

EVALUATION BRIEF

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE REGIONAL MIGRATION PROGRAM (WHP)

This evaluation brief presents a summary of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as identified by the evaluators for use by key stakeholders, including internally by IOM staff and externally by project partners. More details can be found in the full evaluation report.

Evaluation type:	Mid-Term Evaluation
Evaluators:	Patricia Goldschmid (Team Leader), Glenn O'Neil, Estela Garcia Montalvan, and Enrique Garcia Hidalgo
Data collection:	June to September 2021
Final report date:	October 2021
Commissioned by:	IOM Regional Office for Mexico, Central America, North America and the Caribbean

Managed by: Theresia Keding, Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

Evaluation purpose: The general objective of this mid-term evaluation was to assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the WHP intervention at the regional level and to assess how the initiatives have contributed and/or will contribute to the achievement of the program outputs, outcomes and the overall objective established for a three-year strategic framework (2019 – 2022).

Evaluation criteria: Relevance, coherence, effectiveness, sustainability, cross-cutting issues.

Evaluation methodology: A document review of all relevant material provided by the WHP, as well as 125 semi-structured interviews with IOM staff and key stakeholders, conducted remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

PROJECT SUMMARY

WHP is an IOM program funded by the United States Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). The overall objective is to strengthen governments' capacities to manage migration in a sustainable and humane manner.

The WHP started in 2010 and has traditionally been implemented in one-year phases, from October to September to align with the fiscal year of the United States Government. Since October 2019, with the support of PRM, the funding has moved to a three-year planning period while maintaining the one-year workplan phases.

The WHP program advocates for the adoption of well-managed, regular forms of migration to concurrently reduce flows of irregular migration and vulnerabilities of migrants. The expected results of the program are comprised of six outcomes, which contribute to PRM's four priority pillars:

1. Migration Management:

1.1. Countries adopt migration management practices to promote well-managed, legal forms of migration and respect of the human rights of migrants.

1.2. Countries adopt effective whole of government migration policies using evidence-based protocols, processes, and procedures.

Project information:

Geographical coverage:	Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean
Project type:	Migration Governance
Project period:	October 2019 to September 2021
Donor:	US government (PRM)

1.3. Countries adopt policies that advance the social and economic well-being of both migrants and society.

2. Partnership:

2.1. Migration management stakeholders in the region improve understanding of migration management priorities of different actors to avoid duplication and synergies.

3. Crisis response:

3.1. Government improved capacities allow them to anticipate, better prepare for, and respond to migration flows relating to emergencies and crises.

4. Communication:

4.1. Migrants and potential migrants improve behaviors by increasing the selection of alternatives to irregular migration.

KEY FINDINGS

Relevance: The evaluation found that program activities were relevant in all countries covered with degrees of relevance varying according to regions and thematic areas. Strengths were noted in WHP's ability to reinforce government capacities in migration management and policy development. Challenges with relevance were seen more in the Caribbean region where authorities largely perceived migration issues as less of a priority.

Coherence: Coherence between the different activities within the four WHP pillars and coordination among countries was in general seen as positive. Noted was a need for improvement in the adaptation of activities to the specific country contexts and potential collaboration among the four pillars within countries and across the region.

Effectiveness: The WHP was seen as effective in the implementation of activities in phases X and XI despite the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Internal factors contributing to progress included staff expertise, coordination, funding, and the flexibility of the program. Internal factors seen as contributing to delays included administrative processes, staff workload, and the one-year timelines. External factors contributing to progress included the government willingness to collaborate and intra-institutional cooperation. External factors that contributed to delays included the COVID-19 pandemic, government capacity, changes in government, and the sensitive nature of migration issues. Mixed feedback was received on the monitoring and evaluation system highlighting both its positive aspects and points needing improvement.

Sustainability: The likelihood of sustainability of results differed for each WHP pillar and the types of activities. While results achieved were seen as having the potential to continue once external support ceased, this evaluation could not identify an explicit exercise carried out by WHP to identify the outcomes, services, and prerequisites to sustain the intended and changed outcomes of the program.

Cross-cutting issues: Gender and equality and human rights were present in WHP projects. However, a more in-depth focus and analysis were missing. WHP was seen as having considered migration trends with an increase in children and youth, with specific activities such as sensitization and capacity building developed in response. The program was also seen as adapting well to the COVID-19 pandemic particularly in the necessary shift from offline to online strategies.

KEY CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

WHP has made good progress towards achieving its objectives in Phases X and XI. Despite the considerable challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, WHP was able to adapt rapidly and in a flexible manner. At the same time, a number of aspects of WHP could be further optimized as delineated in the following seven recommendations.

A) Strategic re-adjustment of WHP: It is considered a fitting moment to reflect on where WHP has seen achievements, where not and why. This would require a deeper analysis with a strategy reflection process suggested.

B) Program design and delivery to encourage sustainability: The experiences gathered to date provide insights into how activities can positively influence sustainability, with several actions proposed in this respect.

C) Plan for some phase-out strategies: For the next three-year period, certain activities could be identified, notably for Pillars 1 and 2 where a phase-out/exit strategy could be imagined.

D) Moving to three-year planning: It is proposed to maintain a three-year planning period and quarterly reporting while eliminating annual planning/reporting.

E) Improving Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): While the M&E system was seen as effective, it also created a considerable workload for WHP teams; therefore a series of modifications are proposed for the M&E system.

F) More flexible and quicker administrative processes: IOM staff reported delays and frustrations with administrative processes. For the next phase, solutions including possible "fast track" processes should be developed.

G) Integration of cross-cutting issues: WHP had integrated cross-cutting issues within its activities but further efforts were needed; several actions are proposed in this respect.