shared vision. This included a clarity of focus on the need to contain the problem of Afghans using informal routes of migration to Europe. The partnership between UNDP, ILO and UNHCR had the potential to address labour migration at policy level and to work on the nexus of relief and development at local level by building on UNHCR's

<sup>12</sup> Implementation Status & Results Report: Non-Formal Approach to Training Education and Jobs in Afghanistan Project (P146015). Publicly disclosed 24 October 2018.

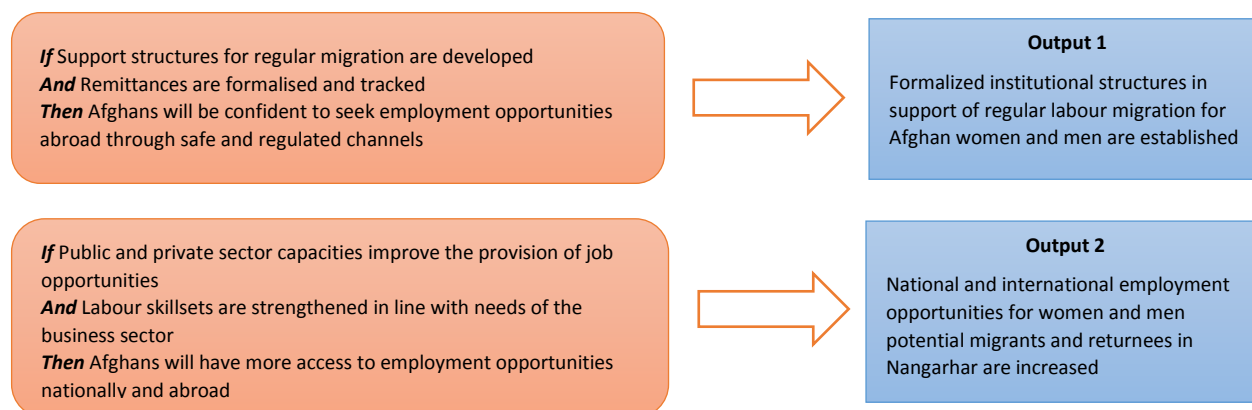
humanitarian base of support to returnees using UNDP's long term approach to sustainable livelihoods. In view of the scale of the problem, the ambition for SALAM was high with a budget of US\$120 million and scope across five provinces with linkages to the wider region.

## Theory of change

SALAM works in two streams (outputs):

- Output 1 aims to formalising the institutional structures for labour migration
- Output 2 aims to increase employment opportunities for potential migrants and returnees.

Each stream has a theory of change, summarised below and shown in greater detail in Annex 3.



The framework project had a third output which was dropped when it became clear that the project would not be funded in full. However, although available funding from Finland was only around 4 percent of the desired, there was no change to the intended outputs. Such a level of ambition was unrealistic.

In a theory of change it is important to state the assumptions on which it is based. The design does not do so explicitly but they can be reconstructed. For output 1 the assumptions are that the reason for irregular migration is the lack of a regular channel and that the same people who use irregular channels (the target group) would switch to regular channels if available. At midterm this is not yet tested.

For output 2 the assumptions are that weak capacity is the reason for the lack of job opportunities and that labour skillsets can be strengthened to the level that they meet the needs of business. These assumptions are also not tested by midterm but they were not valid at design. The main reason for lack of job opportunities, articulated in the ANPDF, is chronic conflict and related underinvestment rather than capacity. In relation to skill development, years of experience attempting to implement TVET and other skill-based income generating programs in Afghanistan has demonstrated low impact and poor linkage to market demands. Beyond Afghanistan there is global evidence that strategies to support refugees to gain employment, which focus solely on their skills development and do not seek to improve the general economic conditions of host countries, are counterproductive.<sup>13</sup>

The strength of the theory of SALAM is that it recognises these factors and explicitly seeks to link job creation with skill development. The weakness is in the context analysis and the assessment of what

<sup>13</sup> *Inclusion of refugees in technical and vocational education and training: an exploration into funding, planning and delivery*. British Council July 2018. Although this report is new, much of the evidence has long been known.

can realistically be achieved within the timeframe. In Afghanistan even the well trained and best educated people have difficulty finding employment and earning a living. In SALAM, and in line with the SDG aim of leaving no one behind, the target group is the most vulnerable Afghan men and women who, with or without access to skill development, are the least likely to access job opportunities in the prevailing labour market.

The intended innovation of SALAM was that support would take the form of local economic development embedded in receiving communities rather than in individuals. That has also proved overly ambitious. At midterm the focus is on individual beneficiaries with no community-based interventions planned. Engagement of the private sector is there to some extent but the main focus has become individualised TVET.

## Beneficiaries

The design of SALAM is centred on preventing irregular migration. The original target group was those who had returned, mainly in an involuntary way, from Europe and Pakistan who were considered high risk in terms of future irregular migration. This group are therefore the starting point for identification as SALAM beneficiaries.

At midterm, when the process of identifying beneficiaries in Nangarhar is only just starting, the target group has widened. It includes IDPs, in recognition of similar and sometimes greater need than returnees. It extends to members of the host communities, in recognition of the potential for conflict when the influx is massive. Women are an equity-based target group, further specified as IDP female heads of household, young women and girls, and women entrepreneurs. A second equity-based target group is people with disabilities. Inclusion also extends to unskilled labourers as an especially vulnerable group.<sup>14</sup> The two recently issued contracts for delivery of job placement and TVET include quotas for women, disabled and youth. The additional rationale for inclusion of youth is that extreme vulnerability increases the risk of radicalization and recruitment for violent extremism.

All these rationales are valid, and they are in line with donor commitments to invest in durable solutions for refugees, internally displaced people and sustainable support to migrants, returnees and host/receiving communities, as well as for other situations of recurring vulnerabilities.<sup>15</sup> However, the result is that the criteria are so inclusive that almost everyone has the potential to be included. At the point that beneficiaries are to be selected, and in a context where opportunity and income are highly desired and contested, the process of selection is more likely to be mired in compromise than if it was more tightly defined. The challenge of identifying beneficiaries is exacerbated because the total number (originally 2,400 reduced to 1,400) is very small in relation to demand (estimated at more than 100,000 families). This will inevitably undermine the desired result of job creation and reduce the relevance of SALAM in the area that is most important to the donor and the provincial authorities.

## Labour market analysis

Underpinning the aim of creating jobs is assessment of the labour market. Originally an activity of the project was to conduct its own assessment. However, with the various delays, it was agreed to use a 2017 Oxfam study as the basis for planning.<sup>16</sup> This describes an increasingly fragile situation in

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<sup>14</sup> SALAM Annual Report 2017

<sup>15</sup> Grand Bargain <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-hosted-iasc>

<sup>16</sup> Labour and Housing market systems in Nangarhar Province, Eastern Afghanistan (Complex Conflict, Displacement, and Returnee Influx) Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis. May 2017



Nangarhar, with extremely high levels of stress in the casual labour market and a significant decrease in daily wages. Although returnees, especially those who were in Pakistan long term, often have a higher level of skill, their access to the labour market is limited because it is heavily mediated through family and social connections. Skill possession alone, even where there is demand, does not guarantee access to jobs. For women, access to jobs is additionally severely limited due to historic cultural and structural inequities.

The relevance question arising from the labour market assessment is whether the activities planned under SALAM are designed to meet the needs of beneficiaries. Certainly the design takes account of demand by promoting skill development where there is identified demand for those skills. The contracts are also oriented to supporting work placement and job seeking. The weakness, considering the challenges of the context, is that the time remaining before the end of the project is now too short to achieve sustainable results. Beneficiary selection alone is a very time-consuming process and it is highly susceptible to pressures to support people who are not the intended target group. This is exacerbated by the inclusive generality of the criteria.

At the other end of the process, job placement is also likely to be slow and difficult due to the preference of employers for people they know and can trust. One impact of forty years of conflict is a lack of trust at all levels. This means that, in the job creation component, training of three months and job placement of three months is too short to develop a meaningful skill level and too short for employers to assess whether they can trust the trainee enough to employ them. The labour market assessment recommends that six months training for a formalised qualification is the minimum standard for meaningful outcomes. This is consistent with MOLSAMD standards.

## Donor engagement

At the time of design a significant proportion of the \$120 million budget was expected to come from the European Union with IOM as a partner alongside ILO, UNDP and UNHCR. However, the EU decided to fund IOM and no other funds were forthcoming. In supporting SALAM, Finland had hoped that their investment would catalyse additional funding if results could be showcased.

The issue of resource mobilization and fundraising was raised at the June 2018 Project Board.

Although participants considered SALAM to be the most significant project aiming to link humanitarian and development assistance, donors continued to be cautious about supporting it. In the absence of visible results it is certainly difficult to engage donors actively.

## 3. Effectiveness

### 3.1. Results to date

#### Results at output level

During 2017 - the inception phase - all activities related to start-up and there was no progress on outputs. At the time of the MTE in late 2018 the project still cannot demonstrate results at output level although there are a number of activities underway that are heading in that direction. The slow progress, especially for beneficiaries in Nangarhar, is a source of frustration for all partners.

#### **Output 1: Formalized institutional structures in support of regular labour migration for afghan women and men are established**

Annual Workplan Indicators 2017	Baseline	Target	Results at end 2017
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1.1.a # MoLSAMD and other government officials trained on international standards and good practices on law/regulations and policy coherence	0	20	0
1.1.b Extent to which national laws and regulations align with international labour standards (scale 1-10)	0	-	0
1.1.c.e. % of increase of knowledge and understanding of the trained officials	0	8	0
1.2. # BLAs on labour migration signed with countries of destination	0	2	0
1.3. # contracts signed with employers / agents in destination countries each year (by country, by sector, by # of workers in demand letters	9	2	0
1.4. Average cost of migration in the Afghanistan - Saudi corridor, using ILO-World Bank methodology	0	-	0

For 2018 the indicators were refined and the number reduced. Targets were also revised downwards to be more realistic but were set as a cumulative total for 2019.

Annual Workplan Indicators 2018	Baseline	Target 2019 <sup>17</sup>	Results end Oct 2018
1.1 # of people trained to use regular migration channel	0	500	0
1.2 # of SALAM training graduates who submit applications for inclusion in the Labour Migration Database	0	300	0

## Output 2: National and international employment opportunities for women and men potential migrants and returnees in Nangarhar are increased

As with output 1, there was minimal progress on output indicators and targets set for 2017 were not reached.

Annual Workplan Indicators 2017	Baseline	Targets	Results at end 2017
2.2 # SALAM training program graduates that are locally employed	0	400	0
2.2a Standardised courses and curricula developed	0	4	0
2.2b # people trained in selected priority sectors	0	500	0
2.6 Clients satisfaction from ESCs services provision (scale 1-10)	0	-	-

Likewise, indicators were revised for 2018 and new targets set for 2019<sup>18</sup>. For indicator 2.1 the wording about completion of training reflects the fact that, although beneficiaries may graduate from SALAM training, there is no official certification process for the skills they attain.

Annual Workplan Indicators 2018	Baseline	Target 2018 <sup>19</sup>	Results end Oct 2018
2.1 # of SALAM beneficiaries having completed vocational training	0	1200	0
2.2 # of SALAM trainees that are employed	0	750	0
2.3 # of new local jobs created by new entrepreneurs, SMEs and producer groups which received the SALAM Entrepreneur Support Package	0	480	0

## Results by project end

Assessing results is not straightforward owing to the way the workplan is constructed. The outputs are set at a level that cannot be achieved by the project and the indicators do not capture the sum of activities. As currently constructed, the outputs cannot be achieved by the end of the project in

<sup>17</sup> The 2019 Annual Workplan has not yet been presented to government

<sup>18</sup> These have not yet been discussed with MoLSAMD

<sup>19</sup> The 2019 Annual Workplan has not yet been presented to government

December 2019. Achievement of the indicators, which can be considered as intermediate outputs, is likely to be partial.

### 3.2. Activities

#### Status of activities

At activity level, under pressure to demonstrate results, activities have finally gathered momentum. The table shows their status.

Activity	Status	Comment
Develop national legislation and policy instruments	Ongoing	No clear target
Establish gender-sensitive, sector-specific minimum standards for Bilateral Labour Agreements	Not achievable	Too late to incorporate gender sensitivity
Improve coordination, adoption, implementation and monitoring of the National Labour Migration Strategy	Unclear	No clear target
Develop an action plan based on recommendations of the Migration Country Case Study	Unclear	Study visit to Sri Lanka took place
Develop an integrated database to collect disaggregated data	Various actors involved	Other partners better placed to support
Establish a TVET Board or similar body	Not active	Beyond project influence
Design and institutionalise local/international events	One event held	
Develop and implement TVET Electronic Management Information System	Various actors involved	Other partners better placed to support
Develop and implement PPP model for MoLSAMD's established VTCs	International consultant	Requires secondary legislation to move forward
Conduct a gender sensitive rural and urban labour market review in Nangarhar in conjunction with EU	Not active	Using Oxfam assessment
Design and deliver gender sensitive competency-based training programs for identified priority trades	In progress	Two contracts issued <sup>20</sup>

The activities in the Annual Workplan were not revised during inception and have not been revised since. Establishment of a TVET Board is no longer appropriate as the government has established a TVET Commission in its place. Although a Board is still on the agenda, GIZ is the main and most appropriate partner along with an EU-funded investment to follow this through. Also not active is conducting a labour market review as the Oxfam assessment is fit for purpose.

Several activities concern long term institutional development: legislation and policy instruments; gender-sensitive BLAs; NLMS; Public Private Partnership. These have no clear indicators, making it difficult to monitor or attribute progress. In early 2018 Finland cautioned that BLAs are a political device, which sit outside the direct influence of SALAM.<sup>21</sup>

Two activities relate to developing a database and a TVET management information system. These overlap with activities of other partners and projects who, given the short time remaining for SALAM, are better placed to provide institutional support to MOLSAMD in the medium term. SALAM requests for gender-disaggregated data has been a sensitive issue and the Ministry has not so far been willing to share it.

UNDP conducted a Migration Case Study in 2017. The proposed development of an action plan based on the recommendations has not been done so far. Finland has expressed caution in the Technical

<sup>20</sup> The third contract for Youth Internship for 100 youth is scheduled to be issued in December 2018

<sup>21</sup> TWG minutes 7 January 2018

Working Group (TWG)<sup>22</sup> about funding study tours abroad because those who participate are often not the intended beneficiaries and the findings of the tours are often not reported in a way that supports them being taken forward. At the time of the MTE reporting on the study tour was incomplete.

### Activities in Nangarhar

The activity which most interests the donor<sup>23</sup> and the provincial authorities (DOLSAMD and the Governor's Office) is delivery of competency-based training programs for priority trades. This activity has only just started with contracts recently issued to private sector providers for job placement (200 beneficiaries) and TVET (600 beneficiaries). When time was running short and the HACT assessment risk rating for procurement was significant, UNDP undertook procurement on the government's behalf. Once the contractors were engaged, UNDP continued to manage the contractors rather than handing programmatic responsibility back to MOLSAMD to be managed by DOLSAMD at provincial level where the activities are taking place.

At the time of the MTE the Director of DOLSAMD had not been officially informed of the activities and had not wished to meet the contractors until the necessary information and authority was provided. The most recently contracted consortium AVTI/PADO has not worked in Nangarhar previously and had not registered with the Department of Economy. This is important because, regardless of whether there is capacity to do so, DOLSAMD has responsibility for monitoring skills provision which is designed and delivered outside of government-supported systems to ensure that it does not fall short of national standards. In fact, due to shortage of time before the end of SALAM, the duration of training is too short to deliver the quality expected by MOLSAMD. But, as one of the National Technical Assistants (NTA) in Nangarhar has the title of Field Monitoring and Reporting Officer, there should be capacity to take on this role.

These were very immediate factors that pose a high risk to successful completion of activities unless they are addressed with urgency (see factors affecting achievement).

Outstanding are training activities for a further 600 beneficiaries under ILO's management. At the time of the MTE it was not clear what form they would take.

### Changes to activities

It is clear that there have been some shifts in project focus during implementation although these are difficult to track. At the higher level there has been a shift from emphasis on migration to emphasis on reintegration with a focus on areas of high return. The Annual Report of 2017 indicates that activities oriented to promotion of outward migration as a primary response to unemployment were replaced by those oriented to in-situ job-creation. There was also mention of increasing opportunities for host communities as well as returnees as an important conflict prevention consideration. However, one year on, job creation is receiving far less attention than training. This matters because a guiding principle of TVET is that it should be matched by job creation to mitigate against the potential to increase frustration among job-seekers who believe training will lead to a job.

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<sup>22</sup> TWG Minutes 7 May 2018

<sup>23</sup> Expressed in the Project Board meeting 7 June 2018

In the design of SALAM there is mention of strengthening the capacity of DOLSAMD's Employment Service Centres (ESCs) because they serve the public as well as SALAM beneficiaries. It is not clear whether, or why, this has been dropped.

### 3.3. Factors affecting achievement

#### Clarity of purpose

The main factor affecting achievement is clarity of purpose. The intended outputs are set at an unrealistic level. Some of the activities are individually useful but they are spread widely and it is difficult to see how they connect to each other and what they add up to. In other words, SALAM lacks the kind of focus that would enable progress on results to be tracked.

In output 2 there is a lack of clarity about whether the project is working on job creation or simply on vocational training. In fact most of the activities are about training but it is not easy to understand whether this has happened because job creation was assessed to be too difficult or inappropriate or whether, in the face of pressure to demonstrate results, it was simply missed.

In Nangarhar another lack of clarity concerns intended beneficiaries. As discussed in the relevance section, the initial focus on new returnees has widened to include IDPs and host communities with quotas set for gender, youth and disabled people. Of the total 1,200 beneficiaries only 800 are in Nangarhar, a number that is very small relative to the number of potential beneficiaries. This means that selection will become complicated. It will take longer to manage a transparent process and, as incentives will be paid to those selected, is likely to be contested and subject to corruption. The risk is that crucial factors such as the likelihood of the beneficiary obtaining and remaining in employment will be sacrificed. This will not only affect effectiveness but also sustainability of results.

Related to clarity of purpose is the scale of ambition. In terms of effectiveness, the failure to revisit the theory of change during inception was a missed opportunity to design and plan for more focused and realistic results. This is important because, in the face of a continuing livelihoods crisis in Nangarhar, there is still an expectation that SALAM is a primary response mechanism. As the project cannot possibly meet this expectation there is high reputational risk.

An example of scale of ambition is the assumption in SALAM that it can create jobs. All stakeholders agree that job creation is essential and it is an objective of the Afghan government in the ANPDF. SALAM has investigated the potential for job creation in Nangarhar and determined that it is significant. However, it has not fully assessed the conflict and political economy factors that are undermining market-led job creation nor taken a balanced position on whether or how the project can make a meaningful contribution. The result is various vague statements of intent about working with the private sector to stimulate employment opportunities and implicit assumptions that training and job creation are interlinked. In the current context of worsening insecurity the enabling environment is not only not at all conducive to job creation but also far beyond the scope of a project to influence.

#### Capacity

A key contribution of the project is supposed to be capacity development. The approach taken is to add capacity to the ministry at national and subnational level in the form of NTA. The number of people, and their job descriptions, seem to have been taken from the framework project without consideration of the exact capacity problem that the NTA are supposed to be a solution to. The framework design does not include a capacity assessment and, although the subproject has implicit

and explicit objectives of capacity development, there is no capacity development plan. The result is that the NTA have not been provided with clear direction and some have not been able to establish roles for themselves that are likely to increase the effectiveness of the project. Consequently NTA appear to be under-utilised.

At provincial level the intention was to use MOLSAMD Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) for delivery. However, when they were assessed in May 2018 they were found to be in a poor state of readiness, with few or no facilities and trainers. MoLSAMD requested refurbishment and employment of security guards to bring at least one facility up to standard but, as only one of the VTCs were in the areas of high return, the decision was made to use private training premises. This later morphed into letting a contract to the private sector for full delivery of TVET courses.

TWG minutes and interviews show that this was a controversial decision. Finland was in favour of supporting the VTCs on the grounds that it is not sustainable to fund the private sector to fulfil a governmental responsibility. UNHCR were concerned that the design and budget of SALAM were built on the assumption of use of government VTCs and that use of the private sector would be (and is) more expensive. In addition UNHCR, who have deep knowledge of the province due to their field presence, challenged the impression that there would be privately rented spaces suitable for training 600 people. At the time of the MTE the contractor had not thought through how and where they would conduct training and planned to leave those decisions until after beneficiary selection. This has some logic but will almost certainly create further delay.

This tension is indicative of a fundamental dilemma. One objective of SALAM is to develop capacity for government as a TVET provider but, when the capacity does not meet an unexpressed minimum standard, a strategy of capacity substitution is adopted. In neither MOLSAMD nor the private sector was capacity assessed at an early enough point and there is now a high risk that the private sector may not have significantly better capacity to deliver training at the required level of quality. In view of the higher cost, there is a direct impact on effectiveness in that the number of beneficiaries had to be significantly reduced.

### Certification and standards

The project discovered very late, during the development of the TVET tender, that a national assessment and certification system does not yet exist. National Occupational Skills Standards (NOSS) and course curricula have been many years in the making, including under the project NATEJA, but are not at the stage that they can be used to certify any training conducted under SALAM. This means that anyone who completes a course under SALAM will not have a recognised qualification. MoLSAMD will only be able to certify that they attended and completed training but not that they are proficient or reach the approved NOSS quality standards. In fact, as the duration of training is less than MOLSAMD consider necessary to acquire the skills to do the job, the training provided through SALAM is unlikely to result in proficiency.

### Gender

SALAM aims to deliver results for women as well as men. At policy level, the signed and draft Bilateral Labour Agreements have moved forward without consideration of gender sensitivity. ILO raised the issue and suggested that gender integration should be a dedicated session of the National Labour Migration Strategy Inter-Ministerial Task Force<sup>24</sup> but at a point when extensive negotiations and high-

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<sup>24</sup> TWG Minutes 7 May 2018

level endorsement had already taken place and the BLAs were ready to be signed. ILO and UNDP may not have been able to influence the process to incorporate a gender perspective but it is clear that the effort to influence came too late. It is unlikely that there will be any updates to the BLAs within the timeframe of SALAM. The lack of a gender perspective can partly be explained by the fact that the vast majority of Afghans working in Gulf countries are male and the structural barriers to female entrants are such that they cannot be overcome in the foreseeable future.

In Nangarhar, the contracts issued to providers state that around 30 percent of beneficiaries should be women. At the time of the MTE, no beneficiaries had been selected so it is impossible to know how successful this will be. Given the many cultural and structural challenges that serve to exclude women from the workplace it will be difficult to identify female beneficiaries who will be able to earn a decent livelihood from training or job placement. The desire to include women may also result in gender stereotypical training being offered that lock women into the lowest rungs of commodity chains working as low-paid labour or restrict them to a narrow range of home-based income generating activities such as poultry raising or handicrafts. Countless numbers of such skills training for women have been delivered in the past with very low success. Developing meaningful employment opportunities for women requires a more strategic approach and a longer timeframe than SALAM can offer.

## Time

SALAM is a very ambitious project in scope and far too ambitious within the timeframe.

**Output 1** is essentially about institutional development. Global experience is that institutional capacity development is a long term endeavour which can only be led from within government as part of the political process of reform.<sup>25</sup> For that reason it is not easily influenced by development partners within the constraints of a timebound project.

This output seeks to develop an institutional framework for labour migration. ILO research shows that Afghanistan is 10–15 years behind other South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan in instituting a proper system for governance of formal labour migration.<sup>26</sup> Recent World Bank research, undertaken as part of the preparation process for the PLACED, shows that countries such as the Philippines and Vietnam have taken two to three decades to build a fully functioning labour-sending system.<sup>27</sup> ILO-led activities in this output are therefore unrealistic within a three year timeframe. This was already known as, for example, the activity relating to training on labour migration is an extension of work to develop a national training course that had not been completed in 2013 when the project ended and no further funding was available.

**Output 2** relates to job creation and skill development. The experience of NSDP is instructive in terms of what is reasonable to achieve and within what timeframe. Many factors beyond the control of the implementing partners (MOLSAMD and MoE) limited achievement: the elections in 2009; increasing insecurity; entrenched bureaucratic structures; a high degree of centralisation of the public TVET sector; and high turnover in the leadership of the implementing ministries. One of the sticking points

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<sup>25</sup> Capacity, change and performance. ECDPM 2008

<sup>26</sup> Labour migration for decent work in Afghanistan: Issues and challenges. ILO 2013

<sup>27</sup> Managed Labor Migration In Afghanistan: Institutional requirements and policy processes with and in Afghanistan. Rebekah Smith, January 2018

- essential if the quality of TVET was to be improved - was granting financial autonomy to public, project-supported TVET institutes, which did not have buy in at political level.<sup>28</sup>

The original Project Development Objective of the second ASDP was to increase the potential for employment and higher earnings of graduates from Vocational Education and Training institutions through improvements in the skills delivery system. When progress stalled in 2015, the project was restructured to focus more narrowly on improving TVET teacher competencies and curriculum in selected priority trades.<sup>29</sup> In that case the reasons for slow implementation were: insufficient coordination between implementing agencies; poor procurement and contract management; and high staff turnover. Within that project was a sub component to develop a system for benchmarking and certification of competencies, led by ILO.

In the light of all this experience it is not surprising that SALAM is not achieving as intended. Institutional capacity development takes a very long time. Not least, to be successful a range of relationships of trust must be built and that cannot be done quickly. When individuals move on, that relationship building has to start over. For international staff, who are used to delivering in tight timeframes this can be challenging and, when under pressure to demonstrate results, they may forego the relationship in favour of speed, as in the case of managing contracts. But this is a high-risk approach, which may damage the relationship with DOLSAMD beyond repair and have a knock on effect on the delivery of training.

## 4. Efficiency

### 4.1. Delivery

At midterm none of the partners – MOLSAMD, UNDP, ILO, UNHCR and Finland - were happy with the progress made by SALAM. By the end of 2017, delivery was only 19 percent against target. For 2018 official figures are not yet available but the guesstimate for expected delivery at the time of the MTE is 30 percent for ILO and 80 percent for UNDP (actual delivery plus commitment). In order to protect funding for 2018 this includes expenditure on activities that have been initiated in 2018 but will not be delivered until 2019.

Common concerns are the length of the inception phase, the slow pace of initiating results-oriented delivery, and the difficulty establishing a collaborative working relationship between partners. In Nangarhar, DOLSAMD has expressed concern about the delay in implementation in the province since at least March 2018. For MOLSAMD, an additional and major concern has been the proportion of the budget allocated to international staff costs.

The inception phase lasted much longer than intended. On the side of UNDP, processes for recruitment and establishing the fund transfer mechanism between partners were prolonged. On the side of MOLSAMD, the change of leadership led to delays in some important approvals necessary to move forward. In part, the nature of some processes is that there are several steps, each of which takes time. But the failure to establish consistent and full time project management to follow through on start-up activities and to ensure timely delivery was a significant cause of delay in delivery.

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<sup>28</sup> Implementation Completion and Results Report For The Afghanistan Skills Development Project. Report No: ICR00003252. World Bank, 2014

<sup>29</sup> Restructuring Paper: Second Skills Development Project Report No.: RES26913. World Bank 2015



## 4.2. Project management

Overall project management has been weak. The critical position of Project Manager took time to fill and the recruit resigned after six months. Thereafter a UNDP Program Officer acted in the role, alongside his other work, from March to September 2018, when the ILO Project Coordinator took over, also in an acting capacity. This has meant that the project has never had a dedicated manager who could consistently cultivate and maintain relationships with MOLSAMD and coordinate between UN partners. Critically, there was no-one who could provide consistent direction and support to the NTA teams in Kabul and Jalalabad.

Recruitment of other staff has also been slow. International positions were not filled until September 2017 for the Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Specialist (PMRS) after two rounds and December 2017 for the Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) after three attempts.

Eight positions for NTAs are allocated. Filling the four in MOLSAMD was not easy but was eventually successful. In Nangarhar the Provincial Coordinator and the Senior Inter-Agency Liaison Officer (based at the Governor's Office) were filled but both resigned and the posts are currently vacant.

## 4.3. National implementation

SALAM is implemented by MOLSAMD through the National Implementation Modality (NIM). This means that ownership and responsibility for all programming decisions rests with the government. UNDP manages the risk through the mechanism Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT), which includes a rigorous assessment of ministry capacity to devolve responsibility for project financial management to MOLSAMD in a way that is accountable. HACT also establishes a simplified set of procedures for managing financial transfers between UN agencies. The Micro Capacity Assessment Report of the HACT process was submitted in January 2018 and subsequent time was needed to deal with issues arising.

Such a process was unfamiliar to MOLSAMD and required a lot of time to explain and obtain agreement. During the process of change in leadership at ministerial level the process stalled and the mechanisms and requirements had to be explained and agreed afresh. This was not straightforward as there were already different views in the ministry about sharing potentially sensitive administrative information with an external party. There were also delays on UNDP's side in processing the HACT in a timely way so that activities could commence. This affected the process of fund transfer between UNDP and ILO and prevented the timely start of ILO-led activities.

A major tension from the outset of the project, and one which has continually been raised, was the Ministry's objection to the proportion of the budget allocated to international staff. In 2018 this was up to 25 percent.<sup>30</sup> The tension escalated in May 2018 when the number of overall beneficiaries in Nangarhar was reduced from 2,400 to 1,400 – a cut of 42 percent - on the grounds of an increase in unit costs and no additional budget. The ministry was infuriated that cuts were being made to an already small number of the most vulnerable Afghans, who are in dire need, when there was no cut to international staff who they believe add little value.

Another reason for dissatisfaction was that one of the justifications for the reduced budget was an increase in unit costs for delivery of training. This happened because the provider was shifted from

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<sup>30</sup> Calculated from the 2018 proforma



government VTCs to the private sector (see also effectiveness section). It was not only an issue for government but also for UNHCR who raised the same concern at Project Board level, citing the significantly cheaper unit costs of training incurred using not for profit modalities (estimated at around \$500 per person) compared with the private sector (estimated at \$1,000).<sup>31</sup>

An additional and related tension has recently arisen. The decision for UNDP to undertake procurement for two contracts relating to job placement and TVET was approved by MOLSAMD after it became clear that the government VTCs could not be utilised and time was running short to deliver to beneficiaries before the end of the project. This approach is consistent with NIM, which allows for UNDP to provide support services where the government does not have such capacity. However, rather than allowing MOLSAMD to resume responsibility for management of the contracts, UNDP appears to have taken over in a way that is de facto direct implementation (DIM). At the time of the MTE, the Director of DOLSAMD had not granted meetings with the two implementing contractors because he had not been officially briefed about the purpose and deliverables of the contracts by MOLSAMD. This is a critical situation and presents a very high risk to implementation.

#### 4.4. Institutional and governance arrangements

##### Governance

At strategic level the Project Board is the governance mechanism. Two Boards have been held, in December 2017 and June 2018.

When the gap in project management due to the lack of a Project Manager became apparent, a Technical Working Group (TWG) was initiated. This has been successful in raising and dealing with important matters requiring decisions. However, in the absence of routine project management meetings that would normally be convened by a project manager, the TWG acted as a substitute. There does not seem to have been any control over who attended. In the June 2018 TWG there were 12 participants. Alongside Embassy of Finland, senior UN partners and the MOLSAMD Director of Skills Development, the four NTA also attended. Given some of the subject matter discussed, which included disclosure of financial and procurement information, this is inappropriate. There were also concerns among some members that disagreements within the project were being aired inappropriately and that some behaviour was unprofessional.

##### Strategic coordination

An important element of the design of SALAM is high level coordination on displacement. This starts with the government-led DiREC (Displacement and Return Executive Committee) and is supported by the Durable Solutions Working Group (DSWG), which ensures the linkage with reintegration platforms and coordination activities.<sup>32</sup> The DSWG is chaired by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations (MoRR) and co- chaired by UNHCR, UNDP and IOM on a rotational basis. During inception SALAM used DSWG as a platform to position itself and is subsequently represented at meetings for the purpose of coordination.

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with UNHCR who are familiar with costings through their support to similar NGO-provided training

<sup>32</sup> DSWG is a partnership of Ministries, UN agencies, national and international NGOs that coordinates humanitarian and development initiatives and activities with the purpose of developing a durable solutions strategy for returnees and IDPs

Another coordination forum is the Labour Migration Working Group (LMWG), hosted by the World Bank to bring together partners and experts working to support the development of a labour migration management system.

At provincial level it was hoped that there would be a P-DiREC. SALAM aimed to promote its success by placing a Coordinator in the Office of the Governor in Jalalabad. However, the recruit was never clear about the purpose of the role and there was insufficient support from Kabul to make it a reality. Subsequently the person resigned and there has been no further action. Nangarhar does have a Provincial DSWG in which UNHCR is very active. However, after energetic coordination in 2016 and 2017 when there were massive returns, the group has reportedly settled back into a less active role.

ILO has coordinated closely with the World Bank during the project preparation for PLACED because of the close relationship between Output 1 and PLACED.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4.5. Factors affecting efficiency

##### Project structure

The way the project structure (organogram) is presented (see Annex 5) does not reflect the NIM modality. Normally the top of the organogram would be the Project Director who, in SALAM, is the MOLSAMD Director of Skill Development. The Project Manager would report to him as well as, for accountability purposes, to UNDP. However, in SALAM, the PM reports only to the Head of the Livelihoods Unit in UNDP, as do the international CTA and PMRS. This, combined with the PM mainly being performed by a UN staff member in an acting capacity, has distorted the ownership of SALAM. International staff believe that they are working for UNDP, not the government. Even though the NTA are on government contracts, the fact that their positions are funded by SALAM has created the impression that they too work for UNDP.

In the absence of a PM it would be reasonable to expect that the CTA might take a technical lead and the PMRS might take the lead on planning. This has not happened and there is a vacuum of leadership. The impression given is that everyone has a hand in everything but no-one is in charge. Combined with ambiguity around the outputs (see effectiveness section), the result is that SALAM lacks direction.

The reason SALAM has lacked a permanent PM is supposedly because of the difficulty of recruitment. However, especially after the closure of several very large USAID-funded projects after the security transition in 2014, the kind of senior person who can manage a project and cultivate appropriate and respectful relationships with government can be found in the market relatively easily. Other agencies do not face the same difficulties that UNDP claims to have.

##### Capacity

Capacity development has been covered in the effectiveness section. It is also an important influencing factor for efficiency.

Like many ministries, MOLSAMD is still developing its capacity after the turmoil of the years of conflict and the sometimes capacity depleting effects of projectized donor funding. Since 2002, a solution to capacity weakness has been to add capacity in the form of international and national TA. If the added NTA capacity is strong it can, to some extent, compensate for weakness in the tashkeel (civil service).

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<sup>33</sup> Funding for PLACED is estimated at USD\$ 50 Million (grant) over a 5 year duration.

However, years of experience in Afghanistan and globally have shown that NTA is rarely successful at *developing* capacity and tends to perpetuate *substitution*. Often, NTA do not themselves have capacity due to the political economy of recruitment, which tends to favour nepotism.

In the case of SALAM in Jalalabad, the NTA team have weak capacity to understand conceptually what SALAM is trying to achieve (promotion of development reintegration solutions) as well as limited practical experience of project implementation. At the time of the MTE there was discussion about providing capacity development support to the NTA. As funding for these positions will discontinue after 2019, supporting NTA is a less efficient approach than direct support to tashkeel officials. As mentioned in the effectiveness section, SALAM does not have a capacity development plan to support discussion of the issue or decision making.

When NTA are provided through project funding it is common that they are utilised to meet the wider needs of the ministry as well as, or instead of, purposes related to the project. This issue has been raised at TWG meetings but has not been addressed. As with some other decisions, UNDP appears to be inflexible about the use of NTA, insisting that they only perform duties related to the project. This has had the effect of undermining government ownership.

Attitudes and behaviours that undermine government has an impact on MOLSAMD's motivation to exercise leadership, especially to ensure that provincial level activities happen in a timely way. This perceived weakness seems to have led some UNDP staff to become more prescriptive in their management guidance and oversight than is appropriate under NIM. A risk is that this becomes a vicious cycle in which UNDP becomes more directive, government becomes less motivated, this is perceived as weak capacity and the response is more directive management.

## Insecurity

Insecurity does not directly impact on SALAM activities. However, ongoing and worsening insecurity in Nangarhar and mandatory UN security restrictions on travel does reduce the number of times and length of visits of the international staff. This affected the assessment of VTCs, which was done late and less thoroughly than desirable. It currently makes it difficult to monitor activities and to mitigate the risk of the inexperience of the NTA.

## Time

As well as affecting effectiveness, as already discussed, time also affects efficiency. Some of the delays experienced in SALAM are normal and, in the Afghan context, few projects deliver on agreed targets within the initial timeframe and even in extension. For this reason, a three year timeframe to deliver outputs, especially when they start from scratch rather than building on a previous intervention, is very short. Therefore, Finland's assumption that the small size of SALAM relative to the EU and World Bank projects may be advantageous in terms of faster delivery is likely false.

Time is important for a number of reasons, but not least the one experienced by SALAM that developing a working relationship with a new partner ministry cannot happen quickly. MOLSAMD has multiple, sometimes conflicting priorities, of which delivery of individual projects are only one and not necessarily the most important priority of the day. Mistrust, such as that observable in relation to disclosure of sensitive information, can only be overcome after sometimes lengthy discussion between the partners as well as resolution of internal ministry differences on how to handle it that cannot be influenced by the project. Similarly, discussion of workplans also takes longer than development partners might expect. But UNDP also needs time to get its own house in order. The Annual Work Plan for 2019 had barely begun in UNDP in early November and there had been no

consultation with government.<sup>34</sup> In part this late attention to such an important issue was reluctance to start a process that, for some aspects of the budget such as international staff salaries, would likely be contentious.

Procurement processes, whether in government or UNDP are governed by processes and procedures with fixed timeframes that cannot be speeded up. For Finland, contracted activities cannot exceed the duration of the project which has meant that the envisaged time-scale for implementation was shortened from 18 to 15 months. Contractors resisted this because they know they will probably not complete activities in that timeframe but had little choice but to agree if they wished to win the contract.

## 5. Sustainability

As detailed in the effectiveness section, activities are still in their early stages. This means that no comment can be made on sustainability.

For activities relating to institutional development, the timeframe needed is much longer than the three years of SALAM. In fact, some of the activities of ILO are building on work that was started but not completed several years ago and, especially that relating to the normative role of the UN, is work that will continue indefinitely.

For the activities directly benefiting beneficiaries, sustainability of the results of training and job placement will depend very much on the quality of experience the trainees receive. If it is high quality they may have improved job opportunities. However, since access to jobs is so heavily influenced by connections and networks, even high quality training may not lead to jobs. Low quality training almost certainly will not result in jobs. As previously discussed, the timeframe and the inexperience of the contractors means that the quality of training is compromised.

## 6. Conclusions, lessons and recommendations

### 6.1. Conclusions

**At the time it was designed and agreed in 2016, SALAM was a highly relevant project.** Migration was a hot issue on the political agenda of donors, especially in Europe, and the design aimed to bring a long term approach to the immense challenge of labour migration and reintegration of returning refugees and failed asylum seekers by working in the humanitarian and development nexus. For the UN agencies with mandates relevant to labour migration, working in partnership as One UN was, and remains, important as a modality.

**Many factors have made implementation more difficult and slower than envisaged.** Part of the reason for SALAM's inability to demonstrate results is that the output statements are set at an unrealistically high level. There has been plenty of scope to define the indicators in a way that makes results realistic and achievable, in particular through the annual workplan process. Capacity gaps and weaknesses in the SALAM team meant that opportunity was missed and there has been no line of sight from activities to outputs. By midterm, the level and spread of activities is indicative of a project

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<sup>34</sup> The process for the 2019 AWP began on 17/18 November when ILO, UNDP and NTAs developed the 2019 AWP. It was discussed with the Project Director (MOLSAMD) on 19 Nov.

that is trying to move in too many directions. The slow progress, combined with the lack of tangible results has been disappointing for all partners and there is a sense that SALAM has lost its way.

**Misunderstandings about the National Implementation Modality have affected government ownership.** UNDP and MOLSAMD have not worked together previously and the NIM modality is a new experience for the ministry. Getting shared understanding of what it means has not been easy, especially in the face of changing ministerial level leadership. A confusing project management structure that undermines the role of the Project Director, combined with UNDP sometimes operating in a style associated with direct implementation (DIM), has led to combative relations. MOLSAMD's lack of confidence in the International TA and uncertainty about the role and management of NTA has resulted in a low level of ownership.

**The original focus on job creation has been largely lost and the training activities that are just starting in Nangarhar have weak linkages to job opportunities.** The main interest of Finland, and the focus of UNDP's current effort, is results for beneficiaries in Nangarhar. With the benefit of hindsight, the balance of effort and spend at national level, where results are harder to demonstrate in the short term, now appears excessive compared with subnational level where returnees, IDPs and host communities face extreme challenges establishing livelihoods. Had provincial activities started earlier, there might have been more time to fully assess the potential (or not) for job creation. The courses are too short and are being delivered too quickly through private sector partners whose ability to deliver quality is untested. In bypassing government TVET there is a risk of substituting one low quality skills training with another that may be marginally better but is unsustainable beyond donor funding. At midterm, SALAM's contribution at provincial level is not sufficiently different from that of players in the humanitarian sphere, to add value.

**SALAM's distinctive development contribution to the challenge of sustainable reintegration is not yet evident.** With the envisaged focus on job creation having slipped into delivery of training, SALAM is not doing anything for beneficiaries in Nangarhar that is not already being done by experienced and locally based humanitarian agencies such as IOM and the large NGOs. Although UNDP envisaged bringing expertise in sustainable livelihoods this has been difficult to place. In part the context and political economy is not conducive to job creation but it also proved impossible to recruit a CTA with a technical sustainable livelihoods specialism.

**The way SALAM has evolved, along with the presence of better placed partners in MOLSAMD, means that its relevance, in the current form, is less than at the time of design.** SALAM sought to do, as a holistic project, what now seems to be better achieved through more focused interventions. The ongoing design of the World Bank-funded PLACED project is much larger than SALAM, has a more tightly defined focus, and has the benefit of technical specialists on labour migration. Similarly, GIZ has an established and long term technical support role in labour-related skills development. That the World Bank and GIZ are better placed does not reflect badly on SALAM. But it does indicate the responsibility to recognise and align with ongoing or emerging programs that have greater potential for effectiveness and sustainability.

**The intention to work at the interface between humanitarian and development interventions and to work as One UN with government in the driving seat continues to be highly relevant.** The theory of change was ambitious but SALAM was the right thing to try to do and it was progressive of Finland to invest in SALAM to enable it to launch. Implementation has been flawed, sometimes seriously, but only the experience of trying enables the lessons to be learned that can inform future approaches. Limitations of the theory have a lot to do with loss of shared vision that is an almost inevitable consequence of change in leadership. Projects are, after all, a political consensus at a moment in time

and, when once-shared visions are lost, the nature and purpose of the experiment has to be revisited. SALAM has not had the catalytic effect of bringing in other donors as hoped but it has enabled a number of lessons to be learned that could not otherwise have been.

## 6.2. Recommendations

### 1. Of equal priority, confirm the leadership role of the Project Director and recruit a Project Manager

- *Confirm the leadership role of the Project Director* – reaffirm commitment to NIM and ensure that the Project Director leads on all important decisions. It is in all partners interests to ensure government ownership in the final year, especially if partners wish to continue the partnership beyond 2019
- *Recruit a Project Manager* – the role in the final year requires a person with seniority and experience, who is willing to be based in MOLSAMD, and who has the capacity and motivation to provide enough support to the Project Director to ensure that activities are well-formulated and delivered whilst ensuring that MOLSAMD retain ownership

### 2. Develop an Annual Workplan for 2019 with realistically achievable activities

It will help bring SALAM to a satisfactory conclusion if activities, and especially indicators, are formulated in a way that allows them to be achieved. The evaluator does not have enough information to make concrete recommendations but the following comments may help inform discussion. Removal of redundant or unachievable activities has value not only in reducing the number but also in creating space to define a small number of new activities where the need has emerged.

Activity	Comment
Develop national legislation and policy instruments	Requires a clear target
Establish gender-sensitive, sector-specific minimum standards for Bilateral Labour Agreements	Remove – not achievable within the timeframe
Improve coordination, adoption, implementation and monitoring of the National Labour Migration Strategy	Requires a clear target and definition of SALAM's role (if any)
Develop an action plan based on recommendations of the Migration Country Case Study	Revisit whether this is appropriate
Develop an integrated database to collect disaggregated data	Remove - other partners are better placed to support
Establish a TVET Board or similar body	Remove – not active and beyond project influence
Design and institutionalise local/international events	Revisit the purpose and set a target if still considered appropriate
Develop and implement TVET Electronic Management Information System	Remove - other partners are better placed to support
Develop and implement PPP model for MoLSAMD's established VTCs	Requires secondary legislation to move forward. Define appropriate target
Conduct a gender sensitive rural and urban labour market review in Nangarhar in conjunction with EU	Remove – redundant as using Oxfam assessment
Design and deliver gender sensitive competency based training programs for identified priority trades	Define the roles and responsibilities of MOLSAMD, DOLSAMD and UNDP



Particular attention should be paid to the ‘training’ that is due to be delivered by ILO for 600 beneficiaries. The evaluator could not determine what the purpose of this activity was and whether there was a plan for it.

The Workplan for 2019 will be (or has already been) prepared in relative haste and is likely to be a compromise. When the Project Manager is recruited and has had time to make their own assessment in consultation with the Project Director, a review of the Workplan will be important to establish ownership by those expected to implement it.

The Workplan should also include an exit strategy, especially for those activities that will be merged into the activities of the World Bank or GIZ.

### 3. Revisit the governance arrangement

The purpose and membership of the Technical Working Group and Project Board should be revisited:

- The Project Board is the forum for Finland, senior MOLSAMD officials and UNDP Country Office to agree strategic direction. In addition to approving the Workplan for 2019, the most important discussion is the future of the partnership beyond the conclusion of SALAM
- The TWG should be the operational forum, held in and led by MOLSAMD with the Project Director delegating responsibility to the Project Manager. It should comprise project staff and need not include the donor or UNDP Country Office.

Attention needs to be paid to hierarchy, especially in relation to the participation of the NTA. Related to the first recommendation on NIM, the reporting line of the NTA needs to be agreed. If they report to the Project Director it is not reasonable that the NTA participate in the TWG on an equal level. One solution might be that the PD sits on the Project Board, along with the Minister, while leadership of the TWG is delegated to the PM. The TWG is then the forum for technical discussion within an agreed workplan. For other management, administrative and logistical discussion, routine project team meetings can be held.

### 4. Revisit the role of the International staff

If MOLSAMD is to re-establish ownership of SALAM, the role and reporting lines of the CTA and PMRS must be clarified. They consume a large proportion of the budget, which has been a source of tension and, if this is to be justified, they need to demonstrate their value to MOLSAMD. In order to build relationships of trust, some compromise will be needed by both International and National TA in terms of providing support to MOLSAMD that is required, but not necessarily linked, to SALAM.

### 5. Develop an exit strategy and consider the future beyond SALAM

With just over one year before conclusion, attention should be given to achieving a dignified exit. This can be partly achieved during the 2019 Annual Workplan process with attention to tightly defining the remaining activities and revising the indicators so that they are realistic and achievable. Engagement with other partners will help ensure that important activities can be sustained.

SALAM, in its current form, is less relevant than at the time of design in 2016. However, the issue of labour migration and the challenge of addressing the interface between humanitarian interventions and long-term development for sustainable reintegration remains highly relevant. If there is interest among partners to move forward, now is the time to start planning. Whether this should take the form

of a re-design of the framework project or whether a completely new design with a new theory of change would be more appropriate is a subject for the Project Board.

### 6.3. Lessons

Six important lessons can be drawn from the experience of SALAM to date.

#### **Lesson 1: Experimentation is important and necessary**

The way SALAM has unfolded makes it more like a pilot than a full project. It has experimented with working in the challenging humanitarian development nexus, as One UN, and with national implementation. Although results are disappointing to all partners, and there are tensions in the relationships, SALAM is not a failure. At the very least it has demonstrated the benefit of a high risk appetite when treading new ground.

#### **Lesson 2: Funding and timeframes need to reflect the nature of development**

SALAM is intended to be a development project and development does not happen quickly. Yet the funding for SALAM is allocated and must be spent on an annual basis without carry over if unspent. This sets up a fundamental contradiction and the pressure to achieve rapid results influences decisions about activities that reduce the potential impact and sustainability for beneficiaries.

#### **Lesson 3: When NIM is the basis of the agreement, all partners must support the principle and practice of government ownership**

The breakdown in SALAM's relationship with MOLSAMD at the time of the MTE was based on a series of misunderstandings. Of these, the most important is the murkiness of what it means to allow government to exercise ownership and drive the vehicle even when the road is full of potholes, the destination is far in the distance, and the journey is slow and uncomfortable. When MOLSAMD expressed frustration with the performance and cost of the international TA, courageous decisions were needed to protect government ownership and reduce the risk of the crisis of confidence that resulted.

#### **Lesson 4: Delivering more of the same is not effective**

Since the 1980s, there has been enormous investment in trainings and income generating activities for refugees in Pakistan and returnees and IDPs in Afghanistan. If all of those had been effective in providing sustainable livelihoods Afghanistan would now be a middle income country. Although SALAM aimed to offer something different, in practice it is offering more of the same kind of TVET that has not been successful in the past and that humanitarian partners can do more effectively and efficiently. To work in the humanitarian development nexus, UNDP needs to offer something substantially better than what has gone before. This relates to lesson 2 in that designing and implementing something more effective and sustainable, especially if women are to benefit, requires a longer timeframe and a flexible funding arrangement.

#### **Lesson 5: No project can reach all beneficiaries without losing focus**

SALAM aimed to work on reintegration of returnees but, somewhere along the line, this objective has got lost. The attempt to be inclusive has created a pool of potential beneficiaries in which almost everyone - returnee, IDP, member of a host community, youth, up to 60, female or disabled - qualifies.



With total numbers far beyond what any project can reach, and perverse incentives influencing who is selected, the result in terms of sustainable reintegration will be impossible to measure. If reintegration really is the goal then a very different approach is needed. In a future project this may include MOLSAMD but other ministries also have a stake.

**Lesson 6: Delivering results for beneficiaries requires a strong and consistent focus at provincial level from the outset.**

The two outputs of SALAM are very different: one being about long term institutional development; the other being about working at provincial level where there are major challenges in the political economy. There is no problem with having two such outputs within one project but it is necessary to manage the balance between them effectively and ensure that provincial activities are given equal priority.

## Annexes

### Annex 1: Terms of Reference

#### Background

##### Organizational context:

Within the UNDP Afghanistan Country Office, Support Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility (SALAM) project is housed in the Livelihoods and Resilience Programme Unit which is responsible for project design, contracting, and project initiation. The focus of UNDP work on livelihoods and resilience is on reducing poverty and creating mechanisms that help men and women in the country to cope with socioeconomic stresses resulting from the humanitarian crisis and limited human development. The Livelihoods and Resilience Unit in UNDP Country Office in Kabul works with private sector to create jobs and economic growth, and with the government, to build infrastructure, link rural areas to markets, develop new forms of employment suited to the needs of the areas and to people movements. It promotes alternative livelihoods adapted to the threats of climate change with focus on value chains, that also help reduce illicit economy.

The Support Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility (SALAM) in Nangarhar is a joint project of UNDP, ILO and UNHCR in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) with the aim to support the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) in developing comprehensive, coherent and integrated national and sub-national policy and institutional approaches for enhancing livelihoods in a time of crisis and protracted conflict, and in the wake of the massive and ongoing return of Afghan people from Pakistan. SALAM brings together the Government and three UN Agencies: UNDP, UNHCR and ILO, along with the private sector and other partners, to seek durable solutions for Afghans in line with the Government's vision and strategies for employment generation and labour migration.

With initial funding support from the Government of Finland, the programme's main interventions promote the creation of an enabling environment for generating livelihood alternatives in Nangarhar. Customized support activities will also be provided to address the specialized needs of various groups, including IDPs, migrant returnees, young people, and women. SALAM also targets safer and more productive international labour migration for those who choose to leave Afghanistan, through initiatives that help identify regular opportunities for international migration. SALAM project is expected to deliver the following outputs:

- **Output 1:** Formalized institutional structures in support of regular labour migration for Afghan women and men are established;
- **Output 2:** National and international employment opportunities for women and men IDPs and returnees in Nangarhar province increased.

The geographic coverage of SALAM project is Kabul city and Jalalabad city of Nangarhar province.

In accordance with the revised project document, UNDP intends to conduct this Midterm Evaluation (MTE) of the SALAM project to **provide a comprehensive independent assessment of project performance and governance arrangements and provide recommendations for the remainder of the project implementation.**

SALAM Framework project was signed with an overall budget of US\$ 120 M covering 5 provinces, including Nangarhar. This project remained unfunded except for the Finnish funding earmarked for Nangarhar. A "subproject" was created to reflect the specific contribution of Finland in Nangarhar. The Nangarhar specific project document reflects a reduction in the scope of the SALAM Framework, including the number of provinces from 5 to one (Nangarhar), from 3 to 2 outputs, a corresponding change in the number of indicators and activities (from 46 to 12 activities and an evaluation). In

accordance with these changes, the budget was reduced from US\$ 120 million to US\$ 5 million and the revised time frame from 2021 to 2019.

The mid-term evaluation is expected to serve as **a means of validating or filling the gaps in the initial assessment of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability obtained from monitoring**. The mid-term evaluation provides the opportunity to **assess early signs of project success or failure and prompt necessary adjustments**. Specifically, the mid-term evaluation is intended to provide a programme or project manager with a **basis for identifying appropriate actions** to:

- Address particular issues or problems in project design, identify potential project design issues or problems;
- Address particular issues or problems regarding project implementation;
- Address particular issues or problems regarding the project management;
- Assess progress towards the achievement of objectives and targets;
- Identify and document initial lessons learnt from experience (including lessons that might improve design and implementation of other L&R Unit projects);
- Identify additional risks (which are not part of the current risk log, if any) and counter-measures;
- Make recommendations and aid decision-making regarding specific actions that might be taken to improve the project and reinforce initiatives that demonstrate the potential for success.

The evaluation will also be used to reflect on the duality of the SALAM overall Framework and the SALAM project in Nangarhar and will include advice on how to revisit the larger SALAM framework for scaling up efforts and resource mobilization.

Against this background, UNDP is hiring an independent International consultant to carry out the Midterm Evaluation of the SALAM project which will be conducted through a consultative process with UNDP, UNHCR and ILO, MoLSAMD, the project donor and beneficiaries.

## **Evaluation Purpose**

The **objectives** of the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) are to:

- Assist the recipient Government, beneficiaries, UNDP and, as appropriate, the concerned partners and stakeholders, to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and impact of the project;
- Provide feedback to all parties to improve the policy, planning, appraisal and implementation and monitoring phases; and
- Ensure accountability for results to the project's financial backers, stakeholders and beneficiaries.

## **Evaluation Scope and Objectives**

The Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes mentioned above and as specified in the SALAM Project Document, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made to set the project on-track to help achieve its intended results. The MTE will also review the project's approach and methodology, its risks to results impact and sustainability and make recommendations on how to improve the project over the remainder of its lifetime.

The questions regarding aspects of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project will cover the design, start-up, project management, and project implementation phases from January 2017 to the time of the evaluation (expected in August 2018).

## **MTE Approach and methodology**

The MTE must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The consultant will review all relevant sources of information including documents (reference the 'Documents to be consulted' section below). The consultant will also interview all relevant stakeholders including all parties who have been contracted by the project or participate in meetings and discussions with the project. The consultant is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach ensuring close engagement of all stakeholders (See section below: 'Evaluation Target Groups and sources of information').

The consultant will produce an Evaluation Inception Report based on a review of all relevant documents and initial consultations and present it to the UNDP Livelihoods and Resilience Unit, the Programme Strategy and Results Unit (PSR), UNDP Senior Management and other stakeholders to explain the objectives and methods adopted for the mid-term evaluation.

In addition to the Evaluation inception report, the consultant will produce: a) an Initial findings presentation on the final day of the in-country mission to Afghanistan, b) a Draft evaluation report, and c) a Final evaluation report based on below evaluation criteria and feedback received and including all tools and questionnaires that were used.

### **Evaluation Questions:**

#### **Relevance:**

- Is the project design appropriate to address the substantive problem that the project is intended to address? How useful are the project outputs to the needs of the target beneficiaries;
- What is the value of intervention in relation to the national and international partners' policies and priorities (including SDG, UNDAF and UNDP Corporate Strategic Plan; Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework and the National Priority Programmes, the UNHCR Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR);
- Are the project objectives consistent with substantive needs, and realistic in consideration of technical capacity, resources and time available.

#### **Efficiency:**

- To what extent were adequate resources secured prior to project implementation? Did the project use the resources in the most economical manner to achieve its objectives;
- To what extent were project start-up activities completed on schedule;
- How well is the project managed, and how could it be managed better;
- Is there an appropriate mechanism for monitoring the progress of the project? If yes, is there adequate usage of results/data for programming and decision making;
- What is the project status with respect to target outputs in terms of quality and timeliness;
- What is the potential that the project will successfully achieve the desired outcomes;
- What are the potential challenges/risks that may prevent the project from producing the intended results.

#### **Effectiveness:**

- Are the project's objectives and outcomes clearly articulated, feasible, realistic;
- Are the underlying assumptions on which the project intervention has been based valid? Is there a clear and relevant Theory of Change;
- To what extent did the project start-up activities adhere to the agreed approach and methodology;
- If there were delays in project start-up, what were the causes of delay, and what was the effectiveness of corrective measures undertaken? Do start-up problems persist;
- To what extent has the project implemented activities as envisaged? To what extent have those activities contributed to achieving the project objectives;
- What factors have contributed to achieving/not achieving the intended results;
- To what extent have the project implementation modalities been appropriate to achieve the overall objectives;

- To what extent has the project managed to implement activities across the target project locations;
- To what extent do external factors, such as logistical or security constraints, have impact on project implementation;
- To what extent is the project logic, concept and approach appropriate and relevant to achieving the objectives.

#### **Impact:**

- What is the wider perception of the project, its image, applicability and performance? Are project communications effective in positively promoting the project to a wider audience;
- What are the results (or preliminary results) of the intervention in terms changes in the lives of beneficiaries against set indicators?

#### **Sustainability:**

- What are the Implementing Partner's resources, motivation and ability to continue project activities in the future;
- Is there adequate all-party commitment to the project objectives and chosen approach;
- To what extent is there constructive cooperation among the project partners? What are the levels of satisfaction of government counterparts, donors and beneficiaries;
- What has been the quality of execution of the implementing partner, and if applicable where are there specific areas for improvement;
- What is the likelihood that the project results will be sustainable in terms of systems, institutions, financing and anticipated impact;
- What is needed for the project intervention to be adapted/replicated further.

In addition to assessing the evaluation questions above, the team should analyze any other pertinent issues that need addressing or which may or should influence future project direction and UNDP, ILO and UNHCR engagement in the country.

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

- The MTE will include a section of the report setting out the MTE's evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings;
- What corrective actions are recommended for the design, start-up phase, managerial arrangements and project implementation, including sustainability, of the project? An actionable recommendation table should be put in the report's executive summary;
- What actions are recommended to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project;
- What are the main lessons that can be drawn from the project experience that may have generic application.

#### **Evaluation Target Groups and sources of information:**

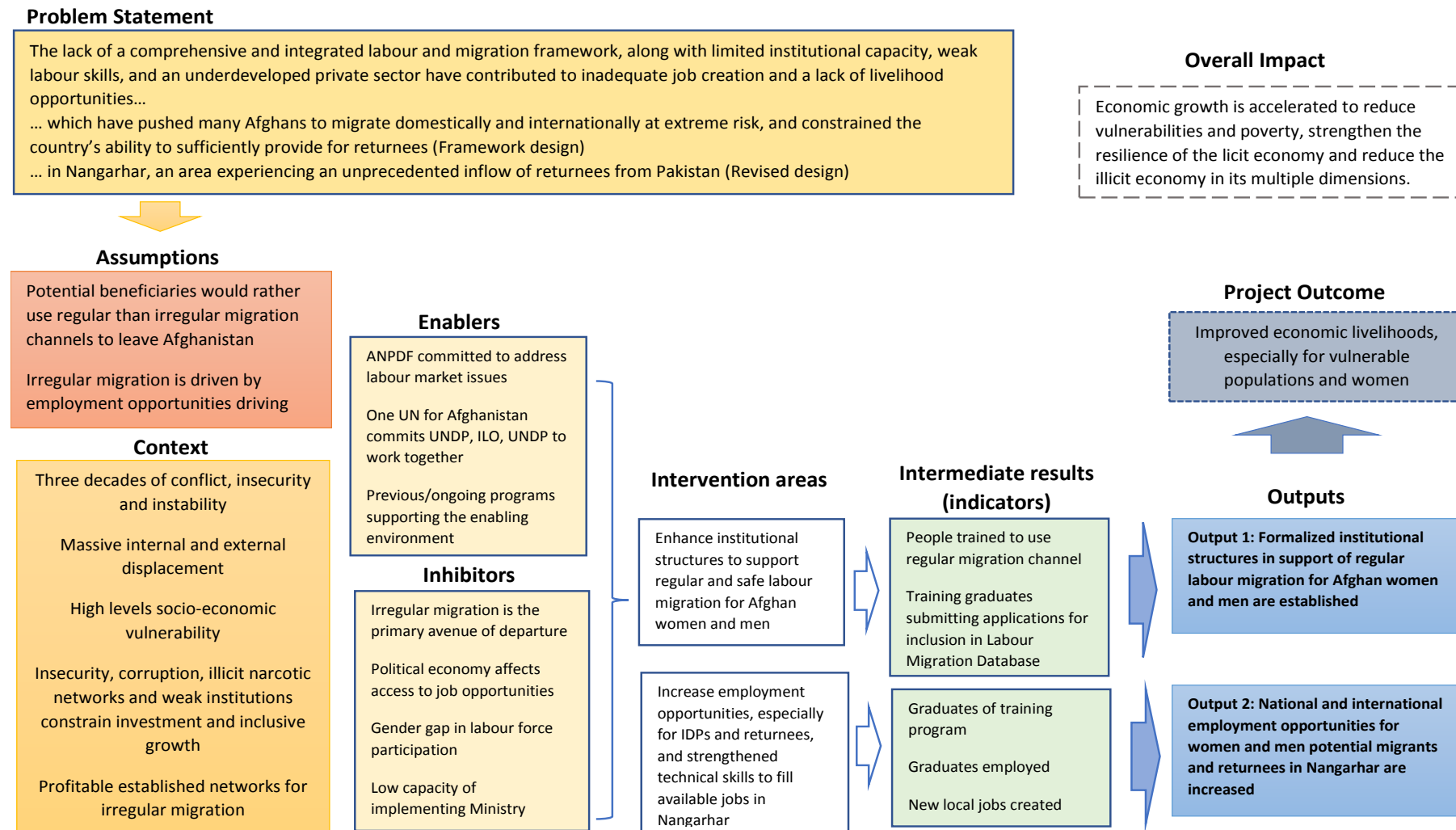
- The consultant should strive to reach as many people as possible, ensuring diversity of various stakeholder groups, as well as to review existing reports and data for an enriched evaluation;
- A provisional list of stakeholder groups that should be consulted during the evaluation is given below and will be updated once the consultant is on board:
  - Government of Afghanistan: MoLSAMD, and its relevant Directorates, DoLSAMD and DiREC in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Governor's Office;
  - Beneficiaries: MoLSAMD, Trainees and Job Placement Returnees, Private Sector Employers and Employers;
  - International Organizations: UNHCR, ILO, IOM, Oxfam, World Bank;
  - Donor: Government of Finland;
  - UNDP Country Office;
  - SALAM Project Staff in Kabul and Nangarhar.

## Annex 2: List of people interviewed

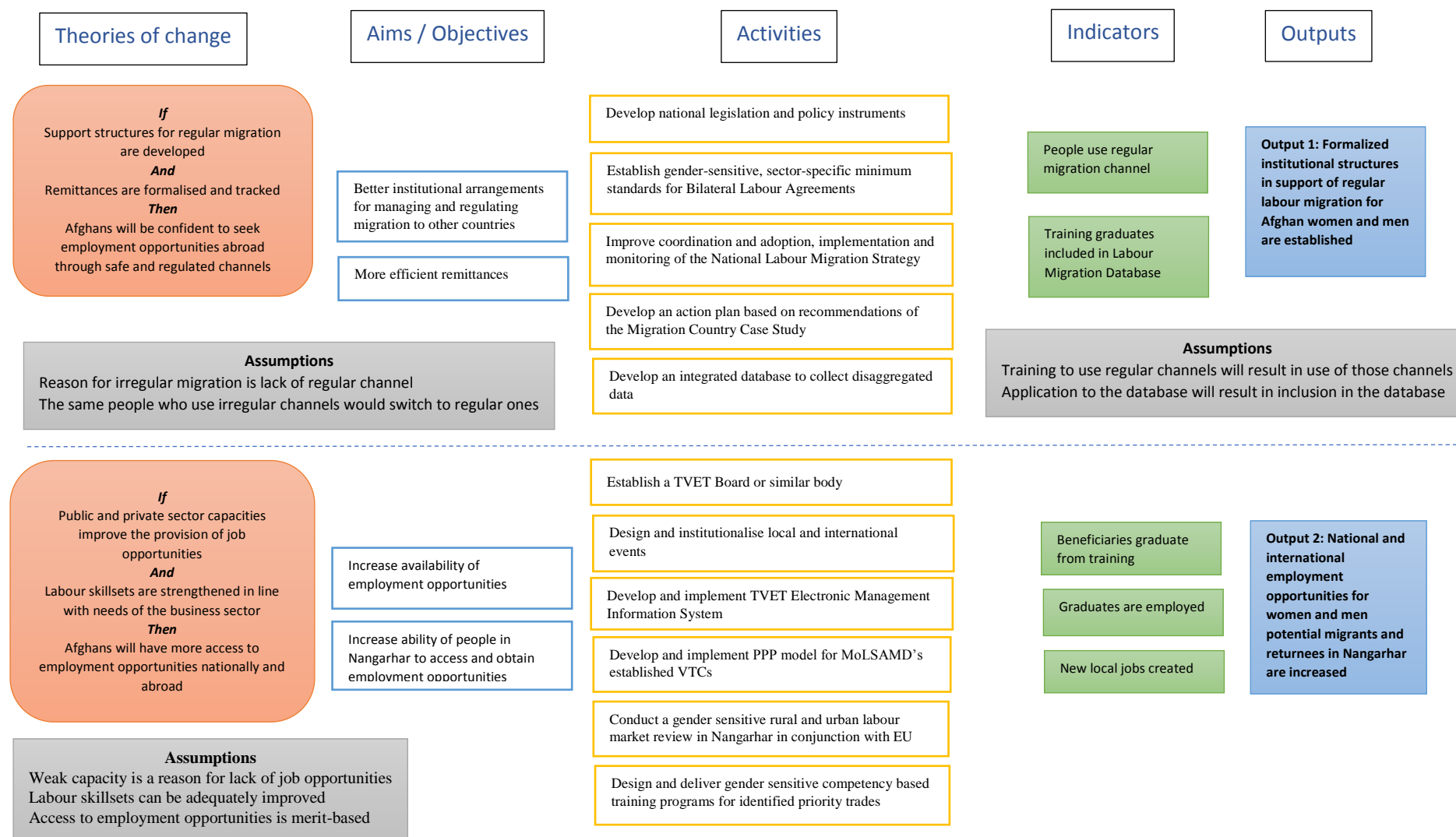
Person Met	Position	Time
<b>Monday 29 October: Kabul</b>		
Mohammed Salim	Livelihoods and Resilience Unit Program Officer	9-10am
Paul Partner	Chief Technical Adviser UNDP SALAM	12-1pm
Jocelyn Mason	UNDP Country Director	3:30 – 4pm
<b>Tuesday 30 October: Kabul</b>		
Syed Haroon Ahmadi Hashmatullah Waisy Abdul Wakil Faizy	Program Strategy, Planning & Results Unit, UNDP	10-11am
Rafi Musawi (TVET) Khalid Wadan (Labour Policy) Esmat Shinwari (Private Sector) Bilal Kakar (Procurement)	National Technical Assistants, MoLSAMD	2-3.30pm
<b>Wednesday 31 October: Kabul</b>		
Manzoor Khaliq Mansoor Akbar	Country Director ILO	9-10am
Malang Ibrahim	Reintegration Officer UNHCR	11-12
Tahmina Haidare	Chief Operating Officer, Afghan Centre for Excellence	2-3pm
Niina Tenhio	Former Embassy of Finland, Head of Development Cooperation	
<b>Thursday 1 November: Kabul</b>		
Lotta Valtonen	Embassy of Finland, Counsellor, Head of Cooperation	9-10am
Christina Hiemstra Matiullah Seerat	Project Manager, IOM Project Officer, IOM	11-12.30
Paul Partner	CTA, SALAM	1-2 pm
<b>Saturday 3 November: Kabul</b>		
Rebekah Lee	World Bank	9-10 am
<b>Sunday 4 November: Jalalabad</b>		
Mr Shirzad	Director, DOLSAMD	3-3.30 pm
<b>Monday 5 November: Jalalabad</b>		
Directors and team	ATVI/PADO – presentation of project	8.30-10 am
Justine Davies, Paul Partner	PMRS/CTA, SALAM Project	11-12
Ismail Abdelgabbbar Mohamed	UNHCR Head of Office, Eastern Region	12-1 pm
Mohamed Eamal	UNHCR Assistant Program Officer	3-3.30 pm
<b>Tuesday 6 November: return from Jalalabad</b>		
<b>Wednesday 7 November: Kabul</b>		
Laura Rio	Head of Livelihoods Unit, UNDP	12-1.30 pm
Karin Takeuchi	Head of Strategy, Planning & Results Unit	2-3pm
<b>Thursday 8 November</b>		
Abdoulie Jallow Matias Linder	GIZ MRSD (Skills Development) Team Leader Deputy Team Leader	12-1pm
Napoleon Navarro	UNDP Sr Deputy Country Director (Programs)	3.30-4.30

## Annex 3: Theory of change diagrams

### Overarching Theory of Change



## Output level Theory of Change



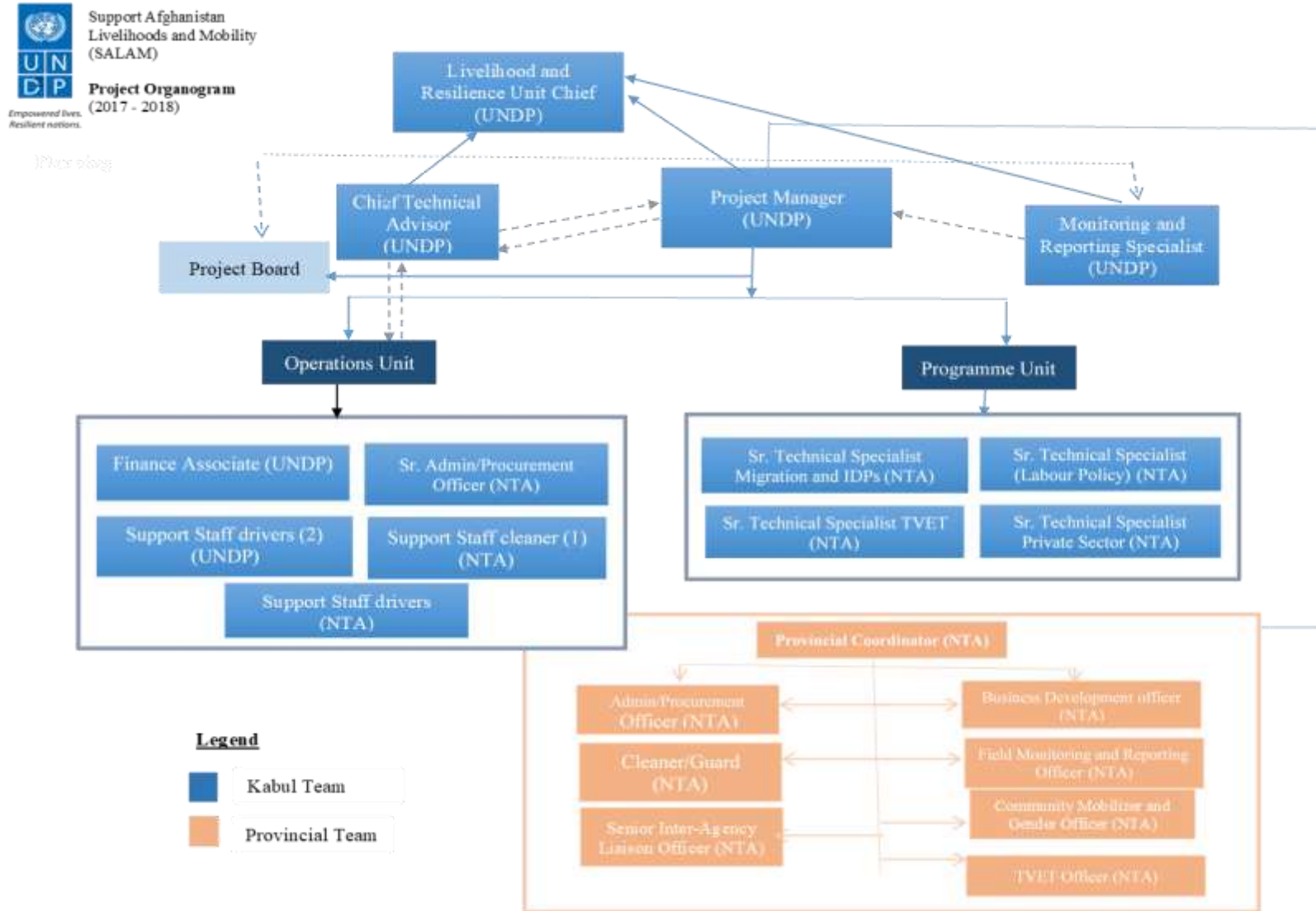


## Annex 4: Evaluation Matrix

Key question	Sub questions	Indicators / judgement criteria	Data collection methods	Sources of information
<b>Is the design coherent and adequate?</b>  <b>(Relevance)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the design adequately address the policy priorities of partners?</li> </ul>	Documented policies Stated priorities	Document review	SDGs, ANPDF, Finnish policy, One UN, UNDP Strategic Plan; ILO 2030, UNHCR SSAR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What substantive need does the project aim to meet?</li> </ul>	Well-defined in the design Verified by assessment	Document review	Framework and sub-project design Labour Market Assessments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How plausible and realistic is the theory of change?</li> </ul>	Clearly articulated ToC with explicit assumptions Partner satisfaction with design	Document review  Interviews	Framework and sub-project design  MOLSAMD, Finnish Embassy, UNDP, ILO, UNHCR, World Bank Provincial stakeholders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are activities sufficient to meet the needs of target beneficiaries?</li> </ul>	Clear and realistic assessment of beneficiary need	Document review Interviews	Monitoring & results framework Implementation level stakeholders
<b>What is influencing achievement of results?</b>  <b>(Effectiveness)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What results are being achieved?</li> </ul>	Evidence of intended and unintended results	Document review	Quarterly and Annual Progress reports Back to Office Reports
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the intended beneficiaries being reached?</li> </ul>	Visibility of target groups (IDP, returnee, women, youth) Level of satisfaction with targeting	Document review  Interviews	Beneficiary lists  Implementation level stakeholders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What contextual factors are supporting or preventing achievement?</li> </ul>	Examples of enabling and inhibiting factors	Document review Interviews	Stakeholders (as above)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How likely is it that the project will achieve the desired outputs?</li> </ul>	Results tracking against indicators Stakeholder opinions	Document review Interviews	As above
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the institutional and governance arrangements working?</li> </ul>	Partner satisfaction with governance arrangement  Functioning Project Board	Interviews (individual and/group)  Document review	Board members (Embassy of Finland, UNDP, ILO, UNHCR, MOLSAMD)  Board Minutes

<b>What are the implementation challenges?</b>		Functioning TWG  Evidence of high level coordination		TWG Minutes  DSWG Minutes
<b>(Efficiency)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is delivery of activities consistent with plans and timelines?</li> </ul>	Activities delivered on time Reasons for delay clearly stated Evidence of efficient management	Document review	Progress reports Workplans Combined Delivery Reports Communications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the main influences on efficiency?</li> </ul>	Examples of efficiency/inefficiency Partner perceptions of efficiency	Individual and group interviews	Managers and stakeholders MOLSAMD Provincial stakeholders: DOLSAMD
<b>What are the implications?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How committed and engaged are the main partners?</li> </ul>	Partner perceptions of their own and each other's commitment	Document review Interviews	As above
<b>(sustainability)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the likelihood of sustainable results?</li> </ul>	Partner and stakeholder perceptions	Interviews	As above

## Annex 5: Project Organogram



## Annex 6: References

UNDP provided the following documents:

	Description	File type
1	January 2018 Project Document revision and Signed Annual Work Plan, HR, PP	PDF
2	Signed 2018 July revised AWP, PP, NTA HR plan	PDF
3	2018 July AWP revision (all tabs, UNDP HR plan also) 6 August Final AWP (Version 4: 9July2018)	Excel sheet
4	“Urgent” Revised AWP to Finland and Justification (excel sheet) –26 June 2018	Email, word and excel
5	No cost extension letter – UNDP request plus Finland to UNDP details (24 Oct 2017)	Email and attachments
6	Signed contract for Job Creation in Nangarhar	PDF
7	Signed contract for skills development in Nangarhar	PDF
8	Youth Apprenticeship in Nangarhar RFP	Word
9	HACT Assessment documents	Emails and word
10	<i>2017 SALAM Annual Report</i>	<i>Word</i>
11	<i>2017 QPR 2, 2017 QPR 3 Report, 2018 QPR 1 and 2018 QPR 2 Report</i>	<i>Word</i>
12	Combined Delivery Reports – SALAM (Jan 2017 – June 2018)	PDFs
13	Jalalabad Back To Office Reports (Jan, Mar, April, May)	PDF, Word
14	Meeting minutes from all Technical Working Group meetings	PDF
15	Minutes from 2 <sup>nd</sup> Project Board meeting	PDF
16	Meeting from SALAM-World Bank meeting (24 June) with Nap	Word
17	Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation Fact Sheet (15 Jan 2018)	PDF
18	TOR / Job Description for all SALAM project personnel	PDF/Word
19	Preliminary gender disaggregated recruitment statistics from MOLSAMD and UNDP	Excel
20	SALAM Organogram	Word

Other documents were obtained from the internet and referenced in the report.