



EVALUATION BRIEF

December 2023

COUNTERING XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION AND ENHANCING SOCIAL COHESION: AN EVALUATION OF IOM APPROACHES AND INITIATIVES

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

Evaluation type: Central

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Evaluation period: 2015–2023

Final report date: December 2023

Commissioned by: Central Evaluation Unit

Managed by: Central Evaluation Unit

Evaluation purpose: The objective of the evaluation was to evaluate IOM's strategic approach and interventions on the three themes, either through direct actions designed or in a complementary or subsidiary manner.

Evaluation criteria: Relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

Geographical coverage: Global

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

IOM has been actively working on countering xenophobia and discrimination and enhancing social cohesion for a number of years, both through specific initiatives and its various commitments as confirmed in IOM's Strategic Vision of 2019 and within the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

IOM also launched a strategic results framework (SRF) in 2022 that helps to assess the performance of the organization in implementing its corporate strategies with one of the objectives being to ensure that "Xenophobia and negative perceptions of migration are mitigated through evidence-based public discourse" and the three themes being included in other parts of the SRF to varying degrees.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The following research methods were used: a document review; a global online survey of IOM field staff with 43 responses received, and; semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with IOM staff, key stakeholders and beneficiaries reaching 241 persons. The evaluation focused on five case study countries: Bangladesh, Italy, Ecuador, South Africa and Tunisia.

KEY FINDINGS

Relevance: IOM's approaches to prevent, identify and address xenophobia and discrimination and to enhance social cohesion were found to be compatible with and in support of IOM's strategic objectives, as well as the external commitments of related United Nations (UN) conventions, norms and standards, such as the GCM and the 2030 agenda on sustainable development. Xenophobia, discrimination, and social cohesion were found to have been included in the SRF to varying degrees and were closely interrelated within IOM programming, but the relationship was often complex and indirect. Both the relevance of the country context and the role of donors in determining funding priorities were found to influence the degree and means by which countering xenophobia and discrimination and enhancing social cohesion were considered in developing relevant initiatives.

Coherence: The commitments and strategic priorities for addressing xenophobia, discrimination or social cohesion were operationalized into IOM guidance and workstreams. No comprehensive IOM guidance was found on xenophobia. For discrimination, considerable documentation was identified, often based on different sub-categories (e.g. gender, disability, etc.) but staff struggled to understand how the different sub-categories relate to each other. For social cohesion, a wide range of policies and guidance was also detected, largely linked to IOM's Diversity, Inclusion and Social Cohesion initiative (DISC).

KEY FINDINGS (CONT.)

Effectiveness: Although IOM reported having reached millions through its communication campaigns on xenophobia, there were very limited efforts to evaluate their performance. Regarding discrimination, it was also difficult to assess its effectiveness across IOM's work. Results showed that initiatives focusing on gender and diversity had increased within IOM, but evidence also demonstrated that further improvements were still needed. For social cohesion, several evaluations identified positive results.

Efficiency: Expertise on xenophobia was shared among several Headquarters (HQ) units/divisions and awareness of IOM's commitment and work on discrimination varied for both partners and staff. Four HQ units were found to be working on social cohesion, creating challenges in aligning approaches across the migration cycle. Increasingly, multi-year funding was being allocated to social cohesion although donors were also prioritizing their own pre-determined topics.

Impact: With limited guidance available for covering xenophobia in programming, it was difficult to assess outcomes and attribute any related impact. Staff thought that the organization's greatest contribution to addressing discrimination was in raising the visibility of the barriers faced by migrants, also considering the cross-cutting nature of discrimination integrated across IOM programming. There were positive examples and growing evidence of IOM's contribution to social cohesion for migrants, although many challenges were still identified.

Sustainability: The main enablers found for guaranteeing the sustainability of IOM's interventions on xenophobia, discrimination and social cohesion included the existence of inclusive government frameworks, supported by IOM's holistic approach. Challenges identified included the short-term funding and resources available, projectization, limited monitoring and evaluation, in addition to context factors.

Examples where IOM was successful in addressing xenophobia indirectly and building sustainable national ownership were noted in preventive measures through policy development and social cohesion projects. IOM worked closely with migration actors to develop inclusive migration policies and frameworks, often supported by policy development and capacity building, in addition to an evidence-based approach.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Xenophobia: Examples were seen where IOM was most likely more successful in addressing xenophobia indirectly, such as through policy development and social cohesion projects. Collection of good practices is also lacking sometimes. The Organization has for instance carried out communication campaigns on xenophobia without building on learnings from previous experiences.

It is recommended that IOM: i) develops a solid evidence-based concept, guidance and evaluation approach for IOM's interventions on xenophobia and considers assessing the potential impact on a wider scale; ii) encourages and reinforces xenophobia initiatives' partnership with the UN system, Local/National Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations; iii) considers the designation of a unit responsible for leading the work on xenophobia, and; iv) ensures greater use of IOM's KM portal, POEM and develops an e-course(s) for IOM staff and partners on xenophobia.

Discrimination: While tackling discrimination is implicit to its mandate, IOM's strategic approach and interventions were based on a combination of both considering discrimination as a cross-cutting issue for integration, and as a distinct element treated in workstreams through specific sub-categories.

It is recommended that IOM: i) integrates a more concrete intersectional reporting on discrimination in the SRF ; ii) creates a mapping of guidance and training courses available on discrimination and its sub-categories and identifies any gaps; iii) develops an intersectional approach to discrimination to support a Rights Based Approach (RBA) in programming and ensures that it is integrated within all key institutional guidance; iv) creates a webpage to locate all available guidance on discrimination and makes greater use of IOM's KM portal, POEM; v) designates responsibility for roles on discrimination to the field, and; vi) increases collaboration on fundraising proposals for discrimination projects with a broader coalition of UN agencies and partners.

Social cohesion: IOM's strategic approach and interventions on social cohesion were generally addressed through projects across the migration cycle, including those in displacement settings, post-conflict, recovery, resettlement, and reintegration. IOM programming benefited from a broad range of guidance and a concerted effort to evaluate the performance of IOM's social cohesion activities in integration settings.

It is recommended that IOM: i) establishes an ad-hoc working group of Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion, Preparedness and Response, Transition and Recovery and Protection divisions to develop a high-level common approach and guidance to social cohesion; ii) considers the roll out of a common evaluation methodology across all social cohesion initiatives; iii) reinforces project design for social cohesion, and; iv) ensures greater use of IOM's KM portal, POEM and integrates social cohesion considerations into the training programs for IOM staff and partners.