

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

FINAL REPORT



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CGF	Consumer Goods Forum
CREST	Corporate Responsibility in Eliminating Slavery and Trafficking In Asia
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
Hong Kong SAR, China	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRIS	International Recruitment Integrity System
IWRAW	International Women's Rights Action Watch
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MFA	Migrant Forum in Asia
PAO	Post-Arrival Orientation
PDO	Pre-Departure Orientation
PEO	Pre-Employment Orientation
RBA	The Responsible Business Alliance
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
ToC	Theory of Change
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGPs	United Nations Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights

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This external independent evaluation was conducted as part of the CREST project with funding from the Development Section of Embassy of Sweden in Thailand.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW OF THE CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY IN ELIMINATING SLAVERY AND TRAFFICKING PROJECT

The Corporate Responsibility in Eliminating Slavery and Trafficking (CREST) project is a regional partnership initiative implemented by the International Organization for Migration (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. The project spanned from 1 October 2017 to 31 December 2022 with a one-year extension until 31 December 2023. The project implemented activities primarily in Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region, China (hereafter Hong Kong SAR, China); Malaysia; the Philippines; Thailand; and Viet Nam. It received financial support from 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.

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation is intended to promote learning and accountability as well as to assess CREST's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, potential impact, sustainability, and the cross-cutting themes of human rights, gender equality and the environment. The evaluation used a theory-based and participatory approach and was utilization-focused. The 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. These stakeholders included private sector partners, industry and employer associations, a research institute, the project donor, government officials, CSOs, IOM staff and other UN staff working on labour migration in the region. Gender equality and equity considerations were mainstreamed throughout the evaluation and feminist evaluation principles were applied.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE

IOM is increasingly seen by stakeholders as a strategic partner who fills an important role in the current human rights and business landscape and as a crucial facilitator of private sector engagement towards respecting the human and labour rights of migrant workers, in line with the responsibilities laid out in the UNGPs. IOM has a comparative advantage to support private sector actors due to its institutional flexibility compared to other United Nations entities that may be more restricted because of their mandate or more formal institutional and bureaucratic processes. IOM made considerable improvements during the second half of the CREST initiative to promote collaboration and synergies between CREST and other IOM programmes and with United Nations programming across the region, particularly with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Labour Organization (ILO), and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). There remains, however, room to further strengthen this type of collaboration, both with United Nations partners as well as other external stakeholders. 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 that IOM can provide.

IOM through the CREST initiative has met many of the needs of its stakeholders through proactive and practical programming that was flexible and responsive to changing needs and circumstances, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, there remain important gaps in the design and implementation of government regulation that protects the rights of migrant workers and that impacts the private sector's adherence to the UNGPs. As such, stakeholders overwhelmingly believe that IOM

is well-placed to support the design and implementation of government regulation that protects the rights of migrant workers due to its comparative strength in convening and facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue and its privileged access to government ministries.

EFFECTIVENESS

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. Indeed, 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. IOM engaged with a total of 1,223 labour supply chain actors through the provision of training as well as labour migration process mappings completed under its private sector partnerships. Moving forward, private sector companies need further support to implement policies and procedures that protect migrant workers, including among their suppliers and recruiters.

During the second half of the CREST Project, IOM has strengthened its engagement in industry-wide coalitions as well as its strategic partnership with the Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), thus positioning the organization to achieve greater scale and impact. Going ahead, stakeholders would like to see IOM take on a more industry-wide or even a cross-industry leadership role to foster positive momentum and collaboration across companies to meet the UNGPs and to further empower migrant workers organizations by supporting CSO advocacy initiatives and convening dialogue opportunities between CSOs, governments and the private sector. Doing so would allow CSOs to further articulate the needs, priorities and visions of migrant workers. IOM's work stream that was developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic provided in-kind and cash assistance to 12,796 migrant workers and their families who were most vulnerable and in need of support (against a target of 5,000). In addition, IOM provided remediation support to 63 cases, representing 149 men and 90 women pursuing grievance mechanisms through State-based mechanisms.

EFFICIENCY

The CREST project delivered results in a timely and efficient manner and has streamlined its administrative processes since the midterm evaluation. IOM still requires all projects to follow standard project development and contracting procedures regardless of the type or size of partnership. More flexibility to adjust processes to better align with the size and scope of the partnership, such as the use of pooled funding, may be useful for smaller engagements. IOM could also potentially include the use of more innovative partnership modalities based on a membership or annual fee structure. In addition, reporting and administrative requirements remain complex and time-consuming for many of IOM's partners, particularly CSOs that have limited resources. In 2023, IOM published new internal instructions to reduce the administrative burden of working with implementing partners and simplify reporting requirements, especially financial reporting.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

The CREST initiative has made an observable impact in the lives of migrant workers, particularly through instances of providing remediation, direct services and safe migration outreach. Indeed, as of 31 December 2022, 220,472 migrant workers and their families had benefitted from CREST interventions against a target of 20,000. The investments of IOM through the CREST project focused on systems-strengthening by supporting private sector companies to improve their policies and practices are in line with the UNGPs. In addition, providing extensive training to companies and their suppliers on the rights of migrant workers, fair and ethical recruitment and employment, and human rights due diligence will have a lasting impact on the lives of currently employed as well as future migrant workers. However, there remains room to achieve further impact through more support for company policy implementation and improvements in government regulation.

SUSTAINABILITY

Recognition and validation by key stakeholders and partners along with increased strategic focus have placed IOM in a good position to transition CREST from a project-orientated initiative towards longer-term and more sustainable programming. This transition is also reflected in IOM's current efforts to develop a new Migration, Business and Human Rights in Asia programme that is intended

to build on results achieved under the CREST project as well as results achieved under its other complementary private sector-focused programming. Securing continued institutional funding and attempting to expand its donor base will be important for IOM to implement this type of future programming. Indeed, institutional donor funding is essential to promote systemic-level change by advancing government regulation, promoting both industry-wide and cross-industry private sector collaboration, engaging SMEs and strengthening the capacities of CSOs that represent migrant workers.

GENDER, HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENT

During the second half of its life cycle, the CREST project was increasingly able to support particularly vulnerable groups of migrant workers such as domestic workers, women-led migrant worker households, financially disadvantaged migrant worker households and migrant workers with disabilities, through its COVID-19 response work. There remains room, however, for IOM to further target vulnerable groups throughout its private sector work by developing specific tools and guidelines to help companies better promote equity across their workforce and support them in addressing the unique needs and priorities held by subgroups of vulnerable migrant workers.

The CREST initiative mainstreamed gender equality throughout its work by integrating gender equality principles across most of its tools and knowledge products; conducting some research studies that included an examination of specific issues facing women migrant workers; producing a guidance document on addressing women migrant worker vulnerabilities in supply chains; integrating gender-sensitive language; trying to ensure that women migrant workers equally benefitted from the programming; and collecting and reporting on gender-disaggregated data wherever possible. Nonetheless, there was considerable room for the initiative to have further designed and targeted its programming towards the promotion of gender equality through a more intentional gender transformative approach designed to challenge the norms and institutional structures that promote gender inequality and inequity.

The CREST project has produced important research on the nexus between business, migration and climate change, which now enables IOM to integrate these learnings into any future labour migration programming. Some of these opportunities include supporting skills development or pre-departure orientation (PDO) training targeted towards professions, communities and migration corridors that are vulnerable to climate-linked migration; working with companies and migrant worker representatives to assess and mitigate the effects of climate change on migrant workers' living and working conditions; and supporting private sector companies to better understand and create policies and mechanisms that can address their own contributions towards deepening the climate crisis and causing situations where workers are forcibly displaced due to climate change impacts.



Pre-departure orientation, safe migration and migrant integration outreach for migrants from the Lao People's Democratic Republic. © IOM Lao PDR 2022

LESSONS LEARNED

- ① Commitment by companies towards the UNGPs prior to establishing an IOM partnership, as well as pressure from companies on their suppliers to adhere to codes of conduct, facilitates the achievement of results. At the same time, some partnerships that were established without this commitment gradually embraced more responsibilities 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 private sector actors who have unique and urgent needs and priorities as well as CSOs that may have limited administrative capacities.
- ③ Migration programming can have a more meaningful impact on addressing gender inequalities when it is geared towards gender transformative programming as opposed to gender mainstreaming by empowering organizations 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 adhere to the UNGPs.
- ④ Sustained long-term institutional 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 by supporting industry-wide private sector coalitions; engaging SMEs in adhering to the UNGPs since they employ a large share 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

- ① 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.
- ② 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.
- ③ 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.
- ④ 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.

SUMMARY OF KEY CONCLUSIONS

- ① 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.
- ② 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.

- ③ 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 IOM should leverage the results achieved in the CREST initiative and its other private sector work to deepen and expand its private sector partnerships by engaging new private sector partners, including SMEs, as well as providing support to existing partners to implement policies, procedures and mechanisms to promote and protect the rights of migrant workers and to encourage compliance across their supply chains.
- ② IOM should design future programming that includes a strong focus on convening and facilitating stakeholder dialogue and cooperation, especially initiatives that support private sector partners to engage with other key stakeholders and that empower migrant worker organizations to pursue advocacy and work together to address common challenges such as gaps in government regulation to promote the rights of migrant workers.
- ③ IOM should modify its administrative and reporting requirements to facilitate greater collaboration with a wide variety of stakeholders, including CSOs and the private sector, and should further invest in strengthening collaboration with other United Nations agencies as well as other actors working on migration, business and human rights across the Asia and Pacific region.
- ④ IOM should consult with and engage key stakeholders into the design of any future migration, business and human rights programming to encourage strategic programming that meets the needs and priorities of stakeholders and that can leverage synergies across actors.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

This evaluation report provides key findings, lessons learned, best practices, conclusions and recommendations that have emerged from the final evaluation of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Corporate Responsibility in Eliminating Slavery and Trafficking (CREST) project. The information generated by the evaluation is based on extensive consultations with key programmatic stakeholders as well as a comprehensive document review. The evaluation is intended to contribute towards institutional knowledge and be used to inform future IOM programming.

SECTION II: CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

International labour migration has been increasing over the past several years. The United Nations sustainable development goals recognize migration as an important driver for development. Labour migration is a means for policymakers at destination countries to offset demographic changes and the increasing labour shortages. There is evidence that labour migration contributes positively to the growth of gross domestic product (GDP) in destination countries, while remittances and other resources sent back home by migrant workers are critical factors for poverty reduction and community development. Migrant workers are integrated into the global economy in various sectors such as agriculture, construction, food-processing, manufacturing, services and hospitality. Migrant workers are also present throughout the supply chains in sectors such as logistics, warehousing, security, transport, and janitorial, among others. As a region, Asia continues to attract large-scale foreign direct investment while providing significant productive input to these globalized supply chains and economic sectors. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, South-East Asia alone hosted 10 million international migrants, most of whom had moved in search of gainful employment.¹

Labour migration in the region is primarily temporary and for the elementary occupations and lower-wage segments of the labour markets. Although the benefits of migration are well documented, migrant workers in the global economy remain at risk of various forms of human and labour rights violations at all stages of the labour migration journey. The 2022 Estimates on Modern Slavery by Walkfree Foundation, ILO and IOM indicate that Asia and the Pacific hosts over 29 million victims with over 15.1 million cases of forced labour, more than half of the global total.² The private sector is responsible for 86 per cent of forced labour.³ Migrants are three times more likely to experience instances of forced labour in comparison to non-migrant workers.

In this context, private sector companies are increasingly influenced by consumer pressure and legislation that requires human rights due diligence to engage in protecting the rights of migrant workers. As a result, private sector companies are increasing their efforts to make their supply chains exploitation-free. In 2011, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights (UNGPs) were endorsed by the United Nations Human Rights Council, thereafter serving as a global standard for corporate responsibility.

IOM is currently implementing the CREST initiative, which is a regional partnership project 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 UNGPs, the SDGs (particularly targets 8.7 and 10.7) and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM).⁴ 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 in order to achieve sustainable change.

Project activities were designed to increase migrant workers' access to transparent information on employment terms and conditions and, ethical recruitment services, and to enhance workers' voice and effective grievance mechanisms. The project received financial support from the Section for Regional Development Cooperation for Asia and the Pacific at the Embassy of

1 International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Spotlight on Labour Migration in Asia*, (Geneva, 2021).

2 International Labour Organization (ILO), Walk Free, and IOM, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*, (Geneva, 2022).

3 Ibid.

4 The Global Compact for Migration is an intergovernmental agreement, prepared under the auspices of the United Nations to cover all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*, (signed by the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives, meeting in Morocco on 10 and 11 December 2018). McAdam, J. (2019). Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. *International Legal Materials*, 58(1), 160-194. doi:10.1017/ilm.2019.6

Sweden in Thailand, with an initial budget of 47,600,000 Swedish Krona (SEK). This was increased to SEK 94,862,326 to support CREST's COVID-19 response work and a cost-extension in the sixth year of implementation. Direct and in-kind contributions by private sector partners were expected to match USD 5 million in private sector contributions by the end of the project. The initiative spans from 1 October 2017 to 31 December 2022 with a one-year extension until 31 December 2023 and includes activities that were implemented in Hong Kong SAR, China; Malaysia; the Philippines; Thailand and Viet Nam. IOM also works with its missions, CSOs and implementing partners in additional origin and destination countries, namely, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka. The project logic is outlined in CREST's Project Document and its corresponding logical framework. Its work is designed to feed into its [Multi-Stakeholder Theory of Change \(ToC\)](#). The project served migrant workers as rights holders and provided support to duty bearers who included private sector actors, government representatives and CSOs.

SECTION III: EVALUATION PURPOSE AND SCOPE

EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND TARGET AUDIENCE

Subsequent to the [2021 CREST Project Mid-Term Evaluation](#), the IOM Viet Nam Mission Office commissioned a final evaluation of the CREST project for accountability and learning purposes to assess the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, potential impact and sustainability. Furthermore, cross-cutting issues including gender equality, human rights and the environment, were thoroughly integrated throughout the evaluation.

The specific objectives of the evaluation were to: 1) assess whether CREST's results contributed to reaching the intended project outcomes and objective, including an assessment of causal links between the project and observed effects; 2) identify the supporting factors and constraints that have led to the achievement or lack of achievement of results; 3) assess the management and implementation of the project, including strengths and weaknesses relating to planning, implementation, partner engagement, monitoring, communication and knowledge management; and 4) establish key lessons learned and provide clear, specific and implementable recommendations to inform future project strategies.

The evaluation was expected to support IOM and the Development Section of the Swedish Embassy in Thailand in measuring the effectiveness of the CREST project in producing short-term, intermediate and long-term results. The knowledge generated by the evaluation will also feed into the design of IOM's future intervention models and contribute to documenting management and delivery approaches. Beyond this, the evaluation will be institutionally relevant for IOM through the identification of lessons learned and best practices relevant to business engagement on ethical recruitment and the elimination of modern slavery. The primary target audience for this evaluation included the Swedish Embassy in Thailand, IOM CREST implementing missions, relevant departments in IOM (particularly Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion and Migrant Protection and Assistance), and members of the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG). Secondary evaluation users may include other United Nations agencies, project partners and potential future donors.

The evaluation scope covered the project duration from 1 October 2017 to 31 December 2022 with a particular focus on activities implemented since the project's midterm evaluation. It also considered modifications made to the project design and implementation approach, such as the inclusion of a new outcome (Outcome 4) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The scope covered all geographic areas impacted by the project.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

The evaluation framework was based on the CREST project document, IOM's Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines, and the norms and standards of evaluation adopted by the United Nations Evaluation Group and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee Evaluation Quality Standards.

SECTION IV: METHODOLOGY

4.1. EVALUATION DESIGN

To meet the specific evaluation objectives identified in the evaluation terms of reference, the evaluation drew on ***mixed quantitative and qualitative methods*** where quantitative data, derived from indicator monitoring matrices, monitoring and donor reports, was examined through a desk review and qualitative data was collected through FGDs and KIs. Since the evaluation was expected to be used for both accountability and learning purposes and will inform future programming, the evaluation was ***utilization-focused***⁵ to ensure that the evaluation findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned were as useful as possible to the evaluation users. The evaluation also drew on ***Feminist Evaluation Principles***.

4.2. EVALUATION APPROACH

The evaluation used a ***theory-based approach*** guided by the project's logical framework and its multi-stakeholder ToC, that describes the ecosystem in which the CREST programme operates. These programming frameworks provided the necessary structure for the evaluators to assess the project's contributions towards observed results. The theory-based approach also tested the project's design hypotheses and assumptions to guide any adjustments that may need to be made to the multistakeholder ToC as well as to any future programming. The evaluation also examined progress made by the project to address midterm evaluation recommendations.

The evaluation used a ***participatory approach*** to engage relevant stakeholders at the regional level and in each of the programme countries. See ***Annex III*** for an overview of stakeholders who participated in KIs and FGDs.⁶ The evaluation process itself was also participatory. The evaluation team was in regular contact with the Evaluation Manager and ERG throughout the evaluation process for validation and feedback.

The evaluation used a ***critical instance case study approach***⁷ by examining the following two case studies:⁸

- ① Review of CREST's partnership with a global garments and footwear manufacturer to identify factors that have facilitated the successful establishment and implementation of this partnership.
- ② Examination of CREST's partnership with the CSO Human Aid Society Selangor (HASS) in Malaysia to understand how this successful collaboration between IOM and the CSO has provided more direct support to migrant workers, including what has worked well and what could be replicated, expanded or strengthened moving forward.

In addition to the application of feminist evaluation principles, the evaluation team used a ***gender equality and equity approach*** throughout the evaluation process. This was done by applying a gender and equity-sensitive analytical lens using a Social Relations Framework throughout the evaluation process to ensure that the evaluation process did not reinforce structures of inequality between all gender groups including subgroups of vulnerable migrant workers. The degree of gender responsiveness of the project was measured against criteria set out in the adapted World Health Organization (WHO) Gender Responsive Assessment Scale (***Annex II***) that was modified by the evaluation team to be used as a gender marker for migration programming.

5 Utilization-Focused Evaluation, developed by Michael Quinn Patton, is an approach based on the principle that an evaluation should be designed and executed to enhance its usefulness to its intended users. Under this approach, evaluations should be planned and conducted in ways that enhance the likely utilization of the evaluation findings and recommendations, and that the evaluation process itself helps to strengthen decision making and improve performance.

6 This list was developed by the Evaluation Manager and the Evaluation Team during the inception phase.

7 https://web.wpi.edu/Pubs/E-project/Available/E-project-121615-164731/unrestricted/USPTO_CookbookFinal.pdf.

8 The selection of these two case studies was done in consultation with the ERG and key stakeholders through inception interviews. They were selected as areas of interest to IOM to inform lessons learned and future programming.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND SOURCES

Due to the ongoing uncertainties relating to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as cost-effectiveness considerations, the evaluation took place remotely. The following data collection methods and sources were used:

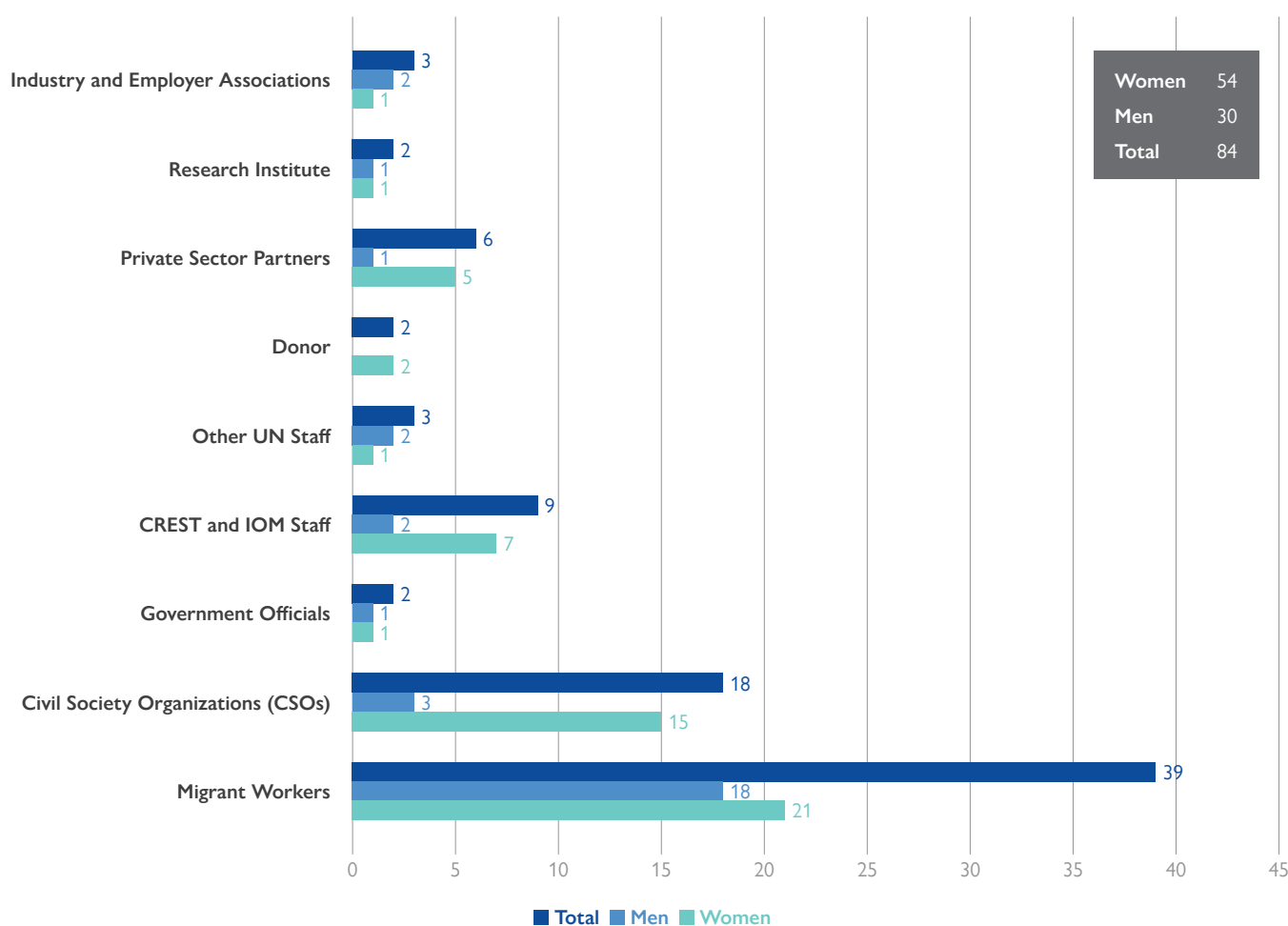
Document review: The evaluation team conducted an in-depth document review to assess qualitative and quantitative information about the CREST project across programming countries, as well as other contextual information that was insightful, including information on activities of other similar initiatives in the region.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): In addition to consulting with representative migrant worker organizations through FGDs with CSOs, the evaluation ensured that the direct voices of migrant workers were captured through FGDs with migrant workers to gain insights as to how the project impacted their lives.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): The evaluation team conducted KIIs with key stakeholders from across the programming countries in addition to key stakeholders at the regional level, as laid out in Figure 1.

Figure 1: below identifies the number of stakeholders who were consulted as part of the evaluation per stakeholder group. In total, six FGDs were conducted with 39 migrant workers and five FGDs were conducted with 20 CSOs. See [Annex III](#) for a detailed list of stakeholders who were consulted as part of KIIs and FGDs.

Figure 1. Stakeholders consulted per stakeholder group



4.4. DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

The evaluation drew on the following data analysis methods (Table 1) to achieve the evaluation objectives.

Table 1: Data analysis methods

Theory of Change analysis	The evaluation used a Theory of Change analysis to provide a detailed assessment of the project's change logic based on its Logical Framework as well as the broader Multi-Stakeholder ToC, which outlines the ecosystem where the project operates. It tested the project's hypotheses and assumptions throughout the evaluation process to ensure theoretical coherence and to assess the extent to which the programme has contributed towards its stated objectives. It also identified any changes that the project has made since the midterm evaluation to further contribute towards the larger ToC.
Contribution analysis	The evaluation used a contribution analysis to assess the extent to which the project activities have contributed towards planned results under each of the project's planned outcome areas in both countries of origin and destination.
Cross-country comparison analysis	The evaluation used a cross-country comparison analysis to identify good practices and lessons learned across programming contexts (including examining differences between countries of origin and destination) and to provide a holistic assessment of the project results.
Quantitative data analysis	Quantitative data from indicator matrices, monitoring and donor reports were analysed to determine quantitative results and trends across countries and thematic areas.
Coding and triangulation	Qualitative data was manually coded, and all data was triangulated during the data analysis phase of the evaluation using an evidence matrix (structured by evaluation question/subquestion and data collection method) to ensure accuracy, reduce bias and provide rigor to the development of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.
Gender equality and equity analysis	Gender equality and equity analysis based on a Social Relations Framework that drew on information gathered through mixed methods (KIs, FGDs and document review) was used during the data analysis phase of the evaluation to ensure that the needs, priorities and different experiences of subgroups of vulnerable women and men migrant workers were accurately and fully captured by the evaluation. The degree of gender responsiveness of the project was measured against criteria set out in Annex II.

4.5 ETHICS

The evaluation approach was grounded in ethical principles defined in the UNEG Guidelines that fall under three broad categories: obligations of evaluators, obligations to participants and the evaluation process and product.

4.6. SAMPLING

The evaluators used a purposeful sampling approach to conduct 31 KIs with key project stakeholders. Interviewees were selected to ensure that all stakeholder groups were represented. Preference was given to those who were most involved in the project as well as those who hadn't already participated in the midterm evaluation to minimize stakeholder fatigue. Migrant workers who participated in FGDs were purposefully selected based on the types of assistance received under Outcome 4 as well as randomly selected by private-sector company partners.

4.7. EVALUATION LIMITATIONS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

The following are some of the limitations that the evaluation faced during its implementation along with mitigation strategies used by the evaluation team:

- **Challenges around measuring impact:** The project did not have sufficient baseline data to conduct a full impact evaluation to concretely identify the full extent of direct impact made by the project on the lives of migrant workers. However, the evaluators drew on what data was available to identify examples of direct impact on the lives of migrant workers. They also discussed the project's contributions towards likely long-term effects.

- **Stakeholder fatigue:** The project actively engaged stakeholders throughout its implementation, and they were also recently engaged in the midterm evaluation. The evaluators mitigated this fatigue by drawing on data that had already been collected through the midterm evaluation and project monitoring data and by selecting stakeholders for interviews who had not already participated in the midterm evaluation, where possible. The evaluation methodology also did not use a survey to prevent stakeholder fatigue.
- **Attributing results:** It is challenging to completely isolate the attribution of results generated from this project from other efforts and dynamics currently at play in the region. To help mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team used contribution analysis to assess how the project's activities and outputs made contributions towards larger outcome and impact-level results, taking into consideration the fact that other IOM programmes and United Nations entities are also working on labour migration in the region.
- **Limitations of gender-disaggregated data:** The CREST project has consistently disaggregated project data between women and men migrant workers, and from early 2022 onwards the project has been increasingly collecting data on migrant workers with diverse gender identities to avoid collecting only binary gender data. However, CREST partners do not consistently collect gender-disaggregated data and the data collected directly by the initiative is subject to a migrant's willingness to disclose gender identity information. These challenges have made it difficult for the CREST project to consistently disaggregate project data by gender. This lack of data limited the extent to which the evaluation was able to provide a detailed assessment of how the project affected migrant workers from across gender groups. The evaluators attempted to mitigate this challenge by still taking the presence of these groups into consideration when conducting the data analysis and developing the evaluation findings.
- **Reliability of data obtained through FGDs with migrant workers:** Information shared with the evaluation team by migrant workers in FGDs was largely positive with respect to their employers and may not have reflected the full extent of their migration and employment experience. This potential bias could be because the discussions took place at their job sites and were organized by their employers, thus potentially giving the workers the impression that the discussions were not completely independent or confidential. The evaluation team tried to mitigate this situation by explaining that discussions were confidential, ensuring that employers were not present during the interview and by hiring independent translators.

SECTION V: FINDINGS

5.1. RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE

This section provides an assessment of the extent to which the CREST project objectives and design responded to the evolving needs and priorities of rights holders, particularly migrant workers and project stakeholders including private sector companies, as well as of the compatibility of the intervention with other IOM labour migration initiatives and United Nations labour migration programming in the region.

1. IOM is increasingly perceived by stakeholders and partners through the CREST initiative as fulfilling an important role in the current human rights and business landscape as a crucial facilitator of private sector engagement towards respecting the human and labour rights of migrant workers, in line with their responsibilities laid out in the UNGPs. While most of CREST's private sector partnerships to date have been with multinational brands, SMEs require significant support that project stakeholders believe IOM can provide.

Over the lifespan of the CREST project, stakeholders and partners, who include private sector companies, private sector industry coalitions, governments, CSOs and other United Nations entities increasingly viewed IOM as a strategic partner who can fill an important gap with respect to engaging private sector companies in promoting and protecting the rights of migrant workers by upholding the UNGPs. At the project's midpoint, IOM was largely perceived by stakeholders as a service provider with expertise in ethical recruitment who could deliver tools and resources to support private sector actors in meeting their

human rights obligations. However, as the project progressed and partnerships across stakeholder groups deepened, partners began to appreciate IOM's comparative advantage as a thought-leader, facilitator and convenor, as well as its ability to support human rights beyond ethical recruitment – including, for instance, human rights due diligence, remediation of grievances committed against migrant workers and access to justice, and advocacy for migrant worker protection. As a result, stakeholders and partners are increasingly viewing IOM as a strategic actor in the area of migration, business and human rights, and are looking towards the Organization for greater leadership and continued support. See [Findings 2](#) and [5](#) for more information on the kinds of leadership and support that stakeholders would like IOM to further pursue.

Because of experiences gained through the CREST project, IOM has further strengthened its competitive edge regarding private sector engagement in upholding the UNGPs as well as supporting efforts to contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs (particularly targets 8.7 and 10.7). IOM's hands-on and practical approach to working with private sector actors, as witnessed through the CREST initiative, is attractive to private sector companies. The project's use of tools and resources to provide targeted support to private sector entities through initiatives such as [Labour Migration Process Mapping](#), human rights due diligence training and support offered through the [Migrant Worker Guidelines for Employers](#) has been effective at engaging private sector companies (see [Finding 4](#) for more information on company engagement). These tools have been made open source via IOM's global publications page and can be accessed directly from the [CREST website](#), therefore increasing their accessibility. This engagement then deepened over time as private sector companies signed subsequent partnership agreements to further their collaboration with IOM. Indeed, since the midterm evaluation, eight of the 13 partnership agreements signed were with existing partners who wished to deepen their collaboration with IOM. The use of these tools can be seen, for example, in the case study of IOM's partnership with a global garments and footwear manufacturer, where IOM's initial support to update the company's

"IOM helped us to understand how to better protect migrant workers across our supply chain. I see lots of potential to work with IOM in the future."

Quote from a private sector partner

"IOM is playing an important role in engaging the private sector [to protect the rights of migrant workers]."

Quote from a United Nations agency working in the region

employment guidelines on ethical recruitment and develop a training package on forced labour and the risk to migrant workers led to a subsequent partnership agreement. The establishment of a formal partnership provided an opportunity to implement human rights due diligence through the development of a comprehensive, gender-sensitive ethical recruitment due diligence toolkit that was then shared with 250 company suppliers.

The partnerships with private sector companies that have been established through the CREST initiative and the learnings that the project has generated to further strengthen IOM's private sector engagement have well positioned IOM as a United Nations entity with a strong comparative advantage to engage with private sector actors. Project stakeholders view IOM as an entity with sufficient flexibility to support the private sector in its efforts to meet the UNGPs compared to other United Nations entities that may be more restricted due to their mandate or more formal institutional and bureaucratic processes. Increasing visibility and appreciation of this advantage among partners and stakeholders puts IOM in a good position to continue and potentially expand its private sector engagement within the migration, business and human rights landscape.

CREST's focus has been largely on supporting big international companies and brands to better align their activities with the UNGPs. The project's partnerships have focused largely on multinational enterprises in the electronics, footwear and apparel industries but have also expanded to tier two industries such as the rubber industry. By focusing on multinational corporations, CREST has been able to achieve significant scale with limited resources and has impacted the lives of 220,472 migrant workers and their families (as further discussed in [Finding 11](#)). Even so, there remain many SMEs that also require support. These enterprises are often less well informed of their labour and human rights obligations and tend to have a smaller capacity to implement policies that respect the rights of migrant workers than larger companies. However, these entities are also primary employers of migrant workers and therefore their engagement is crucial to eliminating migrant worker exploitation. Project stakeholders believe that IOM's on-the-ground presence, excellent knowledge and understanding of local contexts, and extensive partnership networks strategically places the organization to provide this much needed support to SMEs. Although IOM would need to balance the efficiency regarding the investment versus reward of engaging with smaller actors, this may be an area that IOM could further target in the future.

2. IOM through the CREST initiative has met many of the needs of its stakeholders through proactive and practical programming that was flexible and responsive to changing needs and circumstances, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, important challenges remain regarding government regulation that stakeholders overwhelmingly believe that IOM is well-placed to address.

IOM through the CREST initiative provided programming that met many of the needs of diverse stakeholder groups. It offered customized tools, information, strategic advice and capacity-building support to private sector companies to help them to uphold the UNGPs and work towards eliminating migrant worker exploitation across their supply chains. The Organization also helped to increase the profile of labour migration within a business and human rights agenda when implementing the UNGPs. These tools and support covered topics related primarily but not exclusively to ethical recruitment, human rights due diligence and remediation. IOM also provided ethical recruitment training to employers, suppliers, labour recruiters and government partners. During the second half of the project, IOM strengthened its direct support to migrant workers by working with civil society and community-based organizations to meet some of the most immediate and pressing needs for humanitarian assistance of migrant workers and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a regional fund to support access to justice and remediation. This highly flexible response allowed IOM to provide in-kind and cash assistance to migrant workers who were most in need of immediate support. See [Finding 7](#) for more on CREST's COVID-19 response.

At the same time, KIs with stakeholders from across stakeholder groups (including private sector partners, CSOs and United Nations staff) revealed an overwhelming desire by stakeholders for IOM to play a larger role in influencing the adoption and implementation of government regulation that promotes the rights of migrant workers and that would create an even playing field across private sector actors. Indeed, protection is one of the three UNGP pillars. Private sector companies identified significant challenges around upholding company policies that protect migrant workers and that promote their rights without enforceable government legislation in place to require suppliers to do so. Companies also explained that it would be easier

“We need there to be an even playing field across companies. We're happy to invest in efforts to protect migrant worker rights but our competitors should also be required to do so.”

Quote from a private sector partner

for them to invest resources into upholding the rights of migrant workers if their competitors were also required to do so. Government representatives identified challenges in coordinating with other countries in the region in designing and implementing legislation that is coherent and coordinated across borders.

Stakeholders from across stakeholder groups felt that IOM is well placed as an intergovernmental entity to work in collaboration with other United Nations entities including the ILO, UNDP and UN-Women to support national and local governments across the Asia and Pacific region to advance policy adoption and implementation that promotes and protects the rights of migrant workers. Specifically, stakeholders explained that IOM could play an important role in engaging private sector actors in multi-stakeholder dialogue and advocacy initiatives to support improved government legislation and implementation to protect the human and labour rights of migrant workers. Interviewed CSOs also explained how they would like IOM to play a more active role in supporting their advocacy efforts with government entities to improve legislation that affects the rights of migrant workers. Such a role would include endorsing their advocacy campaigns, integrating elements of this advocacy into IOM's own work, and potentially providing funding and capacity development support to advance their advocacy work.

3. IOM has made considerable improvements during the second half of the CREST initiative to promote collaboration and synergies between CREST and other IOM programmes and with United Nations programming across the region. There remains, however, room to further strengthen this type of collaboration, both with United Nations partners and other external stakeholders.

One of the recommendations that emerged from the CREST midterm evaluation was for IOM to promote collaboration and synergies between the CREST project and other IOM programmes and United Nations programming across the region. In response to this recommendation, IOM has further strengthened collaboration and synergies among them in several ways. For instance, it worked closely with the CREST Fashion Programme to build synergetic programming. Indeed, the CREST initiative and the CREST Fashion Programme held monthly joint planning sessions to promote cooperation, collaboration and synergies. Examples of synergies between the CREST initiative and the CREST Fashion Programme include the sharing of research and knowledge products on labour migration between initiatives, such as the [Migrant Worker Guidelines for Employers](#) and [Labour Migration Process Mapping](#) approaches, as well as partnership sharing among fashion brands from the CREST initiative to the CREST Fashion Programme where the latter added value to the partnerships and expanded support to third-tier suppliers.⁹

IOM also further strengthened its working relationship with UNDP by better aligning CREST's project framework and language to a business and human rights framework and by collaborating closely through the Regional Business and Human Rights Forum. Collaboration with UNDP at the national level has also been strengthened by co-designing and implementing activities in countries that include Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Collaboration with the ILO has also been strengthened. Indeed, during the second half of the CREST project, IOM and the ILO signed a global Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which was then translated into a Regional Action Plan. The MoU set up the necessary framework for further collaboration and joint work between the two entities, while IOM through CREST contributed to joint efforts by providing ethical recruitment expertise as part of the development of the Regional Action Plan. IOM is currently partnering with the ILO and UNDP to implement the Ship to Shore Rights South East Asia Programme. In terms of CREST-specific collaboration, the ILO provided

"It's impossible for us to demand that our suppliers protect the rights of migrant workers when they are not legally obliged to do so. We expect IOM to take the lead in working with governments to improve legislation that protects the rights of migrant workers."

Quote from a private sector partner



The United Nations Responsible Business and Human Rights Forum 2022 convened various stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific to enhancing responsible business practices and corporate accountability in the region.

⁹ Tier three suppliers are suppliers or subcontractors for tier two suppliers and can extend longer than three. The tiers extend as much as needed for hiring companies, depending on how many levels of suppliers or subcontractors are needed in the supply chain to create the product or service.

technical inputs to strengthen CREST's Labour Migration Process Mapping Guide and Migrant Worker Guidelines for Employers. IOM also strengthened its relationship with UN-Women by holding consultation sessions to discuss how to complement and avoid duplication with other UN-Women programmes such as the Safe and Fair Programme that focuses on the rights of women migrant workers. UN-Women also contributed to the CREST initiative by providing technical inputs to strengthen the gender equality perspective of the Migrant Worker Guidelines for Employers.

While the initial design of the CREST project was not based on significant stakeholder consultation, IOM has increasingly recognized the importance of meaningful stakeholder consultation and has strengthened dialogue with relevant stakeholders, including United Nations agencies, throughout the course of the CREST initiative. IOM is currently engaging in external stakeholder consultations to inform the development of its upcoming Migration, Business and Human Rights in Asia Programme that will build on results achieved through the CREST project and IOM's other private sector work.

In addition to increased stakeholder consultation and collaboration, the CREST midterm evaluation recommended that IOM consider leveraging its partnerships with private sector actors to serve as a bridge between the private sector and other United Nations programming. For instance, some private sector partners mentioned that they would also like to work with the ILO to set up and implement remediation systems due to the ILO's technical knowledge in labour laws. In addition, an entity such as the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) may be well placed to provide technical and capacity development support regarding how to integrate environmental concerns into private sector efforts to achieve the UNGPs. Therefore, there could be opportunities for IOM to potentially facilitate initial contact and promote collaboration between its private sector partners and other IOM and United Nations programming that may be in a good position to contribute towards supporting private sector companies to uphold the UNGPs. In response to this recommendation, IOM set up coordination mechanisms between CREST and other United Nations labour migration programmes to improve collaboration across United Nations labour migration programming in the region. However, formal referral mechanisms to directly connect the private sector with other United Nations programming have not yet been established and there is ample opportunity to further strengthen and deepen collaboration and partnership between IOM and other United Nations entities working on labour migration across the region.¹⁰

5.2. EFFECTIVENESS

This section provides an assessment of the extent to which the CREST project achieved its planned results and objectives, including any differential results across countries and stakeholder groups.

4. The CREST project has significantly surpassed its private sector engagement goals, therefore reflecting strong private sector engagement and ownership.

Over the course of the CREST project, IOM was able to successfully engage private sector stakeholders and surpass most of its outcome and output targets for Outcome 1: *Private sector stakeholders commit to the elimination of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains in Asia*. Indeed, as of 31 December 2022, IOM had established 17 unique private sector partnerships against a target of 10. This is an increase of five partnerships since the midterm evaluation, which is an important accomplishment within a challenging COVID-19 pandemic context where company activity was frequently halted and where companies were often forced to focus on emergency responses as opposed to implementing the UNGPs.

Efforts to establish these partnerships helped IOM to further expand its contact and reach across private sector companies since even those companies that have not immediately signed a formal partnership agreement with IOM may be interested in working with the Organization in the future. As of 31 December 2022, as part of the partnership development process, IOM identified and integrated 876 private sector stakeholders into its stakeholder database against a target of 500. In addition, 98 concept notes and proposals were submitted to private sector stakeholders against a target of 50.

IOM also surpassed its private sector financial contributions target of USD 5 million by achieving USD 7.6 million in private sector contributions. These financial contributions reflect strong commitment from private sector partners towards strengthening management systems that recruit and employ migrant workers and remediation systems that address human and labour rights violations committed against migrant workers. In addition the contributions reflect the willingness from private sector companies to engage with IOM to ensure the respect of their human and labour rights in line with the UNGPs. Engagement among private sector companies through the CREST initiative to uphold the UNGPs can be seen through several company-driven actions in partnership with IOM. These initiatives include, but are not limited to: designing company-wide policies and procedures

¹⁰ This point was an analytical recommendation by the Evaluation Team and did not come directly from stakeholder interviews.

(including standard operating procedures) that are aligned with the UNGPs as well as hiring additional staff to support the implementation of these policies and procedures; investing in ethical recruitment training through a train-the-trainer approach to further strengthen the capacity of company staff and suppliers; setting up remediation mechanisms to reimburse migrant workers who paid recruitment fees and related costs;¹¹ establishing in-company human rights working groups that engage company staff as well as suppliers; engaging in voluntary human rights reporting as a sign of increased engagement towards transparency; and proactively reaching out to IOM with requests for additional support to further promote the rights of migrant workers across company supply chains.

The [case study of IOM's partnership with a global garments and footwear manufacturer](#) revealed that results can be facilitated significantly when companies have commitments already in place that demonstrate strong interest and buy-in from the company to meet the UNGPs prior to the establishment of the IOM partnership. Indeed, the global garments and footwear manufacturer already had a Modern Slavery Outreach Programme in place prior to partnering with IOM. The company was also willing to be publicly recognized as an IOM partner and was interested in taking an industry-wide leadership role. This internal commitment and external transparency towards meeting the UNGPs were important success factors for the partnership and the results that were achieved, which included developing a gender-sensitive pre-migration orientation programme for migrant workers employed by the company's suppliers as well as addressing some of the practical challenges associated with implementing the employer pays principle of recruitment such as tackling the lack of knowledge and capacity of many labour recruiters in adhering to ethical recruitment principles, among other results. See [Annex I](#) for more information on the case study findings.

5. IOM's support through CREST to private sector companies via knowledge products, tools and policy development have helped companies to identify, address and remedy migrant worker exploitation across their supply chains. Moving forward, private sector companies need further support to implement policies and procedures that protect migrant workers, including among their suppliers.

Through the CREST initiative, private sector companies have received numerous knowledge products, tools and policy development support from IOM that were customized to meet each company's specific needs and realities. IOM produced 18 gender-sensitive tools for private sector partners against a target of seven (under Outcome 2). Tools that private sector partners found particularly useful include the [Labour Migration Process Mapping Guide](#) to identify, diagnose and address the human and labour rights risks to migrant workers within international supply chains. By December 2022, IOM completed 13 labour mapping processes for private sector partners against a target of four. Indeed, the case study of IOM's partnership with a global garments and footwear manufacturer revealed that knowledge generation through IOM's supply chain mapping helped the company to focus its work in those geographic regions where it can have the most impact in terms of reducing human rights risks. Other tools deemed useful by partners include the open-source [Migrant Worker Guidelines for Employers](#) that provide practical guidance for business enterprises on how to recruit and employ international migrant workers ethically and responsibly; the [Operational Guidelines for Businesses on Remediation of Migrant Worker Grievances](#) that provide companies with a clear framework for designing and implementing an effective remediation programme that emphasizes engaging with all workers including migrants; and the [E-Course: An Introduction to The Management Of Fair and Ethical Recruitment and Employment Of Migrant Workers](#) that explains the key principles laid out in the Migrant Worker Guidelines for Employers.¹² In addition to the e-course, IOM through the CREST initiative provided 171 trainings to private sector stakeholders against a target of 50, which reached 1,348 suppliers and 2,942 representatives (of which 718 were women, 856 were men, and 1,368 where the gender breakdown was unavailable). The CREST project reports that, where data were available, a total of 88.3 per cent of participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the training, against a target of 80 per cent.

Support provided by IOM has facilitated progress by companies to eliminate migrant worker exploitation across their supply chains by creating policies and standard operating procedures to support the ethical recruitment of migrant workers and to set up remediation systems to address instances where the rights of migrant workers were not respected. Indeed, the CREST project has surpassed most of its outcome and output targets under Outcome 2: *Private sector partners are taking measures to implement ethical recruitment for the elimination of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains in Asia*. Under this outcome as of 31 December 2022, IOM engaged with a total of 1,223 labour supply chain actors through its private sector partnerships, which includes 14 lead companies, two business associations, one private sector foundation, 53 brands, 881 employers and suppliers, 262 recruitment agencies and 11 subagents. Through this engagement, IOM supported the development of 60 supplier action plans with seven lead companies against a target of 10. In addition, 14 private sector partners reported progress in addressing migrant worker vulnerabilities in their operations and supply chains against a target of six while 711 employers were eliminating or working towards the elimination of worker-paid recruitment fees against a target of 600.

¹¹ This result has been reported by private sector partners to the CREST initiative and confirmed in FGDs with migrant workers but cannot be independently verified.

¹² CREST Fashion developed and launched the e-course in March 2022 through funds from the Laudes Foundation.

Case study highlights: IOM's partnership with a global garments and footwear manufacturer

IOM and the global garments and footwear manufacturer established a partnership in 2017, resulting in the following key achievements:

- Updated employment guidelines on ethical recruitment and treatment of migrant workers, which incorporate the company's new policy on zero recruitment fees for migrant workers;
- Development of a training package on forced labour and the risk to migrant workers and a Training of Trainers with the company's trainers, who were then able to roll out the training to nearly 100 of the company's tier 2 suppliers in the local language;
- Development of a comprehensive, gender-sensitive ethical recruitment due diligence toolkit that was shared with 250 company suppliers;
- Development of a gender-sensitive pre-migration orientation programme for migrant workers employed by the company's suppliers;
- Training on ethical recruitment and the company's Code of Conduct provided to more than 40 labour recruiters that were supporting company suppliers;
- Collaboration with the Fair Labour Association, as well as Puma and New Balance, to carry out an assessment of recruitment practices and working conditions for migrant workers in Viet Nam's natural rubber value chain.

While the support provided by IOM has been very useful in helping companies to establish the policies, procedures and mechanisms necessary to promote and protect the rights of migrant workers and to meet the UNGPs, private sector partners explained during KIs that, moving forward, they will require support to effectively implement these policies, procedures and mechanisms and to ensure compliance across their supply chains, particularly with their tier 2 and 3 suppliers. Specifically, private sector partners are asking for the development of tailor-made tools and strategies that can help implement and enforce their policies and procedures with suppliers. They are also asking for more technical and capacity development support to assist them in setting up and managing remediation systems.

"It's impossible for us to demand that our suppliers protect the rights of migrant workers when they are not legally obliged to do so. We expect IOM to take the lead in working with governments to improve legislation that protects the rights of migrant workers."

Quote from a private sector partner

6. During the second half of the CREST Project, IOM has strengthened its engagement in industry-wide coalitions as well as its strategic partnership with the MFA, thus positioning the organization to achieve greater scale and impact. Looking ahead, stakeholders would like to see IOM take on a more industry-wide or cross-industry leadership role and further empower migrant workers organisations.

Throughout the course of the CREST project, IOM successfully surpassed most of its outcome and output results under *Outcome 3: Private sector stakeholders effectively collaborate with multi-stakeholder platforms to create an enabling environment for ethical recruitment and the elimination of modern slavery*. Under this outcome, IOM through the CREST initiative organized and supported national and regional multi-stakeholder dialogues, consultations and workshops to present project learnings and corporate social leadership and provided ethical recruitment training to CSOs and a total of 291 recruitment agencies against a target of 180.

IOM's work with industry-wide coalitions was further strengthened during the second half of the CREST project through its collaboration with the Walmart Foundation and the Responsible Business Alliance (RBA) Foundation, which is a non-profit that encompasses more than 200 member companies primarily from the electronics sector. Through this collaboration, IOM was able to integrate standardized and human rights-based pre-departure orientation (PDO), pre-employment orientation (PEO) and post-arrival orientation (PAO) services for Indonesian and Nepali workers migrating to Malaysia to work within the electronics supply

chain. RBA endorsed the PDO and PEO training of trainers and orientation curricula prepared by IOM in consultation with CSOs and governmental stakeholders, and IOM delivered these trainings to CSOs and government stakeholders. This work will facilitate CSOs and migrant resource centres to deliver the tailor-made PDO/PEO sessions to prospective migrant workers in a sustainable manner by drawing on their own funding.

Industry-wide engagement was also strengthened through IOM's collaboration with the Consumer Goods Forum (CGF). In Malaysia, IOM and the Fair Labor Association collaborated with the CGF Secretariat to combat forced labour in select palm oil suppliers from Malaysia. The entities are supporting the implementation of interventions aimed at combatting forced labour and strengthen human rights due diligence systems. In addition, IOM convened a meeting in Malaysia of active stakeholders working on eliminating exploitation in the palm oil sector to discuss their planned efforts and to identify and avoid any potential duplication or overlap. IOM also supported the Government of Malaysia to join the Global Policy Network on Recruitment, which is a multilateral initiative to support information exchange and the sharing of good practices to promote the regulation of labour recruiters.

IOM's deepened engagement with industry-wide coalitions throughout the CREST initiative has helped to further position the Organization as an influential actor within these spaces. KIs with private sector companies and representatives from industry-wide coalitions suggest that there remain extensive opportunities for IOM to further engage with and even assume a greater leadership role at the industry-wide level, or even across industries, by pursuing synergies across its private sector partnerships and facilitating industry-wide dialogue with government actors to strengthen labour migration regulation. Indeed, some large private sector companies are showing interest in participating in industry-wide roundtables, suggesting that IOM can potentially play a larger role at encouraging its private sector partners to engage in industry-wide collaboration.

KIs have also suggested that there is some stakeholder fatigue among those companies that are most active within industry-wide coalitions and that they would like IOM to encourage SMEs to become more involved in industry-wide collaboration. In addition, stakeholders from existing industry-wide coalitions have suggested that IOM consider taking on more of a leadership role at encouraging collaboration in those industries where coalitions do not already exist such as construction, fisheries, rubber, etc. However, it is unclear to what extent this is a feasible suggestion given that IOM's mandate does not include developing private-sector industry-wide coalitions.

"We would like to see IOM take more of a leadership role in supporting industry-wide coalitions in those industries where coalitions aren't strong or don't yet exist like the construction, fisheries and rubber industries."

Quote from a private sector partner

Notwithstanding, there may be more strategic opportunities for IOM to scale-up its impact if it were to focus primarily on activities that span across industries as opposed to focusing on specific industries. As was found in the [CREST Fashion Final Evaluation](#), it is often very challenging if not impossible to design labour migration programming that is industry-specific due to the natural fluidity of labour migration. Working across industries could potentially help to facilitate economies of scale by reaching more migrant workers and support a more holistic and overarching approach towards the promotion and protection of the rights of migrant workers while upholding the UNGPs.

IOM also continued to strengthen its partnership with the MFA, which is a regional network of CSOs, associations and trade unions of migrant workers committed to the protection and promotion of the rights and welfare of migrant workers across Asia. Building on the MoU between IOM and MFA that was established during the first half of the CREST project, IOM worked with MFA to support CSOs that represent migrant workers by sharing CREST-specific tools and resources and by supporting direct service provision through in-kind and cash transfers to those migrant workers and their families most in need of assistance as a part of the project's COVID-19 relief work under Outcome 4 (see [Finding 7](#) for more information). This allowed IOM to reach high numbers of migrant workers working in various industries across countries. Collaboration with the MFA has also helped IOM to better understand the needs, perspectives and priorities of migrant workers so that they can be better integrated into future IOM labour migration programming.

Now that this strategic partnership has been established and collaboration has deepened, there is potential for IOM to further support migrant workers organizations in more strategic ways, going beyond direct relief assistance. Klls with CSOs and the MFA revealed that migrant workers organizations and CSOs that represent migrant workers have several needs that IOM could potentially support through future programming. Such actions could include supporting access to dialogue opportunities with governments and the private sector to articulate the needs, priorities and visions of migrant workers. Advocacy should target initiatives to influence the creation and implementation of government regulation to protect the rights of migrant workers as well

to strengthen government-owned remediation and access to justice initiatives. Potential avenues for advocacy could be explored through the GCM's Regional Network on Migration for Asia and the Pacific as well as ASEAN networks, or the Colombo or Bali Processes. Migrant worker organizations and CSOs representing migrant workers also identified a need for assistance to build their networks and membership base as well as to create platforms and opportunities where they can safely work, connect and provide support to each other. In a context where civil society space is shrinking across the region, this form of assistance is an increasingly important priority for CSOs representing migrant workers.

“Civil society spaces are shrinking across Asia and we need support to advocate for the needs and interests of migrant workers. We need to expand our membership base and have access to government dialogue.”

Quote from a CSO partner

7. IOM through CREST demonstrated excellent flexibility and adaptability in response to the COVID-19 pandemic by creating a new work stream focused on direct relief assistance to address the immediate pressing needs of migrant workers and their families as well as the restarting of safe labour migration after the pandemic.

In response to the challenges facing migrant workers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM through CREST worked with the Development Section of the Embassy of Sweden in Thailand to modify the project's structure to include a fourth outcome: *Migrant workers and their families impacted by COVID-19 are more resilient and have increased access to safe, orderly and regular labour migration during recovery.* The inclusion of this outcome into the project's structure allowed for IOM to meet the most pressing needs of migrant workers in crisis while reinforcing IOM's work under CREST's other outcome areas, namely with respect to supporting migrant worker access to remediation, generating, and disseminating data and research, and promoting safe migration practices.

Under this outcome, IOM provided in-kind and cash assistance to those migrant workers and their families who were most vulnerable and in need of support by targeting women-led migrant worker households, migrant workers with disabilities, and migrant workers who were particularly vulnerable to exploitation such as domestic workers. As of 31 December 2022, 12,796 migrant workers and their families (of which 3,523 were men, 5,482 were women, 261 were boys, 502 were girls and 1,800 where the gender breakdown was unavailable) received direct assistance against a target of 5,000. In 2022, IOM conducted a regional post distribution monitoring assessment across 10 countries, which revealed that the cash assistance was most commonly used to cover basic needs such as food (37%), as well as allowing recipients to invest in livelihoods (30%), access health care (12%) or access education (12%). The most common forms of in-kind assistance included food aid (26%) and items for business support (26%). The assistance to migrant workers and their families was provided through 30 CSOs and community-based organizations, including MFA members, against a target of 20. IOM's implementing partners were able to serve large numbers of migrants due to their own extensive networks and presence on the ground. These partnerships also allowed IOM to strengthen its own footprint, presence and profile within this space, creating relationships that have the potential to be strategically leveraged in the future.

Case study highlights from IOM's partnership with the CSO Human Aid Society Selangor (HASS) in Malaysia

Key results include:

- Strengthened partnership with a well-recognized partner who has a strong presence in the Malaysian ecosystem;
- Distributing 800 sets of food aid and 57 units of rental cash-based assistance to 250 households (1,261 direct beneficiaries);
- Increased capacity of HASS to engage with IOM and possibly other donors through project development and reporting capacity development interventions.

Key factors that facilitated the achievement of results:

- HASS proactively conducted monthly check-ins with beneficiaries to assess their needs and provided support based on the vulnerability as listed in the agreed-on criteria;
- Regular HASS-IOM coordination and catch-up calls;
- Strong capacity within HASS to comply with IOM procedures.



In addition, the CREST project's COVID-19 relief fund provided remediation support to 63 cases, representing 149 men and 90 women pursuing grievance mechanisms through State-based mechanisms. By December 2022, the 30 closed cases resulted in adequate remediation for 53 per cent of the assisted migrant workers, against a target of 50 per cent. In Hong Kong SAR, China and Thailand, approximately USD 37,000 in compensation had been paid out by employers, with a further USD 53,000 awarded and awaiting settlement.

Other work conducted under Outcome 4 included community outreach, country-level assessments on the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on migrant workers, their families and communities as well as the development of recommendations for all relevant stakeholder groups, including how private sector companies and government entities can further support migrant workers during and after the pandemic to promote restarting safe labour migration. IOM shared some of this information by hosting a virtual national-level dialogue session in the Philippines to launch three policy papers that discuss the reintegration of Filipino migrant workers. Following the forum, the Government of the Philippines led, with the support of IOM, a series of multi-stakeholder consultations to take stock of and identify gaps regarding reintegration policies in the Philippines.

8. The CREST initiative has generated several unexpected results.

The CREST initiative generated several effects that were not initially planned for as part of its project design. One of the unexpected positive results that was achieved was subsequent collaboration between partners who met through the CREST initiative. The climate change and migration research that CREST commissioned with the Stockholm Environment Institute brought together the institute and World Vision through CSO interviews conducted by the institute. This initial contact introduced the two parties and brought the theme of environmental rights to the forefront. As a result, the Stockholm Environment Institute and World Vision are now at the preliminary stages of exploring opportunities to pursue direct collaboration. Although a welcome result, CREST's results framework did not anticipate or plan for project partners to create synergies with each other and pursue collaboration that extends beyond the project scope or timespan.

Even when projects are well designed and achieve numerous positive results, it is still possible for their activities to be associated with some unexpected risk. The case study with the CSO HASS identified some risks to a handful of migrant workers in Malaysia during the project's COVID-19 response. The first unexpected risk emerged when an administrative delay caused a delay in cash transfers to migrant workers who needed to use the funds to pay for housing. These migrants expected the cash distribution

within a given timeframe and used the income they would otherwise put aside for rent for other purposes. However, the funds were eventually disbursed, and the migrant workers were able to pay their rent without any negative repercussions or risk of eviction.

A second unexpected risk also occurred in Malaysia to a small number of irregular migrant workers who reported feeling afraid of getting harassed, arrested or detained by the authorities when travelling to a pick-up centre where they could obtain their direct assistance. This is consistent with reports of immigration raids, detention and deportation at the height of the pandemic. While no actual harm came to any of the migrants when receiving direct assistance, IOM learned through this experience that irregular migrant workers may experience a heightened risk of harassment or detention if required to visit a pick-up centre. Where a risk to irregular migrant workers is perceived, house-to-house distribution may be preferable to reduce the need for beneficiaries to travel from their place of accommodation to receive aid packages.

5.3. EFFICIENCY

This section provides an assessment of the extent to which the CREST project delivered results in an economic and timely way, using efficient governance, management and implementation structures.

9. Overall, the CREST project has delivered results in a timely and efficient manner and has streamlined its administrative processes since the midterm evaluation. Reporting and administrative requirements, however, are complex and time-consuming for many of its partners, particularly CSOs that have limited resources.

KIIs and a review of project documents reveal that the CREST project has, overall, delivered results in a timely and efficient manner. The project experienced few delays and whenever it did, an extension was typically provided to implementing partners to facilitate the completion of their work. The Development Section of the Embassy of Sweden in Thailand also demonstrated flexibility in terms of the project's timeline to facilitate the achievement of results by providing a one-year extension to compensate for delays experienced because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, as previously outlined in the midterm evaluation, CREST's financial structure where private sector partners provided funding for direct services received under Outcome 2 helped to increase the project's overall financial efficiency.

In response to recommendations made in the midterm evaluation to further standardize the partnership development process to achieve increased efficiency, IOM made improvements during the second half of the project to streamline some of the administrative requirements involved in partnership development. Such improvements included using predefined templates and following established processes whenever possible throughout partnership development. IOM still requires all projects to follow standard project development and contracting procedures regardless of the type or size of partnership being developed. Hence, more flexibility to adjust processes to better align with the size and scope of partnerships could potentially further increase flexibility in future programming. Doing so could potentially include using more flexible and innovative partnership modalities based on a membership or annual fee structure.

While stakeholders largely appreciated IOM's flexible approach when working with private sector partners, as outlined in [Finding 7](#), some CSO stakeholders perceived IOM to have a limited degree of flexibility or willingness to engage in certain topics such as government advocacy and unionization. They also explained that IOM's administrative and reporting requirements were often difficult to understand and comply with, especially for small CSOs that have limited resources and staff personnel available to dedicate time to this type of compliance. In some cases, CSO partners working on Outcome 4 reached out to IOM to obtain additional guidance and support on how to comply with IOM standards. While IOM provided this support when requested, CSOs largely felt that the requirements were too stringent and burdensome, and that additional flexibility should be integrated into IOM administrative and reporting requirements when working with CSOs. In March 2023, IOM HQ developed instructions for Administering Financial Grants in IOM Operations (IN/287) and Implementing Partnerships Management Handbook (IN/288). These revisions are focused on reducing the administrative burden of working with implementing partners and will likely improve reporting requirements, particularly regarding financial reporting.

"IOM's reporting requirements, especially the financial reporting, were very complicated and hard to understand. We don't have the time to do this level of paperwork."

Quote from a CSO partner

5.4. POTENTIAL IMPACT

This section provides an assessment of the extent to which the CREST project's results are likely to contribute towards the project goal and have a lasting impact on the lives of migrant workers.

10. The CREST initiative has made an observable impact on the lives of migrant workers, particularly through providing remediation, direct services and safe migration outreach. Its systems-strengthening work with private sector companies and its knowledge generation and dissemination are also likely to generate important impacts in the future. At the same time, there remains room to achieve further impact through support for company policy implementation and changes in government regulation.

IOM through the CREST initiative was able to influence the lives of significantly more migrant workers than initially planned. Indeed, as of 31 December 2022, 220,472 migrant workers and their families had benefitted from CREST interventions against a target of 20,000. These beneficiaries include migrant workers who are employed by CREST's private sector partners that implement ethical recruitment measures as well as those migrant workers who were reached by the initiative's information, education and communication activities and through direct service provision in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

IOM's investments through the CREST project into systems-strengthening through its support to private sector companies to improve their policies and practices in line with the UNGPs and provision of extensive training to companies and their suppliers on the rights of migrant workers, fair and ethical recruitment and employment, and due diligence will have a lasting impact on the lives of currently employed as well as future migrant workers. Currently employed migrant workers will be working under company structures that are better designed to identify and remedy human rights abuses and that will provide stronger frameworks for protecting and promoting their rights. Future migrant workers will benefit from more ethical recruitment and due diligence processes that will likely result in fewer breaches of their human rights. In addition, the open-source knowledge products generated by IOM under the CREST project will serve as accessible and useful tools to continue systems-strengthening work in the future.

Some examples of improvements in the lives of migrant workers can be seen through FGDs that were held with migrant workers employed by one of CREST's private sector company partners in the electronics sector.¹³ The company implemented new policies and standard operating procedures with IOM's support to uphold the employer pays principle and improve working conditions among its employed migrant workers. These interviews revealed that while those migrants hired in 2019 paid a recruitment fee, interviewed migrants hired in 2023 did not. Indeed, interviewed migrants hired in 2023 stated that they did not pay any money for flights, medical screening, passport fees or for recruitment services. They also did not take out any loans to be hired. In addition, interviewed migrants who paid recruitment fees in 2019 had their fees reimbursed. Interviewed migrants also stated that their working and living conditions had improved since IOM started working with the company and that they now have more living space and are not forced to work overtime.

Virtual FGDs led by the evaluation team with employed migrant workers who participated in CREST-funded trainings on ethical recruitment reported sharing information on migrant worker rights and ethical recruitment standards with friends and family members in their countries of origin who are considering engaging in labour migration, therefore positively influencing the migration experience of future migrant workers. These migrant workers reported using text messages and social media platforms including Facebook and TikTok to share information on migrant workers' rights and safe migration practices. Many of the employed migrant workers who participated in FGDs explained that they had paid recruitment fees when initially migrating, thus reiterating the need for the promotion of ethical recruitment.

"I learned a lot about safe migration through the [IOM] training and then I shared this information with my friends who are thinking about migrating."

Quote from a migrant worker

¹³ These interviews were conducted by IOM staff remotely while the migrant workers were at their place of work. Interview questions were also provided to their employer in advance of the interview. While the employer and the workers stated that they had not been coached, it is impossible for IOM or the evaluation team to verify this. Migrant workers may have been less critical of their employer due to these circumstances.

The direct service provision in response to the COVID-19 pandemic provided by IOM through the CREST project directly impacted migrant workers when they most needed support. As explained in Finding 7, the provision of humanitarian relief assistance had a direct positive impact on the lives of 12,796 migrant workers and their families by helping them to meet their most pressing needs. However, in addition to meeting the immediate needs of migrant workers, IOM's post distribution monitoring assessment reported that 56 per cent of respondents were able to demonstrate that the assistance had left a medium or long-term positive impact on their socioeconomic status.

Moving forward, during KIIs, stakeholders from across stakeholder groups revealed a perception that future IOM programming could have the potential to generate even further impact in the lives of migrant workers if it were to include elements that were to further support private sector companies to implement policies and guidelines that are aligned with the UNGPs and the strengthening of government regulation to require recruiters, suppliers and private sector companies to respect the rights of migrant workers. As mentioned in Findings 2 and 5, private sector policy implementation and government regulation are important areas of migrant worker protection that remain to be strengthened within the migration, business and human rights landscape. However, initiatives that promote government regulation and private sector compliance have the potential to significantly influence international brands, their suppliers and recruiters, to respect migrant worker rights as well as to facilitate and empower migrant workers to engage in safe labour migration and to seek justice for any human rights abuses. Such initiatives ultimately have the potential for significant positive impact on the lives of migrant workers.

5.5. SUSTAINABILITY

This section provides an assessment of the extent to which the net benefits of the CREST initiative will continue or are likely to continue.

11. Recognition and validation by key stakeholders and partners along with increased strategic focus have well placed IOM to transition CREST from a project-orientated initiative towards that of longer-term and more sustainable programming within the sphere of migration, business and human rights.

As outlined in the [midterm evaluation](#), the CREST initiative included many project elements that were designed to promote the sustainability of results. However, the project did not specifically focus on supporting the capacity development of CSOs and organizations that represent migrant workers. Doing so is a necessary component to ensuring the sustainability of results since it is these organizations that will continue to push forward a migrant-centred perspective and advocate for the continued protection, respect and remedy of migrant worker rights in the business and human rights landscape once the project has come to an end. There also remains room to further engage with government stakeholders to strengthen regulation to better protect the rights of migrant workers. These are important systems-strengthening initiatives that stakeholders feel would be useful for IOM to consider in future migration programming.

As mentioned in [Finding 1](#), IOM's partners and stakeholders are increasingly recognizing the value-added of IOM's work within the business and human rights area. IOM's work with the private sector is also becoming increasingly strategic as its private sector partnerships deepen over time. These developments combined with lessons learned and the strong results achieved over the course of the CREST project place IOM in a strategic position to leverage and scale-up its migration programming within a business and human rights framework. IOM's private sector engagement work appears to be reaching a point where it is ready to transition from project-level engagement towards a more long-term sustainable programming approach. This position is also reflected in IOM's current efforts to develop a new Migration, Business, and Human Rights in Asia Programme that is intended to build on results achieved under the CREST project as well as results achieved under its other private sector programming. Notably, IOM missions in other regions that are outside of the geographical scope of the CREST project have demonstrated interest in designing interventions in migration, business and human rights.

Securing continued institutional funding and attempting to expand its donor base will be important for IOM to implement future programmes as well as to advance its future work with the private sector. The strategic work that has been highlighted in this evaluation, which includes advancing government regulation, promoting industry-wide private sector collaboration, engaging SMEs and strengthening the capacities of CSOs that represent migrant workers to be active change agents requires stable long-term institutional funding. If IOM's private sector work were to only rely on financial contributions from private sector companies, the Organization would not be able to engage in this kind of strategic work or to advance thought-leadership and stakeholder collaboration across the region. It is donors who enable IOM to leverage its comparative strengths to further advance the rights of migrant workers within a business and human rights context.

5.6. HUMAN RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY, AND ENVIRONMENT

This section provides an assessment of the extent to which gender equality, human rights, disability, accountability to affected populations, and environmental impact concerns were mainstreamed throughout the CREST project's design and implementation.

12. CREST is well structured around the UNGPs and uses human rights language and approaches throughout its work. During its second half, the project was increasingly able to support particularly vulnerable groups of migrant workers. However, there are more opportunities to further target vulnerable groups.

The CREST project is inherently designed around human rights principles, including those outlined in the UNGPs. It is also very well aligned with international human rights and migration priorities and frameworks, including the GCM. As the project continued to develop, it increasingly adopted human rights and business language and became more centred within a business and human rights framework, with the rights of migrant workers at the forefront. This development further strengthened the visibility of human rights across CREST programming.

The second half of the CREST initiative also saw an increase in programming focused on vulnerable groups of migrant workers, especially through CREST's direct service provision under Outcome 4. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM prioritized direct assistance for particularly vulnerable groups of migrant workers, including domestic workers, women-led migrant households, financially disadvantaged households, and migrant workers with disabilities, among others. By identifying and prioritizing these particularly vulnerable groups, IOM was able to further promote the principles of equity through its humanitarian response.

While these advancements are important, there remains room to further target vulnerable migrant workers throughout future IOM programming. The CREST project mainstreamed the principles of equity throughout its tools and products. However, apart from its COVID-19 humanitarian response, the project did not identify specific groups of vulnerable migrant workers who may have required special assistance and it did not develop specific tools and guidelines to help companies to better promote equity across their workforce or to support them in addressing the unique needs and priorities of subgroups of vulnerable migrant workers. While targeting particularly vulnerable groups of migrant workers was not explicitly an objective of the project, it is important for all United Nations programming to include an equity approach by working with vulnerable groups of rights holders to advance the United Nations principle of leaving no one behind, which is a cornerstone of the SDGs. Some vulnerable groups that were identified during the evaluation include migrant workers of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities; irregular migrant workers; migrant workers who require childcare support; migrant workers with disabilities and/or special health conditions; migrant workers who face particular discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, age or other characteristics; and migrant workers in destination countries who have limited formal or informal networks to support them. This is not an exhaustive list, and a dedicated study would need to be undertaken to identify subgroups of vulnerable migrant workers and to understand their most pressing needs and priorities. Moving forward, it is, of course, essential to first do no harm when working with vulnerable groups of migrant workers and this would include pursuing strategies that do not openly identify them or stigmatize them. At the same time, dedicated strategies to promote the rights of the most vulnerable migrant workers are essential to ensure that IOM programming advances equity and does not leave anyone behind as progress is made towards the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers.

13. The CREST initiative successfully mainstreamed gender equality principles throughout its work. There is considerable room for the initiative to further design and target its programming towards the promotion of gender equality.

CREST's gender mainstreaming was largely guided by the CREST Gender Strategy, which was developed in collaboration with the International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRRAW) Asia Pacific for the CREST project. IOM mainstreamed gender equality principles throughout the design and implementation of the CREST initiative in several ways. The Organization integrated gender equality principles throughout most of CREST's tools and knowledge products. For instance, IOM included gender-sensitive questions derived from the [Women's Empowerment Principles self-assessment tools](#) in the worker interview tool used as part of its [Labour Migration Process Mapping Guide](#) exercises and attempted to interview an equal number of women and men migrant workers. This helped CREST and private sector companies to better understand migrants' gendered experience of recruitment and employment, which include issues related to domestic responsibilities, provision of toilet facilities, sexual harassment and gender-based violence, among others. The exercise also included a review of documents such as recruitment policies, grievance mechanisms and employment contracts as well as interviews with corporate management to identify the extent to which gendered needs had been taken into consideration by companies. This methodology has allowed IOM to identify some gender-based

inequalities and gender-based discrimination such as pregnancy checks prior to recruitment or insufficient provisions for pregnant workers in accommodation facilities. The project also conducted some research studies such as the country-level COVID-19 assessments and a survey of migrant worker returnees in Viet Nam that included an examination of specific issues that women migrant workers face. It also produced a guidance document on addressing women migrant worker vulnerabilities in supply chains and an information sheet on gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities in supply chains with corresponding recommendations.

Gender-sensitive language can also be seen in CREST's results framework, and IOM collected and reported on gender-disaggregated data wherever possible. However, this information was often unavailable since many of CREST's private sector partners do not collect gender-disaggregated data. In addition, the project interventions took gender into consideration by trying to ensure that women migrant workers equally benefitted from the programme's initiatives. Such inclusion comprised inviting women migrant workers to participate in trainings, working in sectors where women migrant workers are well represented, and providing service provision and humanitarian support that targeted women migrant workers and their families. As mentioned in [Finding 12](#), women migrant workers were specifically targeted through CREST's COVID-19 response by supporting domestic workers and by targeting women-led migrant worker households. The CREST initiative also provided in some cases gender-disaggregated pre-departure orientation training sessions by dividing groups into women and men migrant workers and offering training to trainers on how to conduct gender-disaggregated training sessions.

While the CREST Gender Strategy is a useful document and includes excellent guidance on how to mainstream gender considerations into IOM's work with the private sector, the CREST project faced difficulties in fully implementing the concepts, as outlined in detail in the [CREST midterm evaluation](#). Indeed, the project did not specifically address inequality generated by unequal gender norms, roles or relations. For instance, it did not conduct stand-alone gender-specific studies to understand where gender discrimination is most prevalent throughout the migration process or how gender inequality may be exacerbated because of labour migration. The project also did not thoroughly examine the unique needs and priorities of migrants of all genders, including women migrant workers pre-migration, during migration, and upon return and design gender-responsive programming to better support them. For example, women migrant workers are often required to leave their children behind when migrating because of a lack of childcare options in the country of destination. This situation puts considerable strain on the women as well as their families and can even put children at risk in the countries of origin where they may not receive adequate care. It can also cause substantial stigma within the community against women migrant workers when they return from their migration experience, making reintegrating more challenging.



Labour migration process mapping of migrant workers from Thailand. © IOM Thailand 2019

While the CREST project provided some higher-level guidance to private sector actors on addressing women migrant workers' vulnerabilities in supply chains, there was ample space for the project to produce more practical tools that companies could use to be more responsive and proactive in addressing gender dimensions in their business operations. For instance, stakeholders mentioned in KII that it would be useful for CREST to support companies to understand how to prevent and remedy instances of sexual harassment in the workplace and to set up and implement remediation systems that promote gender equality.

Gaps in implementing the CREST Gender Strategy are also reflected in the CREST Gender Strategy Review that provides numerous recommendations on how to further strengthen CREST's gender responsive programming. Some of these recommendations include explicitly referencing gender specific vulnerabilities and inequalities experienced by men and women migrant workers in CREST project documents; placing a larger focus on advocating for women's empowerment as a vehicle to eliminating modern slavery; emphasizing gender-sensitive human rights due diligence and access to remedy since women face specific barriers in using grievance mechanisms; and supporting women migrant workers and women migrant worker-led groups/networks to engage with private sector partners.

IOM's engagement with groups who specialize in and advocate for gender transformation within labour migration spaces such as UN-Women and CSOs that represent women migrant workers was somewhat limited throughout the CREST initiative. Although these groups were consulted on the design of some of CREST's products such as the [Labour Migration Process Mapping Guide](#), there is considerable potential to strengthen the quality of IOM's gender equality work and achieve more meaningful gender equality results by deepening partnerships with these groups and further integrating their technical expertise and substantive inputs into the design of future migration programming. There is considerable scope to further empower women migrant workers by investing in the capacity development and advocacy power of CSOs that promote the rights of women migrant workers and working with government partners to design and implement policies that fight gender discrimination and promote fair and safe migration for women migrant workers and workers from across gender groups.

The gaps between what is outlined in the CREST Gender Strategy and what was implemented through CREST programming mainly stem from the fact that the Gender Strategy was developed after the project was designed and therefore the project design does not reflect many of the elements outlined in the strategy. It may also be due to limited knowledge among IOM staff regarding how to implement the strategy. Increased gender equality training to support IOM staff to implement the strategy may be required to strengthen their gender responsive programming capacity.

The gender mainstreaming efforts that IOM pursued through the CREST project reflected gender awareness but did not substantially contribute towards reducing gender inequality in meaningful ways. As a result, the CREST project can be considered gender sensitive according to the adapted WHO Gender Responsive Programming Scale prepared by the evaluation team, which is level 3 on a five-point scale with 5 being the most gender responsive. See [Annex II](#) for the full scale and its corresponding ratings and their definitions. Indeed, the CREST project had the potential to be more gender responsive by designing programming that was either gender specific (level 4) or gender transformative (level 5). Even if a project's primary objective is not focused on gender transformation, as was the case with the CREST initiative, its programming can still make substantial contributions towards reducing gender inequality and inequity if designed and implemented with gender responsiveness in mind. Indeed, stakeholders from across stakeholder groups expressed a desire for future IOM labour migration programming to be more gender specific or responsive.

14. The CREST project has produced important research on the nexus between business, migration and climate change. It is now well positioned to integrate these learnings into any future programming.

Through the CREST project, IOM has produced some important learnings and insights with respect to the nexus between business, migration and climate change. Specifically, the Organization commissioned a study conducted by the Stockholm Environment Institute to examine this nexus. Migration and climate change studies have typically been conducted in silos even though they are often elements of the same problem. In addition, the CREST initiative was able to add value to existing research by integrating the role of private sector businesses into this analysis.

The study assessed the role of the agricultural sector in the international labour migration, business and environment nexus across four key migration corridors: Cambodia and Myanmar to Thailand and Bangladesh and Indonesia to Malaysia. The study included interviews with stakeholders across the region and will produce findings and recommendations that will be soon publicly available to further inform IOM's programming priorities as well as the work of other migration and climate change actors across the region who are interested in further understanding how climate change, labour migration and business practices are interlinked and impact one another.

The most important preliminary findings from the study highlight that while economic drivers continue to be the determining factors shaping aspirations to migrate, the traditional economic drivers of migration have become increasingly intertwined with environmental drivers. One of the clearest links between the economic and environmental drivers of migration is debt due to crop failures, which in turn cause workers to migrate as a coping strategy. In addition, the study found that migration policies as well as the resources/skills of prospective migrants influenced their willingness to migrate. Of those who did migrate, the most vulnerable migrants who were often motivated to migrate due to climate challenges were more likely to work in irregular jobs which lacked regulation, leading to increased exposure to health risks as well as substandard living and working conditions. The study also found that climate change impacts are affecting migrant workers' productivity and earnings in the destination countries and that many of the industries that are least advanced in terms of meeting the UNGPs are the same ones that work in climate change driven areas such as agriculture and fishing.

Several opportunities have been identified through the Stockholm Environment Institute study for IOM to design future programming that can merge environmental rights and human rights to leverage the migration, business and climate change nexus. These include support at all stages of the migration process. For instance, there are opportunities prior to migration for IOM to support skills development or PDO training targeted towards professions, communities and migration corridors that are vulnerable to climate-linked migration.

There are also opportunities during migration to work with companies and migrant worker representatives to assess and mitigate the effects of climate change on migrant workers' living and working conditions. These could include mainstreaming climate change throughout tools and products such as by including questions in the [Labour Migration Process Mapping Guide](#) to identify how climate change realities have affected the migration experience of migrant workers. Tools provided to businesses such as the [Migrant Worker Guidelines for Employers](#) could also be revised to better identify and respond to unique challenges facing migrant workers who have migrated because of climate change and build the capacities of private sector actors to support migrant workers who migrate due to climate change.

Private sector companies also require support to better understand and create policies and mechanisms that can address their own contributions towards deepening the climate crisis and causing situations where workers are forcibly displaced due to climate change impacts. They also need tools and guidance to help them better support migrant workers during and after climate and natural disasters. Such considerations could include facilitating remittances and facilitating evacuation, repatriation and return, among others.

Upon return, there is also a need to integrate a climate-sensitive perspective into existing support mechanisms to facilitate reintegration and employment of returned migrant workers from professions and/or communities vulnerable to climate change. Migrants who engage in climate migration frequently have fewer migration options and are often unable to use their newly developed skills upon return to their countries of origin. They are therefore a particularly vulnerable subgroup of migrant workers who require targeted support and interventions.

SECTION VI: CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation presents three conclusions based on the analysis of the findings. The conclusions highlight the most important elements for consideration emerging from the evaluation and present a forward-looking discussion around the implications of the findings on the future of IOM programming.

Conclusion 1: IOM is well placed to leverage its comparative strengths to achieve expansion and scale-up within the migration, business and human rights landscape.

(Derived from findings 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 11 and 12)

Through the CREST project, IOM has demonstrated its added value in promoting the protection, respect and remedy of the rights of migrant workers within a business and human rights framework as well as its competitive edge at engaging private sector actors in this work. Due to the solid programming foundation that IOM has established through the CREST project as well as increasing appreciation among stakeholders and partners of IOM's contributions and added-value, the organization is well placed to scale-up results and further leverage its comparative strengths through future business and human rights programming that protects and promotes the rights of migrant workers in global supply chains.

The CREST project has shown that there is significant appetite among private sector actors to use IOM tools and resources to better align their practices with the UNGPs. Forging ahead, there is room to widen IOM's private sector partnership base, including engaging more SMEs that are major employers of migrant workers and who require significant support to meet the UNGPs into the programming sphere, as well as deepening existing partnerships to work on more complex issues such as implementation, compliance and remediation. As IOM moves to scale-up its work and tackle complex challenges such as supporting the development and implementation of government regulation 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 is also well placed to use its comparative strengths to integrate migration into the business and human rights ecosystem such as by bringing stakeholders together, convening and facilitating dialogue, and encouraging advocacy to promote increased government regulation to protect the rights of migrant workers as well as empowering migrant workers organizations to serve as organized advocates for the protection of migrant worker rights. Opportunities exist to advance these themes through further development of IOM's role as a thought-leader and by leveraging its partnerships with private sector actors. To make these important contributions, however, continued institutional funding from a diverse donor base will be necessary to ensure the viability and sustainability of IOM's strategic work in this area.

Conclusion 2: The CREST project was implemented using largely efficient practices and generated good cost-effectiveness. However, its 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 United Nations labour migration programming in the region.

(Derived from findings 3, 9, 10 and 11)

IOM implemented the CREST project by using largely efficient practices that drew on an innovative funding model where the private sector provided financial contributions to cover direct services delivered to them. Efforts made during the second half of the project to further standardize private sector partnership development processes also contributed to increased efficiency. However, IOM still uses a standard partnership development process regardless of the size or particularities of each partnership, which hinders quick and efficient partnership development with private sector companies.

In addition, the current administrative and reporting requirements that CSOs must follow when working with the IOM were perceived by CSOs as overly burdensome and a potential barrier for future CSO collaboration due to limited resources and capacities among CSOs to adhere to IOM's current requirements. If IOM wishes to continue working with CSOs that represent migrant workers, it may need to consider exploring ways in which its administrative and reporting requirements could become more flexible to facilitate CSO partnerships and collaboration. IOM appears to already be taking some action to simplify the administrative requirements and particularly financial reporting placed on implementing partners, which is an important step in the right direction.

While during the second half of the CREST project cycle, IOM increased its degree of collaboration with other United Nations entities working in the realm of migration, business and human rights across the Asia Pacific region, there remains a strong need to further synergize United Nations programming and to further bring the expertise of actors such as UN-Women, the ILO, UNDP and UNEP into future IOM programme design and implementation. IOM has numerous opportunities to enhance its labour migration programming by working more closely with other United Nations entities. For instance, ILO's technical labour laws expertise would likely be very useful when designing programming to support remediation; IOM could build on the results of UN-Women and the ILO Safe and Fair Programme as well as the contacts and partnerships that have been established to promote the rights of women migrant workers and their access to services across the region; there is room for IOM to work with UNEP to better integrate climate change considerations into its labour migration programming; and there are many opportunities to work with UNDP to further integrate migration issues into its ongoing business and human rights work across the region. Indeed, stronger collaboration and joint advocacy across United Nations entities will be necessary to achieve complex goals such as improvements in government legislation to better protect the rights of migrant workers.

Conclusion 3: 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 and integrate gender equality objectives and environmental priorities into the programming, which were identified as IOM cross-cutting priorities. IOM has the opportunity to incorporate these important elements into future programming such as the new Migration, Business, and Human Rights in Asia Programme.

(Derived from findings 13, 14 and 15)

IOM made concerted efforts to integrate the cross-cutting themes of human rights, gender equality and environment throughout the CREST initiative and was successful in doing so to varying degrees. With respect to human rights, as the CREST project evolved, it became increasingly placed within a business and human rights framework that provides an excellent structure for advancing IOM's future work with the private sector. By becoming more centred in a business and human rights narrative, IOM is now better positioned to continue promoting the rights of migrant workers in a business setting within a more formal conceptual structure and is in a good position to generate further synergies with other actors such as UNDP who is also promoting business and human rights. Indeed, collaboration with UNDP helped IOM to further position its work within this framework and strengthen the positioning of the rights of migrant workers within the framework.

With respect to gender equality, IOM used the CREST Gender Strategy as a guide to mainstream gender equality principles into the project design and implementation. While IOM was able to successfully mainstream gender equality principles throughout the CREST programme, its gender-equality focus fell short of what was outlined in the CREST Gender Strategy and did not contribute to the reduction of gender inequalities between migrant workers in a meaningful way. This shortcoming was likely because gender specialists were not meaningfully consulted during the design of the CREST initiative and partnerships were not formed with organizations working on gender transformation in the area of migration such as UN-Women.

With respect to environmental mainstreaming, IOM commissioned an important study through the CREST initiative to better understand the nexus between business, climate change and migration to add value to the current climate change / migration research, and to inform the design of future IOM labour migration programming. Several important findings and recommendations have emerged from this study that can be used to develop synergies between future business, migration and climate change work.

IOM is in a favourable position to strengthen the integration of cross-cutting themes into its future labour migration programming through its new Migration, Business and Human Rights in Asia Programme by engaging specialized United Nations agencies like the ILO, UN-Women, UNDP and UNEP in the programme design phase to integrate their technical knowledge into the results framework and programming strategies and to leverage any potential activities, partnerships and networks that these agencies can bring to the programme. These agencies are currently being consulted as part of the development of the new programme's theory of change.

SECTION VII: LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned are insights that contribute to institutional knowledge and that can be applied to similar initiatives in other contexts. This evaluation has identified the following lessons learned derived from the evaluation findings that inform both migration and private sector engagement work.

- ① **Factors that facilitate the success of private sector partnerships:** Private sector partnerships that were able to achieve the greatest results were typically those that were established with companies who had already committed to meeting the UNGPs and were willing to put pressure upon their suppliers to adhere to codes of conduct. However, some partnerships that were established without this initial level of commitment by the company towards the UNGPs adopted greater commitment and gradually embraced more transparency throughout the lifespan of the partnership, which facilitated the achievement of greater results, thus signalling that conditions for a successful partnership can also be cultivated over time. *(Derived from findings 1 and 4)*
- ② **Working with implementing partners under difficult circumstances:** Administrative and reporting requirements need to have built-in flexibility so that they can be used during special circumstances such as humanitarian responses and with implementation partners who may have limited administrative capacities. CSOs working with IOM under the CREST project as part of its COVID-19 response had difficulties meeting IOM's administrative and reporting standards due to constrained resources and capacities. *(Derived from finding 10)*
- ③ **Opportunities when programming 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, opportunities exist for future labour migration programming to address gender inequalities more meaningfully between groups of migrant workers through a more gender transformative approach. Future activities should be informed by gender-specific studies to understand where gender discrimination is most prevalent throughout the migration process or how gender inequality may be exacerbated. In addition, IOM could further support gender transformative approaches by empowering organizations 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 adhere to the UNGPs. *(Derived from finding 14)*
- ④ **Importance of donor funding in facilitating systemic-level change that supports the protection, respect and remedy of the human and labour rights of migrant workers:** While it is certainly important for private sector actors to demonstrate their engagement towards meeting the UNGPs by funding any direct support provided to them, it is also equally – if not more – important for IOM to receive sustained long-term institutional donor funding in order 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 SMEs in adhering to UNGPs since they employ a large share 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. *(Derived from findings 1, 2, 4, 6 and 11)*

SECTION VIII: BEST PRACTICES

- ① **Setting the foundation for strategic partnerships:** Offering tailored tools and support to stakeholders (including private sector companies, governments and CSOs) to address particular and targeted challenges of mutual interest through activities such as training and technical assistance is an excellent entry point to set the foundation for developing more strategic partnerships built on confidence and shared understanding that can then address more complex systemic challenges such as influencing government regulation to protect the rights of migrant workers and fostering cooperation and collaboration across private sector companies to further encourage and support companies to adhere to the UNGPs. The CREST project used tailored tools and support that included customized knowledge generation, training, as well as technical assistance to develop guidelines and operating procedures in order to engage governments and the private sector in the promotion and protection of the rights of migrant workers within a business and human rights framework. The initial engagements during the first half of the CREST project cycle allowed IOM to deepen its working relationships over subsequent partnership agreements. These evolving partnerships have the potential to further deepen and address even more complex challenges such as improving both government regulation and company policies and practices. *(Derived from findings 1, 2, 4 and 5)*
- ② **Leveraging direct assistance to generate new knowledge:** Direct assistance to rights holders can be used as a strategic tool to generate information on their needs and priorities that can then be used to further tailor future support. 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 realities facing migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This information 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. As opposed to simply offering direct service provision as a one-way interaction, IOM leveraged its position so that the benefits of the interaction flowed both ways, which then created additional benefits that will circle back to migrant workers. *(Derived from finding 7)*
- ③ **Engaging CSOs that represent migrant workers:** A primary factor that facilitated the success of providing direct assistance to migrant workers through CSO implementing partners was the level of internal capacity of the CSO partner. Indeed, as the case study of IOM's partnership with HASS found, HASS's strong internal capacity to comply with IOM procedures and effectively and efficiently reach a large number of migrant workers facilitated success under this outcome. At the same time, it was also worth engaging with CSOs whose internal capacity was less strong since this engagement allowed for IOM to expand its CSO network and build the foundation needed to provide capacity development support to CSOs representing migrant workers through its future labour migration work. *(Derived from finding 7)*
- ④ **Leveraging tools and resources through open-source platforms:** The CREST initiative produced tools, guidelines and knowledge products that are general enough to serve diverse private sector companies but that can also be adapted to the specific needs of each entity. By publishing them online free-of-charge through an open-source platform, IOM is promoting wide-scale usability of its products. *(Derived from finding 1)*



Tin Mar Win, one of 16 migrant health volunteers from Myanmar providing direct assistance to migrant workers impacted by COVID-19 in Thailand. © IOM Thailand 2022

SECTION IX: RECOMMENDATIONS

The following four recommendations are designed to strengthen future IOM programming. Each one includes an overall strategic recommendation followed by operational recommendations. Recommendations are presented in order of priority.

Recommendation 1: IOM should leverage the results achieved in the CREST initiative and its other private sector work to deepen and expand its private sector partnerships by engaging new private sector partners, including SMEs, as well as providing support to existing partners to implement policies, procedures and mechanisms to promote and protect the rights of migrant workers and to encourage compliance across their supply chains.

- Aligned with Conclusion 1
- Recommended timeline: As of 1 May 2023
- High urgency, medium difficulty, high impact
- Directed to IOM senior management

Rationale: IOM has demonstrated a comparative strength at engaging private sector actors to align their business practices with the UNGPs and at promoting the rights of migrant workers within a business and human rights framework. With well-established partnerships with private sector companies and insightful learnings generated by the CREST project, IOM is well placed to further leverage and scale-up its work with the private sector to address more complex challenges with existing partners and to expand its partnership base.

Operationalize this recommendation by:

- Continuing to expand IOM's private sector partnerships by engaging new companies and suppliers, including SMEs that are major employers of migrant workers and require support to align their practices with the UNGPs.
- Deepening existing relationships with private sector partners by further customizing existing tools to suit different industries and types of enterprises; developing tools and providing targeted capacity development support to companies to help them to implement policies and guidelines across their supply chain; developing tools and guidance to help companies to establish enforcement mechanisms especially among tier 2 and 3 suppliers; and supporting the setting up and implementation of remediation systems that are accessible to all migrant workers, including women and migrant workers of all genders, and responsive to their unique needs and priorities.
- Continuing to invest in further positioning IOM as a thought-leader on issues relating to migration, business and human rights. Doing so could include developing a more formal protocol for disseminating tools and information and creating a strategic plan to leverage IOM's knowledge and role as a thought-leader.
- Expanding IOM's programming to further serve the needs of migrants who have engaged in labour migration by means of irregular channels or who migrated through regular channels and then later became undocumented by partnering with CSOs that represent these workers to ensure that their unique needs and interests are included in government and private sector initiatives that promote and protect the rights of all migrant workers.
- Continuing exploring donor diversification for future migration, business and human rights programming to promote its long-term sustainability. Potential donors could include but would not be limited to: the European Union, who will be interested in supporting the implementation of its forthcoming EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (EU CSDD); the governments of Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand, and, who are interested in regional stability and sustainable development; and the governments of Denmark, Finland and Norway, who are typically interested in funding initiatives that support human rights.

Recommendation 2: IOM should design future programming that includes a strong focus on convening and facilitating stakeholder dialogue and cooperation, especially initiatives that support private sector partners to engage with other key stakeholders and that empower migrant worker organizations to pursue advocacy and work together to address common challenges such as government regulation to promote the rights of migrant workers.

- Aligned with Conclusion 1
- Recommended timeline: As of 1 May 2023
- High urgency, medium difficulty, high impact
- Directed to IOM senior management

Rationale: As a United Nations agency, IOM has a comparative strength in bringing stakeholders together and facilitating dialogue and cooperation to further advance the rights of migrant workers within a migration, business and human rights context. Due to IOM's strong partnerships with private sector actors, the Organization is also in a good position to support private sector actors to collaborate with other stakeholders to achieve larger goals such as improving government regulation to protect the rights of migrant workers. CSOs who represent the voices of migrant workers also need to be present in this work and require capacity development support to effectively advocate for the interests of migrant workers. IOM has developed good relationships with CSOs through the CREST project that can be further developed and leveraged to achieve more impactful results.

Operationalize this recommendation by:

- Supporting existing multi-stakeholder dialogue mechanisms such as the United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights, the IOM Global Policy Network on Ethical Recruitment; the Bali Process, the Colombo Process and the ASEAN dialogue processes to bring together private sector partners with government representatives and migrant worker organizations and encourage dialogue and collaborative work regularly to advance specific challenges related to the promotion and protection of the rights of migrant workers, including the creation and implementation of government regulation.
- Supporting capacity development and advocacy efforts among CSOs who represent migrant workers to influence the development and implementation of government regulation to better protect the rights of migrant workers.
- Taking a leadership role in facilitating private sector collaboration with other stakeholders to advance goals of mutual interest with respect to promoting the rights of migrant workers within a human rights and business context, which could include the strengthening of industry-wide private sector coalitions and their engagement with CSOs and government actors.
- Facilitating collaboration among private sector actors, CSOs and government entities to further strengthen the quality and accessibility to migrant workers of state-based and non-state-based mechanisms that offer remedy to migrant workers as well as facilitating access to justice among migrant workers by supporting the capacity development of organizations that advocate for migrant worker justice.

Recommendation 3: IOM should modify its administrative and reporting requirements to facilitate greater collaboration with a wide variety of stakeholders, including CSOs and the private sector, and should further invest in strengthening collaboration with other United Nations agencies as well as other actors working on migration, business and human rights across the Asia Pacific region.

- Aligned with Conclusion 2
- Recommended timeline: As of 1 May 2023
- Medium urgency, low difficulty, medium impact
- Directed to IOM senior management

Rationale: To achieve more impactful outcome-level results, IOM will need to increase its collaboration with other actors working on migration, business and human rights across the Asia Pacific region such as CSOs and other United Nations entities who can support IOM's work through their specialized skillsets and extensive stakeholder networks.

Operationalize this recommendation by:

- Integrating more flexibility into IOM's standard administrative and reporting procedures to facilitate better collaboration with CSOs, private sector actors and other stakeholders who may have limited capacities and/or resources or who may require more flexible arrangements.

- Exploring the use of innovative partnership engagement modalities such as a membership- or fee-based model.
- Conducting a strategic partnership mapping exercise that identifies the key actors working on issues related to migration, business and human rights in Asia Pacific as well as their strengths, weaknesses and potential added value to future IOM programming.
- Continuing to simplify and streamline the partnership development process to easily engage private sector and CSO partners of varying partnership sizes and engagement types.
- Increasing collaboration and/or form formal partnerships where feasible with those United Nations entities working most on migration, business, and human rights in Asia Pacific that would likely include UNDP, the ILO, and UN-Women to share expertise and stakeholder networks as part of efforts to work jointly towards higher-level outcome results.

Recommendation 4: IOM should consult with and engage key stakeholders in the design of any future Migration, Business and Human Rights programming to encourage strategic interventions that meet the needs and priorities of stakeholders and that can leverage synergies across actors.

- Aligned with Conclusion 3
- Recommended timeline: To begin immediately
- High urgency, low difficulty, high impact
- Directed to IOM senior management

Rationale: Wide external stakeholder consultation and collaboration during both the design and implementation phases of a programme typically strengthens the programming framework by capturing important needs, priorities and challenges facing rights holders and other stakeholders, as well as by adding value to the programme design by drawing on the expertise of programme stakeholders and partners.

Operationalize this recommendation by:

- Holding extensive consultation sessions with key stakeholders (including other United Nations entities; CSOs who represent the interests of migrant workers including the MFA and women-led organizations; private sector partners, and government partners) to identify needs, priorities and strategic inputs when designing future migration, business and human rights programming.
- Setting up mechanisms that keep key stakeholders involved in implementing future programming in order to capture their inputs and make any necessary modifications to the programme design throughout the course of its implementation.
- Drawing on the experiences and expertise of key stakeholders such as UN-Women and women’s organizations to create a more gender transformative programming framework as opposed to one focused on simply gender mainstreaming. Future programming should attempt to implement the recommendations made through the CREST Gender Strategy Review that include:
 - Explicitly referencing gender-specific vulnerabilities and inequalities experienced by men and women migrant workers in project documents;
 - Placing a larger focus on advocating for women’s empowerment as a vehicle to eliminating modern slavery;
 - Emphasizing gender-sensitive human rights due diligence and access to remedy since women face specific barriers in using grievance mechanisms;
 - Supporting women migrant workers and women migrant worker-led groups/networks to engage with private sector partners.
- Continuing to work with key stakeholders such as UNDP when designing future private sector programming to further situate programming within a business and human rights framework by ensuring programme alignment with key UNGP concepts and terminology and by aligning future IOM activities with ongoing business and human rights work across the region.
- Consulting with UNEP and other specialized environmental organizations to identify the best entry points for IOM to pursue to further support migrant workers who are forcibly displaced due to climate change impacts. Some potential entry points include:
 - Supporting skills development or PDO trainings targeted towards professions, communities and migration corridors that are vulnerable to climate-linked migration.

- Mainstreaming climate change considerations into IOM’s existing tools and resources to support private sector actors in identifying and addressing labour and human rights risks exacerbated by climate change throughout their supply chains. Doing so could include adding questions to the Labour Migration Process Mapping Guide to identify how climate change realities have affected the migration experience of migrant workers as well as revising the Migrant Worker Guidelines for Employers to better identify and respond to unique challenges facing migrant workers who have migrated as a result of climate change and build the capacities of private sector actors to support migrant workers who migrate due to climate change.
- Integrating climate migration considerations into IOM’s future work on remedy to ensure that migrant workers who are forcibly displaced due to climate change impacts and who are particularly at risk of exploitation have access to justice and remediation mechanisms.
- Supporting governments to develop and implement legislation and policies that include a focus on protecting the rights of migrant workers forcibly displaced due to climate change. Developing tools and guidance to help private sector companies understand their own contributions towards deepening the climate crisis and how this affects migrant workers as well as how to better support migrant workers during and after climate and natural disasters.

ANNEX I: KEY FINDINGS FROM CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: Private sector partnership between IOM and a global garments and footwear manufacturer

KEY RESULTS THAT WERE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE PARTNERSHIP

- At the beginning of the partnership, IOM supported the company to update its employment guidelines on ethical recruitment and treatment of migrant workers, which incorporated the company's new policy on zero recruitment fees for migrant workers.
- In 2017, IOM developed a training package on forced labour and the risk to migrant workers for the company. IOM also conducted a training of trainers with the company's trainers, who were then able to roll out the training to the company's tier 2 suppliers in the local language. Nearly 100 suppliers from Viet Nam, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, and the People's Republic of China were reached.
- IOM and the company signed a subsequent partnership agreement to further their collaboration. As part of this agreement, IOM developed a comprehensive, gender-sensitive ethical recruitment due diligence toolkit for the company based on the company's Workplace Standards and Migrant Worker Employment Guidelines as well as the IOM IRIS Standard on ethical recruitment. A total of 250 company suppliers now have access to this toolkit.
- IOM also developed a gender-sensitive pre-migration orientation programme for migrant workers employed by the company's suppliers that helps educate migrant workers about their human and labour rights during their recruitment and deployment, employment and return home.
- IOM and the company also sought to address some of the practical challenges associated with implementing the employer pays principle of recruitment, which included addressing the lack of knowledge and capacity of many labour recruiters in adhering to ethical recruitment principles. As a first step, IOM and the company identified and engaged the main labour recruiters that were supporting company suppliers from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. They then provided training to these labour recruiters on ethical recruitment and the company's Code of Conduct. In total, more than 40 labour recruiter representatives received training.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM conducted a survey with employers to assess the impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers. IOM then developed detailed guidance and supporting tools for employers to help them protect the rights of migrant workers during the pandemic. The company played an important role in promoting IOM's guidance and tools with its suppliers and the industry more broadly.
- IOM and the company also worked together to promote greater collaboration between business enterprises in the garment, textiles, and footwear industry. For instance, in 2019 and 2020, IOM and the company joined forces with the Fair Labour Association, as well as Puma and New Balance, to carry out an assessment of recruitment practices and working conditions for migrant workers in the natural rubber value chain. The project engaged over 40 suppliers in Viet Nam, ranging from footwear manufacturers, component suppliers, traders, intermediaries, rubber processors, private plantations and smallholder farmers.

FACTORS THAT FACILITATED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

- The company already had a commitment in place that demonstrated strong interest and buy-in prior to the IOM partnership through the Modern Slavery Outreach Programme (established in 2016). The partnership with the company and IOM through CREST was established in 2017.
- The partnership included work that engaged tier 1 and 2 suppliers where the company faces higher human rights risks.

Case Study 1: Private sector partnership between IOM and a global garments and footwear manufacturer (continued)

- Knowledge generation through IOM's labour migration process mapping methodology helped the company to focus its work in those geographic regions where it can have the most impact in terms of reducing human rights risks.
- The company is willing to be recognized as an IOM partner and is interested in taking an industry-wide leadership role (this reflects the importance of sharing results and committing to transparency).

WHAT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE AND WHERE ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER COLLABORATION?

- Mechanisms need to be put in place that ensure compliance across suppliers and recruiters. So far, the focus has been placed primarily on improving knowledge and sharing information across suppliers and recruiters but companies also need to be able to put in place enforcement mechanisms.
- There is some potential for IOM to leverage the company's commitment towards upholding the UNGPs, its willingness to embrace transparency and visibility, and its interest in building industry-wide collaboration to work towards advocating among governments for improved government regulation. This would create a more even playing field across private sector companies and would help the company to enforce compliance among suppliers and recruiters.
- Moving forward: IOM and the company plan to engage the company's suppliers to carry out human-rights due diligence on their business operations and supply chains in line with the European Commission's forthcoming [EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive](#).
- IOM and the company will continue to promote good practices at the industry level and support access to resources and tools for medium and small enterprises with less advanced management systems used to recruit and employ migrant workers.

KEY INSIGHTS GENERATED THROUGH INTERVIEWS WITH MIGRANT WORKERS WORKING FOR THE COMPANY'S SUPPLIERS LOCATED IN ASIA

- IOM supported the company to map migrant worker populations across all its tier 1 and tier 2 strategic suppliers to identify priority geographical areas for addressing risks related to fair and ethical recruitment to determine where its direct impact could be the greatest. The following key information emerged from FGDs held between the evaluation team and migrant workers working for company suppliers in a location in Asia.
 - All the migrant workers interviewed had to pay recruitment fees. For the Vietnamese workers, these fees were never repaid by the recruiters.
 - Migrant workers have an increased understanding of how to avoid paying recruitment fees as well as their rights and are sharing this information with other migrant workers or potential migrant workers in their home countries through cell phone messaging and social media platforms such as Facebook and TikTok.
 - Migrant workers state that they are happy with their relationship with their employer. They could not identify a marked difference in their working or living conditions since the start of the CREST project.

Case Study 2: IOM's partnership with the CSO HASS

KEY RESULTS THAT WERE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE IOM – HASS PARTNERSHIP:

- A total of 800 sets of food aid and 57 units of rental cash-based assistance were distributed benefitting 250 households (1261 direct beneficiaries).
- IOM strengthened a civil society partnership with a well-recognized partner that has a strong presence in Malaysia.
- HASS strengthen their capacity to engage with IOM (and possibly other donors) through capacity-building interventions including project development and reporting.

FACTORS THAT FACILITATED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS:

- HASS proactively conducted monthly check-ins with beneficiaries to assess their needs and provided support based on the vulnerability as listed in the agreed-on criteria.
- Regular HASS-IOM coordination and catch-up calls.
- Strong capacity within HASS to comply with IOM procedures.

CHALLENGES FACED BY IOM AND HASS:

- Internally, the IOM mechanism of processing and releasing the funds was slow, which caused a one-month delay in implementing the food aid and rental aid. This unforeseen delay put the beneficiaries in need of rental aid once again at risk of being evicted.
- Externally, partners reported that police surveillance and harassment towards irregular migrants are increasing. Beneficiaries shared that they were afraid of being detained while on their way to the HASS centre to receive food aid.

WHAT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE AND WHERE ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER COLLABORATION?

- HASS has expressed an interest to continue providing food aid for undocumented migrant communities in various places in the same region of Selangor/Kuala Lumpur

ANNEX II: GENDER ASSESSMENT SCALE

The WHO Gender Responsive Assessment Scale categorizes programming into five categories according to the extent to which it addresses gender inequalities. The scale ranges from Level 1 Gender Unequal Programming to Level 5 Gender Transformative Programming. The evaluators have adapted the scale to be applicable to non-health-specific programming. This assessment scale provides a useful framework to understand the transformational aims of the CREST Project and was used by evaluators to guide the gender-equality assessment of the initiative. The evaluators used this gender responsive programming assessment scale to conduct a detailed assessment of the ways in which the project was designed and implemented to be truly gender transformative and any gaps or weaknesses towards this effort.

Gender Responsive Programming Assessment Scale

Level 1	Gender-unequal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Perpetuates gender inequality by reinforcing unbalanced gender norms, roles and relations – Perpetuate patriarchal system and infrastructure – Often leads to one gender enjoying more rights or opportunities than the other
Level 2	Gender-blind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ignores gender norms, roles and relations that are that influence differently among gender groups – Very often reinforces gender-based discrimination – Ignores differences in opportunities and resource allocation for different gender groups – Often constructed based on the principle of being “fair” by treating everyone (regardless of gender) the same
Level 3	Gender-sensitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Considers gender norms, roles and relations – Does not address inequality generated by unequal gender norms, roles or relations – Indicates gender awareness, although often no remedial action is developed
Level 4	Gender-specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Considers gender norms, roles and relations for all gender groups and how they affect access to and control over resources – Considers needs of different gender groups – Intentionally targets and benefits a specific gender group to achieve a certain policy or programme goals or meet certain needs – Makes it easier for people to fulfill duties that are ascribed to them based on their gender roles
Level 5	Gender-transformative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Considers gender norms, roles and relations for all gender groups and that these affect access to and control over resources – Considers the specific needs of people from different gender groups – Addresses address structural barriers to gender equality – Includes ways to transform harmful gender norms, roles and relations – The objective is often to promote gender equality – Includes strategies to foster progressive changes in power relationships among different gender groups

ANNEX III: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

Stakeholder group	Women	Men	Total
Migrant Workers	21	18	39
Civil Society Organizations	15	3	18
Government Officials	1	1	2
CREST and IOM Staff	7	2	9
Other UN Staff	1	2	3
Donor	2		2
Private Sector Partners	5	1	6
Research Institute	1	1	2
Industry and Employer Associations	1	2	3
TOTAL	54	30	84

ANNEX IV: LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Title	Author	Publication Date
Project Proposal: Asia: Enhancing Corporate Responsibility In Eliminating Slavery And Trafficking In Asia	IOM	30 Aug 2017
Project Proposal: Asia: Enhancing Corporate Responsibility In Eliminating Slavery And Trafficking In Asia	IOM	9 Apr 2019
Project Proposal: Enhancing protection of migrant workers in Asia impacted by COVID-19 under IOM's regional CREST Project	IOM	1 Jul 2021
Final Inception Phase Report to the Development Section of Embassy of Sweden in Thailand CREST Project	IOM	30 Sep 2018
Interim Report to the Development Section of Embassy of Sweden in Thailand (Year 1) CREST Project	IOM	28 Nov 2018
Interim Report to the Development Section of Embassy of Sweden in Thailand (Year 2) CREST Project	IOM	29 Nov 2019
Interim Report to the Development Section of the Embassy of Sweden in Thailand (Year 3) CREST Project	IOM	30 Nov 2020
Interim Report to the Development Section of the Embassy of Sweden in Thailand (Year 4) CREST Project	IOM	30 Nov 2021
Interim Report to the Development Section of the Embassy of Sweden in Thailand (Year 5) CREST Project	IOM	31 May 2022
IOM GENDER EQUALITY POLICY 2015–2019 (C/106/INF/8/Rev.1)	IOM	19 Nov 2015
IOM PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY 2016–2020 (C/106/INF/16)	IOM	18 Sep 2015
Continuity of Monitoring and Evaluation Interventions during COVID-19	IOM	8 Apr 2020
Sustaining And Scaling Private Sector Engagement To Protect Migrant Workers (S/27/3)	IOM	14 Sep 2020
IOM CREST Regional Stakeholder Engagement Strategy	IOM	1 Sep 2018
Midterm Evaluation of the CREST Project.	IOM and UPENDO Consulting Inc.	21 Jul 2021-07
Management response to IOM CREST Mid-Term Evaluation	IOM	13 Sep 2021
Anonymized Findings from Interviews with Migrant Workers	IOM	N/A
Internal Migration in Southeast Asia An initiative to better understand migrants' experiences and develop inclusive policy responses	UNESCO, UNDP, IOM, and UN Habitat	19 Feb 2022
Strategy for Sweden's regional development cooperation with Asia and the Pacific Region in 2022–2026 (UD2021/)	Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs	16 Dec 2021
Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020: Assessing Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (ST/ESCAP/2801).	United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	2020
The Montreal Recommendations on Recruitment: A Road Map towards Better Regulation	IOM	2020
CREST Gender Strategy Review	IOM	2023
CREST Theory of Change Review	IOM	2023
CREST post distribution monitoring report	IOM	2022
IOM Adidas Case Study	IOM	2022



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