



Mid-Term Evaluation of the Western Hemisphere Regional Migration Program

Final Report

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Acronyms

AMHON	The Association of Municipalities of Honduras
CARICOM	The Caribbean Community
CEPREDENAC	<i>Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres en América Central y República Dominicana</i>
C4D	Communication for Development
CMM	Municipal Migrant Centers
CO	Country Office (IOM)
CoM	Chief of Mission (IOM)
CONATT	Coalition against Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons
CONRED	The National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (Guatemala)
COPECO	<i>Comisión Permanente de Contingencias (Honduras)</i>
CORETT	<i>Coalición Nacional contra el Tráfico Ilícito de Migrantes y la Trata de Personas (Costa Rica)</i>
CS	Civil Society
CSOs	Civil Society Organization
DGME	<i>Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería</i>
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
EU	European Union
FEPADE	<i>Fundación Empresarial para el Desarrollo Educativo (El Salvador)</i>
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
IIEFFORD	Foreign Relations Training Institute (El Salvador)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International non-governmental organization
INM	<i>Instituto Nacional de Migración</i>
IRM	Integrated Response to Migration Program
MICIC	Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative
MIDAS	Migration Information and Data Analysis System
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MiGOF	Migration Governance Framework
MTE	Mid-Term evaluation
MTSS	<i>Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social (Costa Rica)</i>
OCAM	<i>Comisión Centroamericana de Directores de Migración</i>
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
OIG	Office of the Inspector General (IOM)
PDDH	<i>Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (El Salvador)</i>
PGR	<i>Procuraduría General de la República (El Salvador)</i>
PPM	<i>Policía Profesional de Migración (Costa Rica)</i>
PNC	<i>Policía Nacional Civil</i>
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, United States Department of State
RCM	Regional Conference on Migration
RD	Regional Director
RO	Regional Office
RTS	Regional Thematic Specialist
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGJD	Secretariat of Governance, Justice and Decentralization (Honduras)
SNM	<i>Servicio Nacional de Migración (Panamá)</i>
SICA	The Central American Integration System
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VNR	Voluntary National Reviews

Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the external mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Western Hemisphere Regional Migration Capacity Building Program (WHP), funded by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). The evaluation was completed by a team of four consultants¹ from the Owl RE evaluation and research consultancy, based in Geneva, Switzerland. It was completed remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions from June to September 2021.

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

The evaluation covered the four pillars of the WHP focusing on selected outputs.² They measured the relevance of the project for the stakeholders, the coherence with other initiatives, the effectiveness of the program, how well cross-cutting themes of human rights and gender were mainstreamed, and how sustainable the desired effects were or could be.

The evaluation findings are based on the data and information collected through a document review of all relevant material provided by the WHP, as well as 125 semi-structured interviews with IOM staff and key stakeholders, conducted remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings

Relevance: The evaluation found that program activities were relevant in all countries covered with degrees of relevance varying according to regions and thematic areas. Strengths were noted in WHP's ability to reinforce government capacities in migration management and policy development. Activities recognized as most relevant were those along borders with high migrant passage, paired with strong collaboration among countries involved. The COVID-19 pandemic had further shown the relevance of WHP. Challenges with relevance were seen more in the Caribbean region where authorities largely perceived migration issues as less of a priority compared to the Central American region.

Coherence: Coherence between the different activities within the four WHP pillars and coordination among countries was in general seen as positive. Coordination among countries was highlighted for activities linked to cross-border initiatives, communications campaigns, topics such as human trafficking, as well shared meetings coordinated through regional networks such as the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM).³ Several respondents also noted a need for improvement in the adaptation of activities to the specific country contexts.

¹ The evaluation team included Geneva-based consultants Patricia Goldschmid (team leader) and Glenn O'Neil as well as El Salvador-based consultants Estela Garcia Montalvan and Enrique Garcia Hidalgo.

² These outputs were prioritized by the regional coordination of the WHP and in coordination with the donor.

³ Conferencia Regional sobre Migración

Some feedback also referred to potential improvements to the collaboration among the four pillars within countries and across the region.

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

Sustainability: The likelihood of sustainability of results differed for each WHP pillar and the types of activities. While results achieved were seen as having the potential to continue once external support ceased, this evaluation could not identify an explicit exercise carried out by WHP to identify the outcomes, services, and prerequisites to sustain the intended and changed outcomes of the program. IOM staff and stakeholders thought more emphasis could be placed on assessing the elements necessary to sustain outcomes, both at the project design and implementation phases. The necessary preconditions did not currently exist for an overall phase-out or exit strategy for the large majority of WHP activities. The conclusion of the current three-year funding period would be an opportunity to assess for which activity streams a phase-out/exit strategy could be envisaged.

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

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, this evaluation concludes that WHP has made good progress towards achieving its objectives in Phases X and XI. This implementation period faced considerable challenges, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, WHP was able to adapt to the global challenge rapidly and in a flexible manner. At the same time, the evaluation found that a number of aspects of WHP could be further optimized, and even greater results seen for the final year of the three-year funding period and for the future, as delineated in the following seven recommendations. These recommendations are based on the assumption that WHP will secure funding for another three-year period upon conclusion of the current three years in September 2022.

A) Strategic re-adjustment of WHP: Given the progress to date and moving into the final year of this three-year funding period, it is considered a fitting moment to reflect on where WHP has seen achievements, where not and why. This would require a deeper analysis to reassess priorities and needs in the final year and what will need to shift to the next three-year period (providing funding is secured). This could also be an opportunity to further align WHP's priorities with the evolving priorities of the countries and the donor.

- **Recommendation:** In Phase XII (October 2021 to September 2022), WHP should launch a strategy reflection process to understand how its current priorities are being achieved, to what extent they meet the needs of the countries and what gaps need to be addressed. This should be a “bottom-up” approach involving governments and migration actors at the country-level (in addition to regional structures). It will also allow the program to “match” these findings against the existing and new priorities of both the donor and IOM's global strategic direction. As a result, a solid analytical basis could be established for a new WHP strategy anticipated from October 2022.

B) Program design and delivery to encourage sustainability: The experiences gathered in Phases X and XI, together with the program's previous ten years provide insights into how activities can be designed and delivered to positively influence sustainability. Examples identified include:

- Capacity building training established through written agreements and integrated into existing processes as seen with WHP training integrated into existing training courses, embedded directly within national institutions.
- Capacity building involving creating processes and mechanisms, such as cross-border initiatives or support for combatting human trafficking, based on policies and guidelines, and also embedded directly within national institutions.
- A greater integration of civil society organizations and other international and national organizations, as well as diaspora groups active in migration issues in the design phase would also develop a greater ownership and consequent sustainability. Implementing hybrid solutions for the coordination and implementation of activities, or for more challenging activities such as information services for migrants.
- Finally, program design and implementation could seek even greater complementarity with the programs that cover the full migration spectrum, from root causes to reintegration.

Recommendation: In the design of the next three-year period (Phases XIII, XIV, XV), consider further how sustainability could be increased through approaches such as:

- Ensuring that WHP capacity building is integrated into existing institutions and their capacity building workplans.
- Processes and mechanisms supported by WHP are anchored in government policies and procedures (where existing).
- Greater involvement of civil society and migration actors in the design phase.
- Adapting projects and activities for hybrid solutions (i.e., online or combination online/in-person) where appropriate.

- Further complementarity with programs that cover the full migration spectrum, from root causes to reintegration.

C) Plan for some phase-out strategies: The evaluation found that for many WHP activities, it is still relatively early to put in place phase-out or exit strategies. Nevertheless, for the next three-year period, certain activities could be identified, notably for Pillars 1 and 2 where a phase-out/exit strategy could be imagined, for example where a policy, process or mechanism is well integrated within institutions.

- **Recommendation:** In the design of the next three-year period, assess activities for the possibility of putting in place phase-out/exit strategies, notably for some activities of Pillars 1 and 2.

D) Moving to three-year planning: The move to a three-year planning period was viewed very positively by IOM staff and external stakeholders and provided stability and a long-term vision for WHP. At the same time, for the WHP teams in Country Offices (COs) and at the regional level, it did not significantly change their workload on planning and reporting as both were still required on an annual basis. A move towards three-year planning minus the annual exercises would therefore be welcome.

- **Recommendation:** With the validation of the donor, PRM, maintain a three-year planning period while eliminating annual planning/reporting but keeping quarterly reporting that provides the necessary updates for management and the donor.

E) Improving Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): While the M&E system was seen as effective in monitoring progress and fulfilling reporting requirements, it was also reported as cumbersome to use and created a considerable workload for WHP teams (both the tool and the meetings required), as well as lacking a focus on learning. This evaluation would propose a series of modifications to the M&E system, some that could be introduced in Phase XII and others introduced in the next three-year period.

- **Recommendation:** For consideration in Phase XII:
 - Eliminate compulsory internal monthly reporting and maintain quarterly and annual reporting.
 - Review the monthly M&E and coordinators telephone update meeting schedules and consider a two-to-three-month schedule rather than monthly.
 - Review the virtual update format to include less time with COs providing activity updates and more time spent on challenges faced, lessons learnt and good practices.
 - Proactively ask WHP teams in COs on which themes they would like more *and* less exchanges.
 - Further refine the baselines and indicators of the results matrix for Phase XII; instead of using a “0%” baseline for capacity building training, use an aggregate percentage based on the pre-training surveys done in Phases X and XI (i.e. between 10-20% would seem reasonable); explain further the links between the national and regional indicators and targets; involve further the CO teams in determining the baselines, indicators and targets (regional and country levels); share any access to past indicators and progress reported (before the current three-year period).

For consideration for the next three-year period (Phases XIII, XIV, XV) of WHP:

- Consider the introduction of an online M&E system to replace the use of Excel sheets and SharePoint (this would require a budget estimation for the next three-year period).

F) More flexible and quicker administrative processes: IOM staff in more than half the countries reported delays and frustrations with administrative processes, such as procurement and recruitment, that implied they were less efficient in the delivery of their activities. This is not unique to the WHP; a 2020 evaluation of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migration Protection and Reintegration in Africa reached similar findings⁴. However, in this case, the program staff worked with the administrative staff in producing “fast track” processes, for example, for procurement. This could be a possible solution for WHP also.

- **Recommendation:** For Phase XII, the central WHP team should accelerate discussions with their administrative colleagues to find solutions and possible “fast track” processes for procurement and recruitment (staff and consultants) that may be tested and documented before roll-out to COs.

G) Integration of cross-cutting issues: WHP had integrated cross-cutting issues within its activities, such as with disaggregated indicators, consulting relevant stakeholders and training IOM staff and partners. However, this evaluation found that further efforts were needed to integrate and mainstream gender and human rights in the WHP activities. It was also unclear as to what extent WHP staff could access IOM expertise in these areas. IOM staff and stakeholders provided concrete suggestions that are incorporated in the following recommendation. Some of these suggestions can be introduced in Phase XII, while others could be introduced for the next three-year period.

- **Recommendations:**

For consideration in Phase XII:

- Assess events and roundtables more systematically to ensure that more women, human rights, and LGBTQ+ organizations are included.
- Assess where staff and partner capacities in cross-cutting issues require further reinforcement.

For consideration in the next three-year period (Phases XIII, XIV, XV):

- Consider whether a WHP staff dedicated to cross-cutting issues is required to provide support across the regional and country teams.
- Review if it is necessary to introduce an overall gender and equality indicator for WHP.
- Ensure that gender analyses are carried out in the design phase for major projects.
- Ensure that common protocols are adopted in incorporating gender and equality in day- to-day activities, for example in the provision of kits in migrant centers.

⁴ See: IOM, Office of the Inspector General (December 2020), Process Evaluation of IOM’s Institutional Response to the Setting Up and Implementing of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migration Protection and Reintegration (see p. 23 for a description of “fast-track” processes).

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ANNEX 1: Evaluation Terms of Reference

ANNEX 2: List of Documents Reviewed

ANNEX 3: List of Interviewees

1. Introduction

This report presents the results of the MTE of The International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) Western Hemisphere Regional Migration Capacity Building Program (WHP). The evaluation was completed by a team of four consultants⁵ from the Owl RE evaluation and research consultancy, based in Geneva, Switzerland. It was completed remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions from June to September 2021.

2. Evaluation Background

2.1. Objectives and focus of the evaluation

The general objective of this MTE was to assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the WHP intervention at the regional level and to assess how the initiatives have contributed and/or will contribute to the achievement of the program outputs, outcomes and the overall objective established for a three-year strategic framework (2019 – 2022). The evaluation covers the period October 2019 to September 2021, essentially the first half of the three-year strategic project (referred to as Phase X and XI of the program). Additionally, the MTE assessed what external factors and changing environments have influenced the implementation of the program and to what extent.

This objective was supported by a series of 28 evaluation questions, as delineated in the Terms of Reference (ToR), developed in the evaluation matrix. The questions were based on four OECD-DAC evaluation criteria in addition to cross cutting issues. Further, a number of forward-looking questions were asked to assess best practices and ideas for improvement, which would contribute to establishing a set of action points to accompany the evaluation. The evaluation questions are listed in Annex 1. A list of documents reviewed can be found in Annex 2. A detailed list of persons interviewed may be found in Annex 3. The annexes are listed in a separate document.

Table 1: Overview of the Number of Interviews

Stakeholders/countries	IOM	External	Total
Regional (WHP regional team and regional mechanisms)	11	5	16
Other stakeholders: IOM HQ, UN Organizations, Donor	3	7	10
High-Priority countries			
Mexico	5	7	12
Costa Rica	6	7	13
El Salvador	6	8	14
Guatemala	6	11	17
Honduras	6	12	18

⁵ The evaluation team included Geneva-based consultants Patricia Goldschmid (team leader) and Glenn O’Neil as well as El Salvador-based consultants Estela Garcia Montalvan and Enrique Garcia Hidalgo.

Mid-Priority countries			
Panama	4	3	7
Belize	3	3	6
Low-Priority countries			
Guyana	1	1	2
Dominica	1	1	2
Dominican Republic	2	3	5
Haiti	1	-	1
The Bahamas	1	1	2
Total	56	69	125

The evaluation covered the four pillars of the WHP program focusing on the following selected outputs⁶ (these outputs are integrated in the findings with reference to the specific pillars):

Pillar 1 : Migration management	
1.1.a	National and local legislation are developed or strengthened to support the implementation of good migration management.
1.1.c	Tools and instruments to facilitate the implementation of laws are developed.
1.2.a	Information and data on migration trends and the composition of migration flows is shared with governments and other stakeholders.
1.2.b	Coordination mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of whole of government migration policies are in place.
1.2.c	Tools to facilitate the implementation of whole of government policies are established.
1.3.a	Information and data on labor migration trends and labor markets is shared with governments and other stakeholders.
1.3.c	Labor Migration Programs are established or strengthened in the region.
1.3.e	Tools to facilitate the implementation of labor migration management are established.
Pillar 2: Partnership	
2.1.a	Governments regularly share information and engage in Regional Consultative Processes.
2.1.b	Capacities to coordinate in the region are strengthened on specific topics.
Pillar 3: Crisis response	
3.1.a	Migrants are included in contingency plans, protocols, SOPs, coordination mechanisms and other tools to respond to emergencies and migration crisis.
3.1.b	The capacities of government officers and other stakeholders to respond to migration crisis and the needs of migrants in emergencies are strengthened.
Pillar 4: Communication	
4.1.a	Communications for development campaigns are effective and targeted.
4.1.c	Information Hubs in the region are strengthened through capacity building.

⁶ These outputs were prioritized by the regional coordination of the WHP and in coordination with the donor.

2.2. Methodology

Data analysis: The evaluation findings are based on the data and information collected through the following research methods:

- A document review of all relevant documentation.
- 125 Semi-structured interviews with IOM staff (56) and key stakeholders (69): A list of persons interviewed can be found in Annex 3.

The data was compiled and analyzed by identifying trends and patterns that informed the evaluation findings of this report. The units of analysis were both the type of interviewee (e.g., IOM staff, government official or other migration actor) and by country and sub-region (e.g., the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central American regions - with a distinction made with the Northern Central American countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras)) where necessary.

For each evaluation criteria and cross-cutting issues, an overall rating was made by the evaluation table, using the following scale:

Evaluation Criteria Scaling		Explanation
5	Excellent	There is evidence of a strong contribution exceeding the level expected by the intervention.
4	Very good	There is evidence of good contribution but with some areas for improvement remaining.
3	Good	There is evidence of satisfactory contribution but requirement for continued improvement.
2	Adequate	There is evidence of some contribution, but significant improvement required.
1	Poor	There is low or no observable contribution.

Limitations: The following limitations were identified in the Inception Report with the accompanying mitigation strategies described. These limitations did not significantly impact the evaluation as described below. An additional limitation of the broad scope of WHP was identified during the evaluation (see point (e) of the table).

Limitations	Mitigation Strategy adopted
(a) The COVID-19 pandemic: the timing of the evaluation during the COVID-19 pandemic response was expected to impact the availability of IOM staff and project stakeholders/ beneficiaries, and/or extend the time it would take for interviewees to respond to the evaluation request and provide feedback.	Early and close involvement of the WHP team to help coordinate meetings and ensure availability of key stakeholders helped to liaise with the appropriate counterparts and schedule interviews. Some challenges were noted in certain countries due to a political situation or interview exhaustion by certain stakeholders. Interviews were conducted remotely over a period of 5 weeks.

(b) General problem of insufficient data or insufficient representative data collected, due to poor response rate from interviewees.	This problem did not materialize as the team was able to conduct a representative number of interviews for the evaluation.
(c) Reticence by interviewees to be transparent and reveal the factors that motivate them or any problems they may have experienced both internally and externally.	Emphasizing confidentiality during the interview and anonymizing sources was applied to ensure that interviewees felt comfortable sharing information. In addition, interviews were predominantly conducted on a one-on-one basis to allow for confidentiality.
(d) General bias in the application of causality analysis.	Judgements were informed jointly by the team. The main evidence for ratings is described in the report.
(e) Wide scope of WHP implying a challenge for the evaluation to cover all activities sufficiently.	The evaluation focused on 12 countries and the regional level with more interviews carried out in the higher priority countries as listed above. Where possible, any findings are qualified by referring to which countries and/or region they are referring to. Given the wide scope of WHP and the focus of the evaluation, it was not possible to give detailed findings at the level of activities and initiatives of WHP.

3. Background on the WHP

The IOM's WHP is a program funded by the United States Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). The overall objective is to strengthen governments' capacities to manage migration in a sustainable and humane manner. The WHP started in 2010 and has traditionally been implemented in one-year phases, from October to September to align with the fiscal year of the United States Government. Since October 2019, with the support of PRM, it has moved to a three-year planning period while maintaining the one-year phases. Currently, the WHP is in its eleventh (XI) Phase. The WHP program advocates for the adoption of well-managed, regular forms of migration to concurrently reduce flows of irregular migration and vulnerabilities of migrants. The expected results of the program are comprised of six outcomes, which contribute to PRM's four priority pillars, as described below:

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

1 - Migration Management	1.2. Countries adopt effective whole of government migration policies using evidence-based protocols, processes, and procedures.
	1.3. Countries adopt policies that advance the social and economic well-being of both migrants and society.
2 - Partnership	2.1. Migration management stakeholders in the region improve understanding of migration management priorities of different actors to avoid duplication and promote synergies.
3 - Crisis response	3.1. Government improved capacities allow them to anticipate, better prepare for, and respond to migration flows relating to emergencies and crises.
4 - Communication	4.1. Migrants and potential migrants improve behaviors by increasing the selection of alternatives to irregular migration.

4. Findings

The findings are organized around the four evaluation criteria, in addition to the cross-cutting issues, which are delineated as sections below. An overall rating and summary text is provided at the start of each section.

4.1. Relevance

Rating: 4 - Very good

The evaluation found that program activities were relevant in all countries covered with degrees of relevance varying according to regions and thematic areas. Strengths were noted in WHP's ability to reinforce government capacities in migration management and policy development. Activities recognized as most relevant were those along borders with high migrant passage, paired with strong collaboration among countries involved. For example, in Panama WHP supported government's efforts to establish shelters for migrants along the border; Guatemala and Mexico in support of cross-border training programs; Haiti with MIDAS; Belize and Honduras where cooperation led to joint workplans on roadmaps for coordinated protection and care for trafficking victims; as well as El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala where sub-regional coordination took place linked to Pillar 2 through networks established and meetings held between mayors (face-to-face before the pandemic and subsequently virtual). Challenges with relevance were seen more in the Caribbean region where authorities largely perceived migration issues as less of a priority compared to the Central American region.

1. To what extent is the intervention still relevant?

The program activities were found to be relevant by both IOM staff and external stakeholders in all countries covered by this evaluation with degrees of relevance varying according to regions and thematic areas.

IOM staff emphasized that WHP's focus on strengthening government capacity in migration management inherently contributed to its relevance as indicated by this staff member: *"WHP activities reinforce government's capacities, filling their gaps in migration issues"*.

External stakeholders identified the following key aspects of WHP as contributing to its relevance: it strengthened governmental capacities and policies; it supported them to adapt to current migration needs; it sensitized communities to the risks of irregular migration and supported orderly migration through labor agreements and regularization.

Crisis response was recognized as particularly relevant with the COVID-19 pandemic during Phase X, with WHP adapting and supporting governments in their COVID-19 responses as described below. It also proved important to emphasize migrants' rights as this government stakeholder (crisis response) commented: *"COVID-19 highlighted an increased need for identification of migrants not just in the context of security, but also rights"*. This is further explained in cross-cutting issues below.

In terms of regions, WHP activities that were considered among the most relevant were those that were conducted along the borders, particularly in the Northern Central American countries (Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala) bordering Mexico and leading to the United States (part of Pillar 1). For example, in Mexico many initiatives are in the south (Oaxaca, Tabasco and Chiapas), which are key passage areas for migrants. Therefore, the work was seen to remain relevant as long as the situation prevailed. Similarly, the activities conducted along the southern border in Panama were noted, where migrants cross the dangerous Darien region.

Where WHP struggled to prove its relevance was in the Caribbean region as authorities largely perceived migration issues as less of a priority in comparison to Mexico and the Central American region. Nevertheless, IOM Country Offices (COs) were seen to have worked hard to prove the relevance and both staff and external stakeholders highlighted how WHP had supported positioning IOM as a technical migration expert with positive outcomes already seen across the Caribbean.

Among the most relevant topics, stakeholders referred to labor migration which was seen as having become a central issue in the Central American region. For example, in Costa Rica as a transit and host country for migrants, labor migration was now on the government's agenda, in the context of the migrant population coming from Panama and Nicaragua to work in agriculture. Activities were also seen as remaining relevant through collaborations with regional networks such as the RCM, and through partnerships with other agencies and civil society (CS). Labor migration was also one of the topics selected as priority by the RCM, with workshops organized to share experiences about mechanisms of labor migration in the membership countries as well as a strategy developed jointly by ILO and IOM including a toolkit for public servants to consult to better understand how to address labor migration. Topics such as child protection and human trafficking were also considered relevant as trends indicated that an increasing number of young adults and children were among migrants. For example, on initiatives linked to children and adolescent migrants, collaboration between the

governments and agencies such as UNICEF, ILO, UNHCR and IOM was considered as contributing to relevance, as results were then presented through the RCM.

From a donor perspective, WHP was seen as remaining relevant to their needs and showed an ability to adapt to emerging priorities. At the same time, a focus on several new themes emerged recently, such as labor migration, climate change and collaborative migration management that were seen as needing further integration into WHP priorities in the coming years⁷.

2. How do the intended results align with and support government policies and national strategies?

WHP initiatives were largely seen as aligned with government policies and national strategies. IOM was recognized as a key reference in migration working closely with relevant national authorities to ensure that WHP initiatives were aligned with national priorities and government needs, as underlined by this IOM staff: *“We even develop agreements with the government that establish priorities and a work agenda. We do it in the design of the program, and we invite different actors from the country.”*

External stakeholders also noted that initiatives were not only aligned with national and municipal governmental policies and strategies but also supported governments in developing policies in line with their international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM).⁸

For migration actors and the international community, relevance was also seen through the support for the RCM, which groups together directors of government migration services to regularly share information on migration and align priorities. Other regional mechanisms cited as helping the program to develop and align initiatives with government priorities included the *Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres en América Central y República Dominicana* (CEPRENAC), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), and the *Comisión Centroamericana de Directores y Directoras de Migración* (OCAM).

In some countries of the Caribbean, there was more divergence in terms of alignment. Challenges in coordination and alignment of activities were mainly linked to changes in governments and/or their capacity to deal with migration management which influenced the development and implementation of national policies and strategies as described further below. In some cases, the needs of governments were difficult to respond to. For example, a migration needs assessment conducted in Antigua (not a WHP country) revealed that there

⁷ With reference to the new strategies (July 2021) of the US government (National Security Council): Strategy for Addressing Root Causes of Migration in Central America (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Root-Causes-Strategy.pdf>);

Collaborative Migration Management Strategy (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Collaborative-Migration-Management-Strategy.pdf>).

⁸ The following WHP countries have adopted the GCM: Mexico, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Guyana, Dominica, Haiti, and Bahamas.

was a need for a migration policy, but it was too much for the government to manage at this stage. Similar situations were seen in other Caribbean countries, where limited capacity of the governments meant that alignment was challenging.

In a few countries, IOM staff and government stakeholders reported that governments and migration actors were not consulted in the development of WHP initiatives, as an IOM staff from the Caribbean commented: *“The issue was that government was not involved in original project planning and design; this is partly why there is a lack of collaboration.”* Similarly, some government feedback indicated that in Mexico some projects did not consult the government enough as indicated by this government respondent: *“Often the project comes to us already designed with the strategy already mostly in place and there is little room for maneuver. It would be good to be able to include other organizations, not just the government entities.”*

In other cases, WHP projects were developed in close collaboration with one government administration but then encountered challenges due to a change in government. This meant that workplans and priorities would require adjustments with the need for newly established collaborations. In some contexts, this was positive, such as in the Dominican Republic and Panama where the new administrations were more positive about collaboration on migration initiatives; in others it was more challenging, such as Guyana, Mexico, and El Salvador.

3. Are the program activities and outputs consistent with the intended outcomes and objective?

The program activities and outputs of Phases X and XI were consistent with the intended outcomes and objective: to target governments to manage migration in a sustainable and humane manner, as seen in the previous and subsequent sections on Relevance, Effectiveness and Sustainability.

Pillar 1: The program was able to support governments with the development of migration policy, legislation, and procedures in several countries. Feedback from interviews confirm that IOM was a valuable counterpart in these activities, particularly with capacity building training and education programs, on protection and well-being of migrants, and in providing evidence-based research and data contributions across the region.

Pillar 2: The results seen in partnerships were consistent to date, such as cross-border initiatives and collaboration with United Nations (UN) agencies and other actors. The engagement with regional networks was seen as a valuable program initiative contributing to positive results with governments along key borders.

Pillar 3: Crisis response mechanisms were also seen as having been reinforced particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. A focus identified as valuable was the effort to raise awareness about trafficking in persons across important borders such as the southern border of Panama and in Mexico.

Pillar 4: Communications activities such as the Communication for Development (C4D) campaigns and migrant information hubs were recognized among stakeholders as an important contribution in several countries, with Costa Rica, Mexico, and the Northern Central American countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) in particular.

Challenges identified by some stakeholders were linked to finding a balance between priorities that emanated from global agendas and local needs, adapting to country contexts, and balancing the country's specific needs with donor and IOM expectations, as confirmed in these statements by an IOM staff: *"It is difficult to bring the two dimensions together, the global one and the local. There is no real alignment with the program design at the local level with the outputs."*

4. To what extent has the program responded to the needs of both direct and indirect target beneficiaries?

The program was seen by both internal and external stakeholders as responding to the needs of beneficiaries, identified as primary (government entities and migrant diaspora organizations) and secondary (migrants and potential migrants).

External stakeholders felt that WHP met the needs of direct beneficiaries such as municipal and governmental institutions through capacity building and indirect beneficiaries through initiatives such as the migration information hubs at the local level; the development of migration policies and mechanisms at the national and local level benefited both. Specifically, one external stakeholder (migration management - governance) noted: *"IOM's support responds to the needs raised by government counterparts, from the level of ministries to the municipalities"*.

IOM staff expressed that WHP activities were often based on research studies or needs assessments conducted with government institutions. In other cases, they were based on specific requests from the governments. For example, in Honduras, Panama, and Mexico the governments requested data support.

In most cases, governments welcomed proposals for WHP activities from IOM, with some exceptions where government positions are more reticent to international cooperation (e.g., the former administration in the Dominican Republic and currently of Mexico). Difficulties were also identified in cases where needs assessments uncover a need for action, but governments are not equipped to carry out the necessary activities (e.g., Dominica) or there were coordination issues or changes in priorities (e.g., Guyana). Also in some cases, governments reported not being consulted in the design phase, as described above.

Further, in some countries (mainly in the Caribbean), government services did not see the benefits of collaboration as they perceived that the IOM was only responding to issues related to irregular migrants, as this IOM staff commented; *"the authorities believe incorrectly we are only working for irregular migrants, but it's not the case - we are proposing to work across all migration issues"*.

4.2. Coherence

Rating: 3 - Good

Coherence between the different activities within the four WHP pillars and coordination among countries was in general seen as positive. Coordination among countries was highlighted for activities linked to cross-border initiatives, communications campaigns, topics such as human trafficking, as well as shared meetings coordinated through regional networks such as the RCM. Several respondents also noted a need for improvement in the adaptation of activities to the specific country contexts. Some feedback also referred to potential improvements to the collaboration among the four pillars within countries and across the region.

1. To what extent is the intervention coherent internally, with regard to coherence between program pillars, as well as coherence between program interventions in the different WHP countries?

Coherence between the four WHP pillars was seen as positive with most IOM staff and stakeholders indicating that there was communication among the pillars and among the WHP staff on the different activities within the implementing countries.

IOM staff highlighted that there were regular coordination meetings at the country-level to coordinate among the different pillars as demonstrated by this comment from an IOM staff member: *“The four pillars are complementary, and the work is harmonized through national coordination and the entire team’s work.”* Pillars were seen as complementary in many cases with synergies aligned as demonstrated by this comment from a government representative (partnerships): *“WHP has many activities where the pillars come together, and they complement each other”*.

Coordination among countries was seen as positive, particularly among the Northern Central American countries as well as Mexico for cross-border initiatives (Pillar 2), for example. Common training on irregular migration was organized between the three countries in coordination with Mexico. For Pillar 4, a C4D campaign was successfully developed between Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. This was said to have been the result of common necessities identified through a rapid online assessment with beneficiaries from the three countries, in response to the need to adapt the previously planned individual campaigns in each country to the context of the Covid pandemic and resulting border closures.

Similarly, a strong collaboration was identified between Panama and Costa Rica for a joint response along the border. Others also highlighted exchange meetings with other countries in the region, such as the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and El Salvador. In addition, collaboration between countries was also said to have been facilitated through the regional mechanisms such as RCM (further elaborated in Effectiveness).

Given the differences seen between the Central American countries and the Caribbean in their migration priorities, it was understandable that the coherence between these regions was not always possible according to both IOM staff and stakeholders. At the same time, it was pointed out that the WHP coordination team made considerable efforts to find synergies and ensure coherence between the regions, where possible. In the Caribbean, IOM staff and stakeholders did emphasize that they were aware, informed, and able to learn from other activities in their region and other WHP countries.

Some feedback referred to a need for improved communication among countries considering the diverging contexts of each country. Feedback also referred to the potential for greater collaboration between the pillars. IOM staff mentioned a need for more information sharing among colleagues working on each pillar both within a country and with other countries implementing WHP. The language barrier was also mentioned, notably the challenge of the English and French speaking countries in the Caribbean with meetings and documentation in Spanish.

2. To what extent is the WHP coherent with other interventions in the region which have similar objectives, implemented both by IOM and other implementing agencies?

Coherence between WHP and other interventions in the region was seen as varying depending on the IOM mission and the country.

In general, coherence with interventions of other actors was seen as strong in most of the countries, with very few references to overlaps. The most important links were with UN agencies. Some examples include the work with UN Women on gender and the value chain publication⁹ in Mexico, collaboration on labor migration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Mexico; working on care centers in Guatemala (Petén) with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); coordinating with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to work with the *Procuraduría General de la República (PGR)* in El Salvador under the framework of the National Policy to Protect Migrants and their Families¹⁰; collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on migrant smuggling and human trafficking through the RCM; and with the International Labour Organization (ILO) working on migrant labor along border communities in several countries also through RCM; IOM and ILO were seen as very aligned and coordinated on the topic of labor migration as underlined by this UN agency stakeholder: *"IOM works with the directors of migration and with ILO, we also work with the entrepreneurs and systems of employers and workers. You need all of these together to be able to build successful projects. IOM provides the link to the migration directorates. This makes for a very good synergy."*

⁹ Cadenas de Suministro con Enfoque de Derechos y Perspectiva de Género (report in the process of being published at the time of this evaluation)

¹⁰ Política Nacional para la Protección y Desarrollo de Persona Migrante Salvadoreña y su Familia.

Several countries reported that coordination meetings were organized with UN organizations, International non-governmental organization (INGOs), and civil society organizations (CSOs) to discuss and coordinate projects. Connections with regional mechanisms, such as the Central American Integration System (SICA)¹¹ and RCM, were also noted as contributing to coherence among interventions.

Within IOM, examples of positive collaboration were also noted, such as synergies with IOM projects funded through other mechanisms. For example, a project in the Dominican Republic funded by IOM's International Development Fund (IDF) supporting the Ministry of Economics, Planning and Development to manage the border areas through an observatory, generated information about socio-economic conditions and the migratory situation. This information was then presented by a ministry representative to WHP stakeholders at a workshop. In addition, an important connection between WHP and other IOM interventions was the link to the Integrated Response to Migration program (IRM) funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Several IOM staff mentioned complementarities between the two programs. For example, an "educational toolkit" developed by WHP in Honduras and subsequently used by IRM.

While most IOM staff and external stakeholders were positive about coherence, some challenges were identified, often linked to a lack of information or coordination. As the WHP covers a broad range of areas with a large number of staff working on numerous projects, it was seen as challenging for staff to follow all WHP interventions and avoid overlap, particularly in the high-priority countries. Cases were noted where either a program manager or an external stakeholder uncovered a previously unforeseen overlap of a WHP activity with another initiative. Improved communication among IOM projects and a better information management and sharing was needed according to IOM staff.

Some limitations in coherence were linked to confusion among stakeholders generated by overlapping IOM projects. For example, some authorities confuse IOM activities, thinking WHP is working to support Venezuelan migrants and refugees which in fact is organized by another IOM program. Reference was also made regarding overlap of IOM projects with the same external stakeholders, for example, different IOM staff contacting the same stakeholders who thought they were being solicited excessively. This lack of internal coordination could then lead to complications in accessing stakeholders.

3. Have WHP efforts towards complementarity, harmonization and coordination with other stakeholders managed to add value to the program, contributed to joint results, and avoided duplication of efforts?

While duplication was seen as unavoidable, most IOM staff and external stakeholders agreed that efforts were in place and progress has been made towards more complementarity and harmonization among the different migration actors. This was particularly true for

¹¹ Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana

collaboration with other international agencies. For example, the UN reform in the Dominican Republic improved inter-agency coordination avoiding overlap of agencies' initiatives.

The strong collaboration and harmonization developed in several countries on labor migration with the ILO (based on a regional implementation agreement), mainly through the RCM, was mentioned. For example, an IOM staff member mentioned that *“there is a lot of cooperation with the ILO to implement activities together. Nothing has been found to overlap.”* Another comment from an IOM staff confirmed the strong collaboration with ILO: *“when the stakeholders talk about labor migration, they think about our two agencies.”*

Similarly, through the Human Mobility Group co-led with UNHCR in Panama, WHP focused on developing joint projects to avoid overlap. IOM ensured that all responses for migrants were coordinated among the entities involved including government, CS, and international agencies to minimize duplicity in projects.

Other examples included national platforms such as the Council for Children and Adolescents (CONNA)¹² in El Salvador, the Association of Municipalities of Honduras (AMHON)¹³ and the Intermunicipal Board in Guatemala¹⁴. Similarly, in El Salvador IOM participated in collaborative platforms with external stakeholders, such as the *Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* (PDDH), at a local level along the border with Guatemala, and at the national level with UN agencies and national authorities to ensure that there was no duplication of efforts.

Greater harmonization was suggested by stakeholders and IOM staff with initiatives across the full migration spectrum, such as those that addressed root causes of migration and those at the other end that addressed reintegration, with the collaboration on the IRM program funded by USAID, cited as a good practice to be replicated.

4. Are the program activities and outputs coherent with the Principles and Objectives of the Migration Governance Framework and other relevant international norms and standards to which governments and institutions adhere?

Program outputs were seen as coherent with the Migration Governance framework and other relevant international norms.

Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF): WHP's activities were seen as coherent with MiGOF, as each of the four WHP pillars correspond to the MiGOF's dimensions. For example, in Costa Rica, WHP was seen as aligned within the work matrix of the country, and the activities were organized around the SDGs and with MiGOF dimensions.

MGI: Similar to the MiGOF, WHP was seen as coherent with the MGI and integrated the MGI process within its activities. The MGI was perceived by IOM staff as a very useful process to

¹² Consejo Nacional de Niñez y Adolescencia.

¹³ Asociación de Municipios de Honduras.

¹⁴ Mesa Intermunicipal de Guatemala.

engage with the governments on and work jointly in improving their migration management, including at the local level as seen in Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Mexico.

SDGs: The program was seen as coherent with the SDGs in coordination with the UN. External stakeholders also noted that WHP was coherent with these global commitments, making the necessary links where possible.

GCM: WHP was seen as contributing to the objectives of the GCM. Synergies were seen between the GCM regional review for Latin America and Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) (e.g., Honduras, Mexico) where there were references to WHP activities, as noted by this IOM staff: *“There is a common interest and identification to generate conditions for migrants agreed in the GCM to create safe, orderly, and regular migration. In addition, we are in tune with the common interest of the human rights approach, which has strengthened them, and we have worked in a coordinated manner.”*

5. Is relevant and timely information being provided to beneficiaries about the program objectives, progress, achievements, and other relevant information and do they have the opportunity to give feedback and participate actively in program planning processes?

Most beneficiaries, particularly government counterparts involved in WHP projects, were able to actively participate in planning processes and provide feedback with some exceptions seen, as described below. Most WHP processes integrated stakeholders through working groups, technical committees, informal meetings, email exchanges and phone calls to provide updates and receive feedback. For example, in El Salvador communication with counterparts was conducted through the Advisory Committee, formed by the government entities that work with WHP. There were some exceptions seen, where IOM staff and stakeholders thought that governments and migration actors were not sufficiently involved in the design and planning process, with examples cited in the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, and Mexico.

In addition, as mentioned previously, regional mechanisms such as the RCM, SICA, the OCAM, and the CORETT were also mentioned as conducting regular meetings to share experiences, set priorities and align strategies with those of WHP.

Good collaboration and involvement were also mentioned by the donor. Specifically, they could provide inputs into the annual plans and on an ad-hoc basis. Another example was the change in the United States administration in 2021 where the migration priorities changed and the WHP needed to be adapted accordingly.

Examples of close collaboration were also noted with CS. For example, in both Belize and Mexico, WHP has worked closely with CS who manage migrant integration centers and/or information hubs, in addition to developing workshops and C4D campaigns (in Mexico). At the same time, both IOM staff and stakeholders thought CS and other migrant actors could be further integrated with the WHP processes, such as in the design and planning phase.

4.3. Effectiveness

Rating: 4 - Very Good

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

1. To what extent have the activities, program outputs and outcomes been implemented and achieved in accordance with the established workplans, or are they on track to being achieved?

Despite the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which generated restrictions and changes for governments, the WHP activities were carried out largely in line with the established workplans, according to both IOM staff and external stakeholders. CO feedback indicated that if the delays incurred could not be caught up in Phase XI, activities would be adjusted (or abandoned in a few cases), as described below.

Concerning achievements, at both the regional and country-levels, IOM staff and stakeholders highlighted achievements from Phases X and XI, with the most significant to date cited below:

Pillar 1: Migration management: As the largest pillar, achievements were seen in a range of areas. For example, stakeholders and IOM staff in Belize, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, and Guatemala indicated significant developments in migration policy, legislation, and procedures during Phases X and XI. For strengthening programs on regular migration, the labor migration agreements between Costa Rica, Panama and Nicaragua were cited as good practices for potential replication, in addition to other progress seen in Dominican Republic, Haiti and Mexico. These achievements were supported by the ongoing work on capacity building training and education programs, activities supporting the protection and well-being of migrants, research and data gathering across the region.

Pillar 2: Partnerships: The support provided by WHP to the RCM and Caribbean frameworks were cited by both IOM staff and external stakeholders as strategically important for developing collaboration across the region. Progress was also seen in cross-border initiatives: between Costa Rica and Panama on irregular migration; Guatemala and Mexico in support of cross-border training programs; Belize and Honduras where cooperation led to joint workplans on roadmaps for coordinated protection and care for trafficking victims; as well as El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala where sub-regional coordination took place linked to Pillar 2 through networks established and meetings held between mayors (face-to-face

before the pandemic, then virtual ones) in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic did delay contacts and collaboration between some countries. For example, in establishing the potential cooperation between Guyana and Suriname.

Pillar 3: Crisis response: IOM staff and stakeholders highlighted IOM's support with responses to the COVID-19 pandemic across the region (mainly in Phase X and as a contingency measure). For example, providing hygiene and protection equipment in eight countries, as well as creating quarantine spaces in shelters along borders. They also assisted partners with awareness-raising activities targeting migrants and provided ongoing training of staff of emergency services (and other migrant actors) across the region. IOM staff and stakeholders also mentioned the progress made in developing emergency-related standard operating procedures, for example in Costa Rica (municipal (local) emergency response plans), Dominica (integrating Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative (MICIC) guidelines in disaster response plans) and Dominican Republic (integrating MICIC guidelines in provincial emergency plans).

Pillar 4: Communications: The three C4D campaigns¹⁵ launched in Phases X and XI, mainly in Costa Rica, Mexico and the Northern Central American countries were seen as successful with behavior change targets exceeded to date¹⁶. Fifty migrant information hubs were active throughout the region with stakeholders providing examples of how this local and adapted approach supported migrants and potential migrants in the regularization procedures, understanding their rights (e.g., for migrant access to vaccines for COVID-19), available services and understanding alternatives to irregular migration.

2. To what extent can these changes/effects be credited to the intervention?

Overall, WHP was seen by both IOM staff and external stakeholders as strongly contributing to the outcomes (changes/effects) seen during Phases X and XI. For example, the C4D campaigns and migrant information hubs of Pillar 4, in addition to the work under Pillar 1 at the municipal levels (e.g., Costa Rica and Guatemala), the partnerships established under Pillar 2, the complementary COVID-19 response under Pillar 3 and the various research and data collection activities. These initiatives would most likely not have taken place without the support of WHP, according to IOM staff and stakeholders.

The contribution from governments and migration actors was also thought as key to the outcomes seen, according to IOM staff and stakeholders, in addition to the WHP activities of the preceding ten years that laid the foundations for many of the achievements seen to date.

3. What are internal factors that contributed to progress or delays in the achievement of the outputs, outcomes, and objective?

¹⁵ The three campaigns were: 1. Mistakes by Word of Mouth in Costa Rica (*De Boca en Boca la Gente se Equivoca*); 2. Migrate informed in Mexico (*Migrar informados*); 3. Think Twice in the Northern Central American countries (*Pensálo 2 Veces*).

¹⁶ The WHP quarterly report (April-June 2021) reports for Outcome 4.1, a 13% increase in positive behaviors compared against a target of 5%.

The following internal factors were identified, ranked in order of perceived importance:

Internal factors contributing to progress:

- **Staff expertise:** The expertise and know-how of IOM staff on migration issues was seen as a positive factor, in addition to the availability of regional IOM technical experts to support the CO staff (although some CO staff thought regional IOM experts were not always available to support them in a timely manner given their workloads as described below). The expertise and commitment of IOM staff was also mentioned by external stakeholders.
- **Coordination:** The coordination of the WHP was seen as efficient and contributing to progress. Despite the broad scope of WHP, the efforts of the regional WHP team in coordination and developing synergies between the countries and pillars was appreciated and brought results according to IOM staff.
- **Funding:** The availability of three-year funding from the donor enabled the WHP team to plan activities over the longer term and improved the stability of the program according to IOM staff and external stakeholders.
- **Adapted and flexible program delivery:** External stakeholders highlighted the flexibility of WHP to adapt their program delivery mode, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. External stakeholders both in Honduras and Guatemala mentioned the use of the online training as an example that was introduced timely during the pandemic, also allowing a broader range of participants to be reached, as described above. Working through regional mechanisms such as the RCM was also mentioned, in addition to the “local to national” approach used in many countries.

Other factors mentioned to a lesser extent included the clarity of the WHP’s objectives, the strong position and reputation of the UN in the region, the research focus of WHP, and the support provided by IOM management (i.e., heads of missions of COs).

Internal factors contributing to delays:

- **Administrative processes:** The main delaying internal factor (mentioned by seven COs) was the complexity and length of the administrative processes, notably procurement and recruitment. For example, hiring of consultants in support of WHP could take up to eight months according to IOM staff, as one commented *“As much as the WHP coordination team is flexible, the administration has zero flexibility and offers no solutions - it’s a real obstacle for efficiency”*.
- **Staff workload:** The workload of staff was mentioned as a delaying factor, with many juggling different projects and activities, particularly during the end of year reporting period (a few external stakeholders also mentioned this factor). The support of regional IOM technical experts (both those within the WHP regional team and those supporting other IOM programs and projects) was highly appreciated by CO staff as mentioned above, but those experts who supported other IOM programs and projects (RTS) were challenged to provide the support in a timely manner.

- **One-year timeframe:** As much as the IOM staff appreciated the donor commitment to three-year funding, the continued need to plan annually was seen as an impediment, including the reporting requirements (monthly, quarterly, and annually) as described below.

Other factors mentioned to a lesser extent included the lack of a Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) focal point in the region, the centralized nature of the WHP design and planning, the lack of consultation with government and CS in the project design phase in a few countries, and the difficulty to recruit migration expertise in the region for staff and consultancies.

4. What are external factors that contributed to progress or delays in the achievement of the outputs, outcomes, and objective, including both contextual factors and other related interventions?

The following external factors were identified, ranked in order of perceived importance:

External factors contributing to progress:

- **Government willingness to collaborate:** The interest and willingness of the governments to collaborate with WHP was seen as key for progress. The fact that both national and local governments were involved and committed supported the program, in addition to bringing stability through dedicated staff and sometimes budgets.
- **Intra-institutional coordination:** Where government institutions and entities supported coordination between themselves, migration actors and IOM, it was seen as a factor contributing to progress, including their involvement from the design to implementation.

External factors contributing to delays:

- **COVID-19:** The pandemic impacted some 75% of the time-period of Phases X and XI, delaying activities and requiring rapid program adaptation, as described below. This limited many aspects of WHP, most notably the de-prioritization of some WHP activities, such as Pillar 1 policy development as the COVID-19 response became the top priority for governments.
- **Government capacity:** Both IOM staff and government representatives reported challenges in the capacities of governments to meet the needs of WHP and provide the level of support and resources required. This was seen in most countries to varying degrees, leading to delays in implementing activities and progressing as planned.
- **Changes in government:** An obstacle to progress identified was changes to governments, both at the political and staffing levels. This often implied that previous commitments needed to be re-negotiated with the new governments and/or officials, delaying activities. During Phases X and XI, major changes in governments impacting WHP's progress were seen in Belize, El Salvador, Guyana, Haiti, and Mexico.
- **Sensitive nature of migration issues:** Issues such as irregular migration, labor migration and human trafficking were sensitive issues for countries and needed to be addressed carefully according to IOM staff and stakeholders. This implied that obstacles could be seen, such as governments wishing to avoid issues that could have broader consequences

for them, such as being seen to addressing irregular migration in a context where nationalist sentiments could be inflamed with political and social consequences.

Other factors mentioned to a lesser extent included the impact of natural disasters (hurricanes Eta and Lota in 2020 for Central American countries - mainly Honduras), the challenges of stakeholders and beneficiaries to work online (e.g., for online training and employment fairs) and that some authorities finding it challenging to work with the UN as a partner.

5. To what extent has the program adapted or is able to adapt to changing external conditions in order to ensure project outcomes?

There was consensus that a strength of WHP was its ability to adapt to changing external conditions; the adaptations to COVID-19 being a case in point. At the same time, as highlighted above, WHP's flexibility and ability to adapt, while supported by the donor, was not always complemented by a flexibility of administrative processes, causing frustration among IOM staff and stakeholders, and leading to delays in program implementation.

While some IOM staff thought that WHP was able to adapt rapidly to the changing context during the COVID-19 pandemic, other staff members mentioned that the adaptation was lacking direction and guidelines. For example, IOM staff mentioned that they would have liked more clarity on how to adjust budgeting and reorganize projects in the limited timeframe available.

Progress tracking was adjusted to the changing external conditions. For example, the reporting indicated which activities would be accelerated and alternatively where they would be de-prioritized, based on the specific contexts¹⁷.

6. How could the program strengthen its ability to achieve the intended results more effectively?

The evaluation findings provide several suggestions to improve WHP's effectiveness that are detailed further in the Recommendations section, in addition to a series of suggestions to improve sustainability (see Sustainability section) and the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system (see next question). Overall, these suggestions cover the strategic, planning, administrative processes, and cross-cutting issues aspects of WHP.

7. How effective is the WHP monitoring and evaluation system? What challenges have been experienced with regard to the WHP monitoring system, and what improvements could be made?

IOM staff provided mixed feedback on the M&E system. The M&E system was seen as effective in being able to provide an overview of the progress towards the WHP's objectives and fulfill the donor reporting requirements. Two positive developments were highlighted in Phases X and XI of WHP: 1) the appointment of monitoring assistants (IOM staff) in the

¹⁷ See for example, the WHP quarterly report (April-June 2021), Section IV "Challenges Encountered and Actions Taken" (p. 39) where some activities are deprioritized, and no follow-up activities proposed for the next fiscal year due to changing context conditions.

majority of WHP countries (7 of 12 countries); and 2) the development and adoption of more common M&E tools and templates. Nevertheless, IOM staff across the countries have experienced some challenges in using the M&E system, notably:

- The main component of the M&E system was the high-level results matrix that aggregated results from the country-level for each of the pillars, outcomes, and outputs. Although this was a logical construct, challenges were seen in understanding and reporting on the indicators. For example, in using a “0%” baseline for capacity building training; understanding how indicators, targets and baselines were set (as done centrally); understanding how the regional and national indicators are linked; access to past indicators and progress reported (before the current three-year period).
- The monitoring focused predominantly on reporting progress based on the set indicators and some staff found there was not enough space for reflection on challenges and lessons learnt both in the written reporting and the online meeting updates. The monitoring has not been used sufficiently to re-adjust the succeeding WHP strategies and priorities according to some IOM staff, as one commented: *“There is not a deep enough analysis conducted of what is really needed and what has already been done. There is a need to spend more time really analyzing what exists and extracting learnings to identify gaps and better adapt new activities to the context - to ensure that it is really needed. Otherwise, the activities are redundant”*.
- The use of multiple Excel worksheets for monitoring was cumbersome for some staff as was the use of a common SharePoint folder; some staff mentioned that they faced difficulties to understand the M&E system as this IOM staff (non-M&E) commented *“Everything is in the same tool, workplans, activities, reports of each activity, etc. This makes it a very complex tool. I have been working with this for two years and only understand it just now”*.
- The frequency of reporting was challenging for most COs. The need to report monthly was seen as excessive, also considering that the donor required only quarterly reporting and the staff did not all understand how the monthly reporting was used. One partner (communications) receiving funding from WHP commented *“IOM reporting requires a lot more than other donors; to me it seems a bit too much. The reporting form could be reduced - as could the requirement to do it monthly”*.
- Although some IOM staff found the monthly update virtual meetings informative, other staff felt their participation was not necessary and the number of update meetings excessive (including thematic meetings), particularly for COs that received relatively small grants, such as the Caribbean countries.
- The donor, PRM, made a considerable number of requests for information and data outside of the agreed reporting requirements. Although the WHP staff were able and

willing to provide such information, it did create challenges in being able to collate what was requested within the expected timeframes (often 24 hours).

Based on the challenges faced, IOM staff suggested several improvements to the M&E system, such as:

- The possibility to move away from compulsory monthly reporting and meetings for all or some areas of work.
- The consideration of an online system for monitoring to replace the use of Excel sheets and SharePoint. This could also be a way to have real-time and updated data without requiring monthly reporting.
- Further refine the baselines and indicators of the results matrix for Phase XII based on the experience of Phases X and XI; for example, instead of using a “0%” baseline for capacity building training, use an aggregate percentage based on the pre-training surveys done in Phases X and XI (i.e. between 10-20% would seem reasonable); explain further the links between the national and regional indicators; involve further the CO teams in determining the baselines, indicators and targets; share any access to past indicators and progress reported (before the current three-year period).
- To balance further the monitoring with a greater emphasis on documenting and identifying learnings and good practices. For example, it was suggested that in the update virtual meetings, less time was spent on COs providing an update on activities, and more time spent on challenges faced, lessons learnt and good practices.

These improvements are also included in the recommendations below.

4.4. Sustainability

Rating: 2 - Adequate

Likelihood of sustainability of results differed for each WHP pillar and the types of activities. While results achieved were seen as having the potential to continue once external support ceased, this evaluation could not identify an explicit exercise carried out by WHP to identify the outcomes, services, and prerequisites to sustain the intended and changed outcomes of the program. IOM staff and stakeholders thought more emphasis could be placed on assessing the elements necessary to sustain outcomes, both at the project design and implementation phases. The necessary preconditions did not currently exist for an overall phase-out or exit strategy for the large majority of WHP activities. The conclusion of the current three-year funding period would be an opportunity to assess for which activity streams a phase-out/exit strategy could be envisaged.

1. What is the likelihood of the achieved results to continue once external support ceases?

Likelihood of sustainability of results differed for each WHP pillar and the types of activities.

Pillar 1: The achieved results related to the development of policies, protocols, guidelines, and mechanisms (mostly resulting from Pillar 1) were assessed by both IOM staff and external stakeholders as having the greatest likelihood of continuing once external support ceased. Sustainability was estimated to be high for these elements as they are integrated with legislative and policy frameworks and processes and would consequently guide migration management for the future. Examples in this respect were provided for Belize, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Panama and Mexico. IOM staff in some Caribbean countries, such as the Bahamas, Dominica and Guyana, thought it was too early in the program to estimate sustainability as activities were just starting in these countries¹⁸.

Training of government officials and other migrant actors, which mostly present in Pillar 1 (but also in other pillars), was found to be mixed in terms of sustainability according to IOM staff and stakeholders. Where training was integrated with existing institutions, sustainability was likely to be higher, for example, in El Salvador within the Foreign Relations Training Institute (IIEFFORD) and the National Civil Police Sports School; in Belize with Galen University; and in Costa Rica within the Costa Rica Tourism Board (ICT)¹⁹ and the National Coalition against Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons (CONATT)²⁰. Training was seen as less sustainable where it was “one-off” exercises and not linked to institutions and ongoing processes (stakeholders did not provide specific examples). Online training, such as through IOM’s E-Campus was viewed positively but required the ongoing support of IOM for its promotion and integration within existing educational offerings of institutions.

Pillar 2: With a key focus on establishing partnerships and working relations between countries and migration actors, it was seen as having good potential for sustainability, for example in cross-border initiatives that were mostly based on written agreements established through WHP. However, where agreements were informal, sustainability was less guaranteed. It was also thought that ongoing support and motivation of the WHP was still needed for the near future.

Pillar 3: With its focus on crisis response, Pillar 3 was seen as having activities to meet the immediate needs of migrants in crisis that did not necessarily have a strong sustainability element, such as those carried out as a response to new necessities due to COVID-19. Pillar 3 activities that were planned and focused on developing or reforming emergency response mechanisms and procedures had greater potential for sustainability as described above.

Pillar 4: With its focus on communications, Pillar 4 had less likelihood of sustainability and would require the ongoing support of WHP in the near future, according to IOM staff and stakeholders. They explained that communications with migrants, and potential migrants, was not a high priority for most governments and therefore securing funding for C4D campaigns and migrant information hubs may be challenging, as this stakeholder from an information hub explained: *“We provide information for migrants which is key for them.*

¹⁸ Bahamas was added to WHP as of Phase XI; Dominica and Guyana have been part of WHP since Phase X.

¹⁹ Instituto Costarricense de Turismo

²⁰ Coalición Nacional contra el Tráfico Ilícito de Migrantes y Trata de Personas.

Without WHP support we would continue but without the same intensity and outreach. For example, we couldn't afford to employ two persons for our hub".

2. Are the program beneficiaries adequately capacitated (technically, financially and regarding internal and inter-agency coordination) to continue to deliver results in accordance with the Objectives and Principles of the Migration Governance Framework?

The objectives and principles of the MiGOF framework summarize the *"essential elements for facilitating orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people through planned and well-managed migration policies"*²¹. As described above in Coherence, WHP was found to be aligned well to MiGOF and its activities were oriented to developing capacities of the program beneficiaries, such as through strengthening institutions and their policies and procedures.

Technical capacities, in terms of staff know-how, continual learning and supporting mechanisms, were seen as being provided although limitations could be seen such as staff changes and where mechanisms were not integrated or supported by governments and/or other migrant actors. Positive examples were provided where trained government officials had then consequently trained staff in their own or partner organizations, for example in Honduras and Mexico. Another example was seen in Guatemala, where a network of "community migratory counselors"²² was established, and as community leaders, their work was seen as continuing regardless of changes to the municipal governments.

Financial support beyond WHP was proving challenging in many contexts although positive examples were seen where governments and other migration actors had committed budgets to support ongoing activities, such as in the Northern Central American countries, Dominican Republic (shortage of funding to cover the information hubs (ventanillas) covered by the European Union (EU), and Belize (government budget for human trafficking initiatives).

3. What are the major factors and changes affecting sustainability? These may include expected and unexpected, intended, and unintended, positive, and negative factors. How should the program address these challenges to increase its sustainability?

Factors that affected sustainability were identified as follows:

Positive factors: The factors listed above under effectiveness also affected sustainability positively including the guaranteed three-year funding, the flexible program delivery and the government's willingness to collaborate. Other factors identified included the integration of initiatives within existing institutions and/or legislative and policy frameworks and processes, the regional initiatives in place, and the resources and research produced by WHP.

Negative factors: The factors listed above under effectiveness also affected sustainability negatively including IOM's administrative processes, COVID-19 pandemic, changes in government capacities to support WHP. Other factors identified included limited funding for

²¹ Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF): https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/about-iom/migof_brochure_a4_en.pdf

²² Consejeros Comunitarios Migratorios.

activities and challenges linked to the “whole of government” approach. An example mentioned was a ministry of education refusing to collaborate on a C4D campaign targeted at youth for the prevention of irregular migration.

A broader aspect affecting sustainability highlighted by several IOM staff and stakeholders was the lack of long-term planning of migration priorities jointly with governments, as is carried out by other UN agencies, such as UNDP that often carries out five-year planning jointly with governments on development goals. This would have the advantage that the WHP could be flexible and adapt its priorities but the disadvantage that it could face pressure to adapt its priorities from the donor or governments. This was a broader issue than WHP and applied to all IOM programming according to IOM staff.

Suggestions as to how WHP should address these challenges are described below.

4. Has the program identified the outcomes, the necessary services and prerequisites required to sustain the intended and changed outcomes?

This evaluation could not identify an explicit exercise carried out by WHP to identify the outcomes, services, and prerequisites to sustain the intended and changed outcomes of the program. More so, the approach of WHP across activities was to sustain outcomes where appropriate and feasible through focusing on strengthening institutions, capacities and working with governments and migration actors to put in place supporting policies, mechanisms, and processes. As described in the previous question, challenges were faced that were beyond the control of WHP, such as the capacity of governments and the priorities they set for migration management. Nevertheless, IOM staff and stakeholders thought more emphasis could be placed on assessing the elements necessary to sustain outcomes, both as the project design and implementation stages.

5. What organizations, services or relationships are required to sustain the outcome changes observed? How can the program improve the program design, implementation, monitoring and sustainability of future interventions?

A number of suggestions to sustain the outcomes and improve sustainability were identified, drawn from these evaluation findings, including:

- Ensuring that projects are designed with in-country contributions from governments and migration actors, and they are appropriately adapted to match the capacities and expectations of these actors.
- In designing and implementing capacity building activities, ensuring that activities are integrated into existing institutions that have a motivation and interest to maintain and continue the activities.
- In designing migration processes and mechanisms, ensuring that they are anchored in government policies and procedures that will support sustainability in the longer term.

- Use the learnings from the experiences in adapting processes and activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Phases X and XI and apply the learnings to future activities, for example, implementing hybrid solutions for collaboration (i.e., in-person, online or combination online/in-person).
- Developing complementarity with other projects and programs that cover the full migration spectrum, from root causes to reintegration to ensure that a broader range of needs in the migration area are met.

These points are taken up in the recommendations below.

7. Do the necessary preconditions exist at this moment, both in terms of installed capacities and regarding external factors, for the development of a phase-out strategy or exit strategy?

The necessary preconditions do not currently exist for an overall phase-out or exit strategy for the large majority of WHP activities. In many respects, the foundations for migration management in accordance with the MiGOF framework were now being put in place, such as through strengthened institutions and their policies and procedures as described above. This was also thanks to the past ten years of programming, the ongoing support and collaboration of the governments and other migration actors, and the long-term commitment of the donor, PRM.

The conclusion of the current three-year funding period would be an opportunity to assess for which activity streams a phase-out/exit strategy could be envisaged. For example, for policies and procedures that appear to be integrated and functioning well (Pillar 1) or where cross-border initiatives were functioning and sustained by governments (Pillar 2). This point is taken up in the Recommendations below.

4.5. Cross-cutting issues

Rating: 2 - Adequate

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

1. Has a gender perspective been incorporated in the program, in line with the IOM Gender Equality Policy/IOM Project handbook? Are there ways to better integrate gender considerations that could lead to improved outcomes of the project?

Consideration of gender was identified as key to all activities implemented by WHP according to both IOM staff and stakeholders in most countries. However, this evaluation found some inconsistencies with the proposed approaches of the IOM Equality Policy/IOM Project

handbook. For example, while needs assessments were conducted and activities considered the gender through aspects such as the involvement of specific gender related stakeholders (e.g., women's organizations), the evaluation did not see deeper gender analyses to guide projects as recommended by the IOM Project Handbook. Although indicators were gender disaggregated where feasible, no overall gender indicator was found, and it was unclear to what extent gender focal points were involved in project design and/or accessible for WHP staff for ongoing consultation and advice. Several IOM staff and external stakeholders also mentioned that the program was missing instruments for a gender mainstreaming approach and that there was a lack of focus on gender in general. Challenges in gender were also noted in terms of a clear understanding of the topic both internal and external to IOM staff, with a need for more capacity building to ensure better comprehension, as well as a need to make the topic more transversal, particularly in the Caribbean.

Positively, gender and human rights were seen as mostly transversal throughout the WHP program by IOM staff. In accordance with the IOM Project Handbook, the program worked with specific stakeholders throughout the process in several countries. For example, the Women's institute in Panama, as well the Ministry of Women in the Dominican Republic. Coordination was also found with the National Secretariat for Women²³, as well as with the Municipal Directorates for Women²⁴ in Guatemala.

In addition, WHP was seen to have worked with government entities that were receptive to cross-cutting issues in that they were aligned with fundamental laws in countries to protect the rights of citizens (e.g., Costa Rica, Panama) as mentioned by an IOM staff member: *"All of this is part of the fundamental rights that the Costa Rican government is a signatory to and respects. There is also disaggregated information. There is special attention at the municipal level to these groups in situations of greater vulnerability."* In El Salvador, the program was also identified as encouraging a cross-cutting approach in migration policies, having worked with the *Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería* (DGME) to help them update their protocol on gender-based violence and migration.

IOM respondents confirmed that WHP integrated specific training on gender mainstreaming for staff, from the project development to the implementation of activities and specifically on activities linked to security measures, counter trafficking and vulnerable communities. In Mexico, an example was cited of training conducted on gender and LGBTQ+ for officials working in the information hubs.

In terms of implementation, gender and human rights was also seen to be specifically included in C4D campaigns to raise awareness about dangers linked to human trafficking. There was also a focus on gender in projects that target cross-border migration under Pillar 1. For example, Mexico organized a women's job placement fair in the south. The program activities were noted as aiming for equal involvement of women, men and the LGBTQ+ community.

²³ Secretaria Presidencial de la Mujer Guatemala.

²⁴ Dirección Municipal de la Mujer Guatemala

The donor also recognized WHP as including cross-cutting issues into the programming, including LGBTQ+, as well as focusing on women and children in labor trafficking. Some respondents suggested more common lines in incorporating gender in day-to-day activities would be valuable. For example, ensuring that the specific differential needs of women and children were considered consistently in the provision of kits in migrant centers.

Most often, stakeholders mentioned the consideration of gender and human rights in training, workshops, and information hubs. Capacity building and workshops were said to have included the topics in agendas and often included sessions with gender specialists. An example included workshops organized with MICIC which developed the Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or Natural Disaster, as indicated by this stakeholder (crisis response): *“the gender perspective is transversal and cornerstones in the MICIC Guidelines. There is no training or workshop that these issues are not covered; it is essential to what works.”*

While many also emphasized a specific effort to include women in workshops, some also noted that they were not well represented in certain events (e.g., Labor migration roundtable in Honduras). While WHP collaborated with women's organizations as mentioned above, some respondents felt that more inclusion of women, human rights, and LGBTQ+ organizations were needed in the migration round tables to ensure a more balanced representation. In some cases, there were challenges in including women due to the nature of the work / organization (e.g., security along borders in Panama, where no women are hired to work in the field, but instead are integrated as support staff in the offices).

2. How has the program addressed issues related to human rights and the specific needs of migrant children and adolescents?

Considering that WHP's activities were aligned with international standards and commitments was seen as a confirmation that human rights were integrated into projects. Some respondents also mentioned using other standards such as the Sphere Handbook²⁵ (for humanitarian response) or the MICIC guidelines.

Several IOM staff and external stakeholders highlighted collaboration with key organizations that were linked to the protection of children and adolescents. For example, in Guatemala, protocols for protecting unaccompanied migrant children were supported by the Police Department for Children and Adolescents²⁶, and links were developed to organizations such as the Intermunicipal Technical Roundtable for Migration Issues²⁷, which includes the Commission on the Family, Women, Children, Adolescents and Old Age²⁸, and the sub-directorate of the Guatemalan Migration Institute²⁹.

²⁵ Sphere Association. The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum, Standards in Humanitarian Response, fourth edition, Geneva, Switzerland, 2018. www.spherestandards.org/handbook

²⁶ Departamento Especializado en Niñez y Adolescencia (DENA) de la Policía Nacional Civil.

²⁷ Mesa Técnica Intermunicipal para Migración.

²⁸ Comisión de Familia, Mujer, Adolescencia y Tercera Edad

²⁹ Instituto Guatemalteco de Migración

Some WHP activities addressed issues related to specific needs of migrant children and were linked to national laws and policies to protect children, adolescents, and women. For example, in Costa Rica, the program supported municipal migrant centers ³⁰, which provided psychological and legal support for women, and childcare centers in urban areas which included migrant children. However, capabilities were seen as falling short of the needs of children and teenagers traveling alone, for example, where adequate capacity of institutions was still lacking.

While the program was seen as having a clear focus on human rights in a transversal manner, most of the focus was on raising awareness and strengthening capacities of stakeholders involved, sensitizing, and educating about regular and safe migration. From a regional perspective, some challenges were identified with work on children and adolescents linked to the issue of informed consent. Some IOM staff felt that the program counterparts were not focused enough on children and adolescents. Some migration actors also stated that more could be done to focus on children and gender.

3. To what extent have gender and human rights aspects been considered during the project design and monitoring?

Gender and human rights were seen as being considered in the project design. IOM staff emphasized that both were central to all the projects and were always highlighted with governments. Gender markers were included in the planning process and most internal respondents confirmed that gender is considered in the development and transversal implementation of all projects. However, many also highlighted challenges in the integration of the topic.

At the same time, IOM staff still felt that the topic of gender was a challenge in some countries. While the program was said to have considered it, external stakeholders involved in the projects did not always see issues related to gender as priorities. Therefore, adapting it to the specific context and priorities in some countries was said to be a challenge. For example, in Panama a challenge identified was linked to the work with the national border service, which does not employ women on the front lines. Therefore, it was impossible to ensure a balance between males and females in capacity building sessions.

What was seen as supporting the task of placing delicate topics on national agendas and consequent planning, were regional networks. For example, the RCM opened dialogue about human rights in the context of the massive movements seen through caravans.

³⁰ Centros Municipales para Migrantes

Efforts were also mentioned linked to M&E to ensure that the participation of people of different genders was visible and noted. For example, various resources/tools were used to show how rights of the LGBTQ+ community were integrated into activities.

4. Did the program adapt to the changing context due to COVID-19 in an effective and efficient manner, with regard to the implementation of activities and the coordination with focal points and counterparts, and concerning the program monitoring and evaluation system? How effective and sustainable was the switch to alternative, mainly virtual, delivery methods?

WHP was recognized by both IOM staff and external stakeholders as having adapted well to the changing context of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The most important adjustments made were a move from in-person meetings to online formats, including individual or group meetings and capacity-building sessions. This was seen as positive by most IOM staff and external stakeholders, in that it allowed for greater participation of stakeholders, but that the sessions needed to be adapted and to some extent compressed into shorter periods. It was also noted that some activities were not as effective as in-person, such as cross-border meetings, job fairs or information services for migrants and potential migrants and monitoring visits of WHP staff and the donor. Migrant actors also mentioned that it was more challenging to identify each countries' priority through online communication.

In the long-term, this change was seen as generating some positive adjustments to the way of working. For example, financial savings for meetings which motivate organizations to maintain the online methodology. Some stakeholders mentioned hybrid solutions as a future sustainable approach with maintaining some activities online and some in-person, depending on the nature of the activity and the topic.

Internally, there was some divergence regarding the need for adjustments to workplans and budgets resulting from priority shifts from certain governments, restrictions in movement between countries and suspended travel due to the pandemic. While most IOM staff were positive about the flexibility of the program, some felt that the program did not allow for adjustments easily and that it required some creativity, in addition to lacking the necessary flexibility in administrative processes, as described above. Many staff thought that the changes in approach led to delays and challenges.

Some challenges mentioned were also linked to governments adapting to new virtual methods. For example, WHP's support at the municipal level (Honduras), where in-person contact was important, the change in the methodological approach led to delays due to uncertainties about how to move forward (lack of clarity about rules for meetings, uncertainty about border regulations, etc.). IOM was able to assist with training on using platforms and online tools. Similarly, in Panama, IOM staff commented that it was difficult to establish links to the new government administration virtually since they took office during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Despite the strain on governments to respond to the pandemic, it also resulted in some additional focus on migration issues, as this stakeholder (migration

management – coordination mechanisms and crisis response) commented: *“The pandemic made us realize that we needed to be able to register people....we realized that we weren’t able to distinguish between migrants and Panamanian nationals. They had rights but they weren’t visible...they have the right to an identity and access to services. IOM helped identify this issue and address it.”*

An advantage of the pandemic for monitoring was mentioned by respondents in that it provided additional information about migrant behaviors through social media monitoring, particularly for emergency response. Projects were able to see the impact of response through social media updates from migrants, which showed images and videos of the shelters and provided feedback about their status.

What are the main lessons learned and good practices, as well as corresponding recommendations to strengthen future interventions?

Good practices / lessons learned:

Project design:

- More involvement of stakeholders in the project design contributes to sustainability of projects.
- A “local to national” approach for migration management brings broader results.
- A three-year funding period contributes to sustainability and project stability.
- One-year workplans are too short for effective implementation of projects.

Project delivery:

- Inter-institutional approach with regular meetings and discussions produces more coordinated results, as each entity has clarity about their specific contribution to the activity.
- A combination of online and offline meetings can be effective. These hybrid solutions allow for cost savings and more opportunities to involve stakeholders from different regions including technical experts.
- The likelihood of results increases through integrating activities within existing institutions, policies, and processes.
- Short monthly virtual meetings that focus on both challenges and good practices are positive learning experiences for IOM staff.
- Flexibility in project delivery needs to be complemented by flexibility in accompanying administrative processes.
- WHP support and motivation is important to encourage and maintain cross-border discussions and mechanisms.
- Success of the communications activities illustrates that migrants and potential migrants need balanced and verified information on their rights and on risks they face.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Overall, this evaluation concludes that WHP has made good progress towards achieving its objectives in Phases X and XI. This implementation period faced considerable challenges, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, WHP was able to adapt to the global challenge rapidly and in a flexible manner. At the same time, the evaluation found that a number of aspects of WHP could be further optimized, and even greater results seen for the final year of the three-year funding period and for the future, as delineated in the following seven recommendations. These recommendations are based on the assumption that WHP will secure funding for another three-year period upon conclusion of the current three years in September 2022.

A) Strategic re-adjustment of WHP: Given the progress to date and moving into the final year of this three-year funding period, it is considered a fitting moment to reflect on where WHP has seen achievements, where not and why. This would require a deeper analysis to reassess priorities and needs in the final year and what will need to shift to the next three-year period (providing funding is secured). This could also be an opportunity to further align WHP's priorities with the evolving priorities of the countries and the donor.

- **Recommendation:** In Phase XII (October 2021 to September 2022), WHP should launch a strategy reflection process to understand how its current priorities are being achieved, to what extent they meet the needs of the countries and what gaps need to be addressed. This should be a “bottom-up” approach involving governments and migration actors at the country-level (in addition to regional structures). It will also allow the program to “match” these findings against the existing and new priorities of both the donor and IOM's global strategic direction. As a result, a solid analytical basis could be established for a new WHP strategy anticipated from October 2022.

B) Program design and delivery to encourage sustainability: The experiences gathered in Phases X and XI, together with the program's previous ten years provide insights into how activities can be designed and delivered to positively influence sustainability. Examples identified include:

- Capacity building training established through written agreements and integrated into existing processes as seen with WHP training integrated into existing training courses, embedded directly within national institutions.
- Capacity building involving creating processes and mechanisms, such as cross-border initiatives or support for combatting human trafficking, based on policies and guidelines, and also embedded directly within national institutions.
- A greater integration of civil society organizations and other international and national organizations, as well as diaspora groups active in migration issues in the design phase would also develop a greater ownership and consequent sustainability. Implementing hybrid solutions for the coordination and implementation of activities, or for more challenging activities such as information services for migrants.

- Finally, program design and implementation could seek even greater complementarity with the programs that cover the full migration spectrum, from root causes to reintegration.
- **Recommendation:** In the design of the next three-year period (Phases XIII, XIV, XV), consider further how sustainability could be increased through approaches such as:
 - Ensuring that WHP capacity building is integrated into existing institutions and their capacity building workplans.
 - Processes and mechanisms supported by WHP are anchored in government policies and procedures (where existing).
 - Greater involvement of CS and migration actors in the design phase.
 - Adapting projects and activities for hybrid solutions (i.e., online or combination online/in-person) where appropriate.
 - Further complementarity with programs that cover the full migration spectrum, from root causes to reintegration.

C) Plan for some phase-out strategies: The evaluation found that for many WHP activities, it is still relatively early to put in place phase-out or exit strategies. Nevertheless, for the next three-year period, certain activities could be identified, notably for pillars 1 and 2 where a phase-out/exit strategy could be imagined, for example where a policy, process or mechanism is well integrated within institutions.

- **Recommendation:** In the design of the next three-year period, assess activities for the possibility of putting in place phase-out/exit strategies, notably for some activities of Pillars 1 and 2.

D) Moving to three-year planning: The move to a three-year planning period was viewed very positively by IOM staff and external stakeholders and provided stability and a long-term vision for WHP. At the same time, for the WHP teams in COs and at the regional level, it did not significantly change their workload on planning and reporting as both were still required on an annual basis. A move towards three-year planning minus the annual exercises would therefore be welcome.

- **Recommendation:** With the validation of the donor, PRM, maintain a three-year planning period while eliminating annual planning/reporting but keeping quarterly reporting that provides the necessary updates for management and the donor.

E) Improving M&E: While the M&E system was seen as effective in monitoring progress and fulfilling reporting requirements, it was also reported as cumbersome to use and created a considerable workload for WHP teams (both the tool and the meetings required), as well as lacking a focus on learning. This evaluation would propose a series of modifications to the M&E system, some that could be introduced in Phase XII and others introduced in the next three-year period.

- **Recommendation:**
For consideration in Phase XII:

- Eliminate compulsory internal monthly reporting and maintain quarterly and annual reporting.
- Review the monthly M&E and coordinators virtual update meeting schedules and consider a two-to-three-month schedule rather than monthly.
- Review the virtual update format to include less time with COs providing activity updates and more time spent on challenges faced, lessons learnt and good practices.
- Proactively ask WHP teams in COs on which themes they would like more *and* less exchanges.
- Further refine the baselines and indicators of the results matrix for Phase XII; instead of using a “0%” baseline for capacity building training, use an aggregate percentage based on the pre-training surveys done in Phases X and XI (i.e. between 10-20% would seem reasonable); explain further the links between the national and regional indicator; involve further the CO teams in determining the baselines, indicators and targets (regional and country levels); share any access to past indicators and progress reported (before the current three-year period).

For consideration for the next three-year period (Phases XIII, XIV, XV) of WHP:

- Consider the introduction of an online M&E system to replace the use of Excel sheets and SharePoint (this would require a budget estimation for the next three-year period).

F) More flexible and quicker administrative processes: IOM staff in more than half the countries reported delays and frustrations with administrative processes, such as procurement and recruitment, that implied they were less efficient in the delivery of their activities. This is not unique to the WHP; a 2020 evaluation of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migration Protection and Reintegration in Africa reached similar findings³¹. However, in this case, the program staff worked with the administrative staff in producing “fast track” processes, for example, for procurement. This could be a possible solution for WHP also.

- **Recommendation:** For Phase XII, the central WHP team should accelerate discussions with their administrative colleagues to find solutions and possible “fast track” processes for procurement and recruitment (staff and consultants) that may be tested and documented before roll-out to COs.

G) Integration of cross-cutting issues: WHP had integrated cross-cutting issues within its activities, such as with disaggregated indicators, consulting relevant stakeholders and training IOM staff and partners. However, this evaluation found that further efforts were needed to integrate and mainstream gender and human rights in the WHP activities. It was also unclear as to what extent WHP staff could access IOM expertise in these areas. IOM staff and stakeholders provided concrete suggestions that are incorporated in the following recommendation. Some of these suggestions can be introduced in Phase XII, while others could be introduced for the next three-year period.

³¹ See: IOM, Office of the Inspector General (December 2020), Process Evaluation of IOM’s Institutional Response to the Setting Up and Implementing of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migration Protection and Reintegration (see p. 23 for a description of “fast-track” processes).

- **Recommendations:**

For consideration in Phase XII:

- Assess events and roundtables more systematically to ensure that more women, human rights, and LGBTQ+ organizations are included.
- Assess where staff and partner capacities in cross-cutting issues require further reinforcement.

For consideration in the next three-year period (Phases XIII, XIV, XV):

- Consider whether a WHP staff dedicated to cross-cutting issues is required to provide support across the regional and country teams.
- Review if it is necessary to introduce an overall gender and equality indicator for WHP.
- Ensure that gender analyses are carried out in the design phase for major projects.
- Ensure that common protocols are adopted in incorporating gender and equality in day- to-day activities, for example in the provision of kits in migrant centers.

These general recommendations are supplemented by recommendations for priority actions per country and based on the selected outputs, and at the regional level.

6. Country and Regional Action Points

Costa Rica

- Continue to encourage labor migration programs focusing on women in migration and broaden the scope of agreements beyond agriculture and construction. (1.3.c.)
- Focus even more on migratory work in rural areas, where the need is greatest, such as municipal work, self-employment, which allows them to develop their own projects and their insertion into local life. (3.1.b.)
- Scale up the C4D to the national level to enhance impact and to emphasize how labor migration is favorable to the economy. (4.1.a.)
- Improve thematic planning so that it goes from activities to results and impacts. For example, labor migration work at the national level can be scaled for regional actions among the region's countries. (cross-cutting)

Mexico

- Develop further the positive results linked to the local MGI studies (at the state level) to be able to reach the federal level. (1.1.a.)
- To address lack of participation by governments (potentially due to changes in administrations), create a mechanism to allow the program to move forward with the implementation of activities with government approval but without active government participation in cases where government doesn't engage. (1.2.c.)
- Include more women and gender issues in labor migration programs. (1.3.c.)
- Include government early in the project planning processes, as well as other actors such as Civil Society Organizations. (2.1.a.)

- Involve more IOM staff in the information sharing mechanisms, including other IOM programs both in country and at the regional level using the approach used for sharing among WHP pillars. (2.1.b.)
- Work on forced internal displacement in Phase XII, insert forced internal displacement into a regional program or as a regional program activity (currently, a priority in regional networks such as RCM). (3.1.a.)
- Place more precedence on the use of national experts in the development of C4D concepts and messages. (4.1.a.)

Guatemala

- For sustainability, continue providing capacity building through the e-campus platform using studies and data on the labor market and migrant profiles and vice-versa. (1.3.a.)
- Create operational manuals for certain collaborations to ensure specifics are defined. For example, in the support provided to the CONRED (The National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction Guatemala) to develop a protocol to include migrants in crisis. (3.1.a.)
- Strengthen WHP capacity building in crisis contexts with organizations such as CONRED. (3.1.b.)
- Reinforce C4D with more financial support in the dissemination of campaigns and awareness raising. (4.1.a.)
- Work further with local authorities to institutionalize information hubs by including them in plans and annual budgets of local authorities and migration actors. (4.1.c.)
- Develop a more thorough and demanding approach in the engagement of consultants to ensure quality results (as some had produced documents not adapted to the context). For example, more time for immersion in their institutions to better understand the context and how they work and ensuring continuity with the consultancy company. (cross-cutting)

Honduras

- Continue to include more organizations in the labor migration roundtable, especially those representing cross-cutting approaches such as those representing the needs of women and children's organizations. (1.2.b.)
- For the labor migration roundtable, support the strengthening of the ethical recruitment component and ensure that stakeholders are aware of the role of government in the relationship between companies and IOM. (1.3.c.)
- Support greater Interinstitutional networking at the local and cross-border levels to exchange experiences and set up migration agreements (for example, linked to border points, regulations, etc.) (2.1.a.)
- Coordinate with other programs to provide livelihood opportunities (employment, education, entrepreneurship) for youth, in addition to informing them about irregular migration risks (as youth keep migrating because of the lack of opportunities). (cross-cutting).

El Salvador

- Provide more ongoing training to include new situations to address. Include new staff training but also renew already trained staff. With themes such as care for the migrant population during the pandemic, human trafficking, labor migration, and climate change. Potentially collaborate with the Specialized Institute of Higher Education for Diplomatic Training of the Chancellery.³² (1.1.a.)
- Work closely with other projects that could support direct activities with the local economy to provide alternatives to migration. (2.1.b.)
- Disseminate information to a broader audience, using radio, TV, social media, and other platforms or initiatives, also including youth as a target audience to better understand national opportunities to provide alternatives to migration. (4.1.a.)

Panama

- Continue to develop relationship between IOM and the new national government to ensure that policies are developed and implemented (e.g., migration policy, counter-smuggling action plan). (1.1.a.)
- Continue to develop coordination mechanisms between countries that have helped avoid overlaps in the past and replicate on different levels (municipal for example), also in neighboring countries with authorities, local organizations, CS, and UN organizations. (2.1.b.)
- Reinforce the activities along the southern border in the Darién region (for example, continue to develop further the infrastructure, as well as the technical capacities of public servants in charge of administering the MRS). (3.1.b.)

Dominican Republic

- Develop a stronger focus on gender and children's rights, ensuring that there is a strong understanding of the topic among government officials and national staff. (1.1.a.)
- Continue to develop the positive collaboration with the new government administration to develop policies, particularly in labor migration and in regularization programs. (1.3.c.)
- Further support capacity building through the National Migration Institute school for national officials working on migration. (1.2.c.)
- Build on the positive collaboration for the implementation of projects along the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, as it was recognized as valuable by both country offices. (2.1.a.)

Haiti

³² Instituto Especializado de Educación Superior para la Formación Diplomática, IEESFORD, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

- Further build on the successful collaboration on MIDAS and organize a tactic to share success stories with other relevant WHP projects. (3.1.b.)
- Further leverage the positive relationship with the Directorate of Immigration and Emigration (DIE) to ensure sustainability in the MIDAS operations. (1.3.a)

Belize

- Given the positive signs from the government on the possible revival of the national migration plan, determine the nature of WHP's support. (1.1.a.)
- When carrying out capacity-building training aim to include possible follow-up actions to support integration within existing training courses and institutions (such as for tourism police). (1.1.c.)
- Review the progress seen to date in combatting human trafficking (i.e., establishment of a protocol and a data base module) and determine with the authorities what further support is required from WHP to ensure sustainability. (2.1.a, 2.1.b.)
- Consider how support for the information hubs can be further reinforced, such as reinforcing the possibility to facilitate access (referrals) to financial assistance for migrants seeking regularization and exploring other areas of support within WHP's mandate. (4.1.c.)

Guyana

- With the support of UN Resident Coordinator, explore the possibility of consulting further with the authorities to understand better their needs and capacities in migration policy and management. (1.1.a.)
- Explore further possibilities in the skills-gap analyses and ethical recruitment areas in collaboration with the private sector. (1.3.e.)
- Review the progress (or lack of) in the labor migration area and decide if WHP's support should be pursued or "shelved" until conditions are more favorable. (1.3.c.)

Dominica

- Review the progress (or lack of) towards a national migration plan and decide if WHP's support should be pursued or "shelved" until conditions are more favorable. (1.1.a.)
- Further expand the crisis response activities with the capacity building opportunities available with the tourism industry. (3.1.b.)

The Bahamas

- With the support of UN Resident Coordinator, consult further with the authorities to understand better their needs and capacities in migration policy and management, possibly also including the establishment of an information hub. (1.1.a.)
- Further build on the capacity building training with the University of The Bahamas to reach a broader range of government officials and migration actors. (1.1.c.)

Regional

- Further build on existing regional mechanisms such as RCM and reinforce collaboration with other UN organizations building on successful results, such as the strong collaboration with ILO.
- Ensure enough consideration is allocated to country contexts, including culture, government, and language. (1.1.a.)
- Improve internal processes in terms of roles and responsibilities within the program to improve the image as an organization and to have a more consolidated relationship with partners. (cross-cutting)
- Consider donor sustainability in the planning process of projects in the middle and long-term and work on longer term phases. (cross-cutting)
- Standardize processes and further improve templates for more facilitated reporting. (cross-cutting)
- Increase focus on gender, possibly allocate more funding to a dedicated gender focal point only working on this topic. (cross-cutting)
- Consider establishing a system to ensure that documentation is multilingual including possible native languages to increase impact. (4.1.a.)
- Develop C4D best practices to share amongst countries in the region. (4.1.a.)
- Strengthen the cross-border regional experience exchanges and institutionalize the cross-border relationships through inter-institutional agreements. (2.1.a.)