

# FINAL EVALUATION OF THE ENHANCING CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY IN ELIMINATING SLAVERY AND TRAFFICKING IN ASIA (CREST) PROJECT

## EVALUATION BRIEF

This evaluation brief presents a summary of the key findings, learnings and recommendations, as identified by the evaluator 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:** External evaluation

**Evaluator:** UPENDO Consulting Inc.

**Final report date:** 9 May 2023

**Commissioned by:** IOM Viet Nam

**Managed by:** Elodie Jacoby,  
Monitoring, Evaluation,  
Accountability and Learning Officer

**Evaluation purpose:** to promote learning and accountability and assess the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, potential impact, sustainability, and the cross-cutting themes of human rights, gender equality and the environment.

**Evaluation methodology:** Theory-based and participatory approach. The utilization-focused evaluation drew on mixed quantitative and qualitative methods that included two critical instance case studies, document review, five focus group discussions (FGDs) with 20 civil society organization (CSO) representatives, six FGDs with 39 migrant workers, and 31 key informant interviews (KIIs) with key stakeholders from across the programming countries as well as stakeholders at the regional level.

## THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE

**Geographic Coverage:** Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China; Malaysia; Philippines; Thailand; and Viet Nam with additional activities implemented in Bangladesh; Cambodia; India; Indonesia; Japan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Myanmar; Nepal; Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka.

**Project code:** LM.0331

**Project period:** October 2017 to December 2023

**Budget:** SEK 94,862,326

**Donor:** The Section for Regional Development Cooperation for Asia and the Pacific at the Embassy of Sweden in Thailand and direct and in-kind contributions from private sector partners.

The CREST project is a regional partnership initiative implemented by the IOM that aims to realize the potential of businesses to uphold the human and labour rights of migrant workers in their operations and supply chains to achieve the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs) (particularly targets 8.7 and 10.7), and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM). Through the CREST initiative, IOM developed partnerships and projects with businesses to build stronger commitments to eliminate modern slavery, implement ethical recruitment standards that address migrant workers' vulnerabilities and encourage collaboration across industries and stakeholders to achieve sustainable change.

## SUCCESSSES

- IOM achieved strong private sector engagement through the CREST project, through which it established 17 unique private sector partnerships against a target of 10 and received USD 7.6 million in private sector contributions against a target of USD 5 million.
- IOM's support through knowledge products, tools such as the [Labour Migration Process Mapping Guide](#), and guidance such as the [Migrant Worker Guidelines for Employers](#) and [Operational Guidelines for Businesses on Remediation of Migrant Worker Grievances](#) have helped companies to identify, address and remedy migrant worker exploitation across their supply chains take action through policy development, training, and remediation systems to align their business practices with the UNGPs.
- IOM impacted the lives of 220,472 migrant workers and their families by providing a combination of safe migration information, access to remediation, direct relief assistance and support to private sector companies who employ them.

## CHALLENGES

- Private sector companies identified significant challenges around upholding company policies among their suppliers and recruiters that protect migrant workers and that promote their rights without enforceable government legislation in place to require suppliers to do so.
- While most of CREST's private sector partnerships to date have been with multinational brands, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – who are major employers of migrant workers and who typically have limited resources and are often less well informed of their labour and human rights obligations – require significant support to align with the UNGPs.
- Shrinking civil society spaces across the Asia-Pacific region, inadequate multi-stakeholder dialogue opportunities, and limited resources and capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs) make it difficult for CSOs to advocate for the rights of migrant workers.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### **1. Commitment by companies towards the UNGPs prior to establishing an IOM partnership facilitates the achievement of results**

Private sector partnerships that were able to achieve the greatest results under the CREST project were typically those that were established with companies who had already

committed to meeting the UNGPs, as well as those that were willing to put pressure from companies on their suppliers to adhere to codes of conduct. At the same time, some partnerships that were established without this gradually embraced more commitment throughout the lifespan of the partnership, which facilitated the achievement of results, thus signaling that conditions for a successful partnership can also be cultivated over time.

### **2. IOM administrative and reporting requirements need to have built-in flexibility to effectively engage civil society organisations (CSOs) and private sector actors**

Administrative and reporting requirements need to have built-in flexibility so that they can respond to the needs and priorities of private sector actors; support CSOs that may have limited administrative capacities; and be used during special circumstances such as humanitarian responses. During the CREST project, private sector actors found IOM's administrative procedures to be excessively lengthy and bureaucratic while CSOs struggled to have sufficient capacity to meet IOM's administrative and reporting requirements.

### **3. Migration programming can have a more meaningful impact on addressing gender inequalities when it is geared towards gender transformation as opposed to gender mainstreaming**

While gender mainstreaming ensures that gender considerations are reflected in a programme's activities and results, gender transformative programming has the potential to rectify gender inequalities between gender groups by empowering actors to address those inequalities and by challenging structures that reinforce them. While the CREST project successfully integrated gender considerations throughout its activities through a mainstreaming approach, there are opportunities for future labour migration programming to more meaningfully address gender inequalities between groups of migrant workers by empowering organisations that represent women migrant workers, advocating for changes in government legislation and policies that discriminate against women migrant workers and other gender groups, and empowering private sector actors to use gender equality strategies as a means to achieve the UNGPs.

### **4. Sustained long-term donor funding is essential to facilitating systemic-level change that supports the protection, respect, and remedy of the human and labour rights of migrant workers.**

Donor funding is necessary to promote change at the systemic-level that includes supporting the design and implementation of government legislation that protects the rights of all migrant

workers; promoting collective action across private sector actors to generate momentum towards meeting the UNGPs by supporting industry-wide private sector coalitions; engaging small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in meeting the UNGPs since they are huge employers of migrant workers but may not have the capacities or resources required to provide funding through typical IOM partnerships; and empowering migrant workers through CSOs that represent them to effectively advocate for the respect of migrant worker rights across government and private sector initiatives, including ensuring migrant worker access to remediation mechanisms.

## BEST PRACTICES

- The CREST project was able to use customized tools, trainings, guidance and other support to engage government and private sector stakeholders in efforts to work towards aligning with the UNGPs and the respect of the human and labour rights of migrant workers. Now that this foundation for strategic partnerships has been set, IOM is strategically positioned to deepen these partnerships to work on more complex challenges such as improving both government regulation as well as company policies and practices.
- IOM through the CREST initiative leveraged the relationships with CSOs and migrant workers that it established through its COVID-19 direct assistance response to gather important insights on the realities of migrant workers that can be used to support employers and governments to be more responsive and to develop tools and resources that could better meet the most pressing needs of migrant workers.
- IOM provided direct assistance to migrant workers through CSO implementing partners that had the necessary internal capacity to deliver on results while also engaging with smaller CSOs, which facilitated the expansion of IOM's CSO network.
- IOM published CREST tools, guidelines and knowledge products online free-of-charge through an open-source platform which promotes the wide-scale usability of its products to stakeholders that are not formal partners of IOM.

## KEY CONCLUSIONS

- IOM is well placed to leverage its comparative strengths to achieve expansion and scale-up within the migration, business and human rights landscape. There is room to widen IOM's private sector partnership base, including engaging more SMEs – who are major employers of migrant workers and who require significant support to meet the UNGPs – into the programming sphere,

as well as to deepen existing partnerships to work on more complex issues such as implementation, compliance and remediation. As IOM moves to scale-up its existing policy work and tackle more complex challenges linked to the development and implementation of stronger government regulations to protect the rights of migrant workers, engagement at a higher level across companies and industries to push forward advocacy initiatives and foster collaboration across private sector actors will also likely become increasingly necessary.

- IOM through CREST, implemented largely efficient practices and generated good cost-effectiveness. However, the current administrative and reporting requirements risk becoming a barrier for its effective engagement with private sector partners and CSOs while there remains considerable room to further achieve synergies with other actors in the field of migration programming in the region, including United Nations agencies, think tanks and grass-roots organizations.
- The CREST initiative has supported IOM programming to become further aligned with the UNGPs, which is a strong framework for IOM's work moving forward. There were, however, some missed opportunities during the project design to engage stakeholders to integrate gender equality objectives and environmental mainstreaming into the programming, which were identified as IOM cross-cutting priorities. IOM can incorporate these important elements into future programming such as the new Migration, Business and Human Rights in Asia Programme and has already initiated meaningful stakeholder consultations to this end.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Deepen and expand private sector partnerships

Engage new private sector partners, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and provide support to existing partners to facilitate the implementation of policies designed to meet the UNGPs and encourage compliance across the supply chain.

### 2. Build more flexibility into IOM's administrative and reporting requirements to facilitate greater collaboration with CSOs and private sector actors and invest in strengthening collaboration with other UN entities in the region

Explore the use of innovative partnership engagement modalities and continue to simplify and streamline the partnership development process. In addition, expand IOM's partnership network and deepen collaboration with CSOs and UN entities working on labour migration in the region.



### 3. Focus on convening and facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue to address complex challenges such as government regulation

Draw on IOM's comparative strength in bringing stakeholders together and facilitating private sector and civil society engagement to mutually address common challenges and advocate for improved government regulation to better protect the rights of migrant workers.

### 4. Engage key stakeholders in the design and implementation of future programming to harness their expertise and leverage synergies across actors

Hold programme design consultation sessions with key stakeholders; set up mechanisms to keep stakeholders involved throughout programme implementation; and draw on the expertise of other UN agencies to promote gender transformation and environmental considerations into future programming.



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