

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN TONGA

This evaluation brief presents a summary of the key lessons learned, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for use by IOM staff and external stakeholders.

PROJECT SUMMARY

This project, ‘Capacity-building for Migration and Sustainable Development in Tonga’, aimed to ensure that well-managed migration is a development strategy for Tonga, as it is a cross-cutting theme towards resilience and sustainable livelihood, and national economic development. To achieve this, IOM supported the delivery of, and engagement of stakeholders on, a Migration and Sustainable Development (MSD) research report which provided key data on MSD in Tonga. After extensive stakeholder consultation and engagement, IOM supported the development and adoption of a Migration and Sustainable Development Policy, working with the Migration Technical Working Group of Tonga, also established through this project.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The presence in-country of qualified IOM personnel to implement projects is key for stakeholder engagement and to achieve results, particularly staff with understanding of the local context.
- Having government buy-in is key for the success of a project, even with challenges and delays the project can be effective if government has ownership of the project.
- Ensuring the participation of all relevant stakeholders and being transparent with the partners is essential to good coordination and avoiding duplication of effort.
- Consistency communicating with government and non-government stakeholders to inform the benefits of new policies is important for feedback collection and accountability.
- Admin-finance staff should also be considered as part of the project team to avoid Project Manager overload and deviation from project activities.
- A Technical Working Group composed of key government and non-government stakeholders is an excellent approach and should continue to be the coordination mechanism for the future policy projects.
- There is high value in ensuring sufficient time and resources to develop a policy, as it takes time to achieve commitment from all the stakeholders. Most policy projects rush to achieve a policy document that does not have buy-in and in the end, it is not beneficial.

Geographical coverage: Tonga

Project type: Labour Migration

Secondary type: Migration and Climate Change

Project code: LM.0327

Project period: 01 February 2018 to 30 June 2021

Donor: IOM Development Fund (IDF)

Evaluator: Elizabeth Wilkins, Consultant October 2021

Commissioned by: IOM Australia/Tonga

Evaluation methodology: Document review, semi-structured key informant interviews with partners and stakeholders, a survey and a debrief discussion with IOM staff including participative identification of recommendations and lessons learned.



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FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Relevance: The project was highly relevant in terms of addressing policy gaps in Tonga, and well aligned with regional and global strategies related to the nexus between migration, climate change and sustainable development. Although the project took a top-down approach, the evaluation found strong evidence of relevance to the needs of stakeholders and beneficiaries, providing a framework that mainstreams migration to address issues that impact the population of Tonga.

Coherence: The project was coherent with interventions that had similar objectives and added value to initiatives in Tonga. The project fits well with ongoing and planned initiatives of the GoT. However, there was room for improvement in the coordination with UN and other international partners.

Effectiveness: The two project outputs were achieved, and beneficiaries were satisfied with the process and very satisfied with IOM's role in the implementation. The main challenge was the impact of COVID-19 as the GoT focused on its prevention and response and postponed new policy development. Although it came at a high cost to its efficiency, the project took the necessary actions to adapt activities and ensure results.

Efficiency: The activities for output one (baseline research report) were implemented in a timely manner and in line with the project document; however, COVID-19 impacts in Tonga caused delays for output two (MSDP development). These delays were described by most stakeholders as external factors and independent of IOM's control. The value for money of the project was good compared with similar projects implemented by IOM and funded by IDf as the project had similar costs to deliver comparable results.

Impact: The evaluation could not assess the long-term impacts, as it is premature at this stage given the launch of the policy occurred in April 2021.

Sustainability: The evaluation found that there were early signs of sustainability, mainly due to the strong ownership and commitment of the GoT to implement the MSDP. Stakeholders reported the project strengthened their migration management capacity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Follow up on project results:

- Support the implementation of the MSDP roadmap and continue to create synergies between migration, climate change and sustainable development initiatives.
- Conduct a needs-based assessment of existing capacity and required resources in the GoT to implement the MSDP.
- In coordination with the TWG, undertake a participatory review of short, medium and long-term goals for the implementation of the MSDP with concrete definitions of expected results and indicators of achievements.
- Develop a communication strategy to increase awareness and implement feedback mechanisms on policy interventions with the diaspora and communities of origin, including outer islands. To address challenges to reach communities, liaise with provincial government and CSOs.
- Develop a risk management plan to identify measures to put in place to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on any MSDP related-interventions.
- Engage and promote the MSDP with national and international development partners to link ongoing and planned interventions with the MSDP and reflect its impact.

For implementation of future IOM projects:

- Include a capacity building component to address any knowledge gaps in the thematic area covered.
- Develop a monitoring plan to follow up on results, activities, risks and budget progress.
- At the design stage, ensure that the project is well-resourced to cover IOM staff and office costs, either through complementary projects or designing activities that can be fully implemented with the project funds. Ensure an adequate level of in-country engagement during and after the project.
- All project activities must be documented and saved in IOM knowledge management systems. Trainings, consultations and travel must be documented in the form of reports, including participants lists with disaggregated data. Monitoring tools and all project products must be systematically recorded.
- In future projects, consider also including qualitative indicators along with quantitative in the results matrix. Implement and monitor the project in line with results-based management principles.
- In line with IOM project management guidelines, develop a detailed workplan at the inception stage to include project activities and operational activities in coordination with all key stakeholders, describe clear measures to mainstream cross-cutting themes, and include monitoring and data collection activities in preparation for the project reporting phase.