

Annexure 4

Readout report: Documenting Project's problem solving and learning strategies in Year 1

Meeting between the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) - (January 21, 2025)

Drafted by Esther Gomez, M&E Consultant

Background

The EU-India Cooperation and Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Phase II (CDMM), established under the 2016 Common Agenda for Migration and Mobility (CAMM), aims to enhance collaboration between the EU, its Member States, and the Government of India. The overall objective of the project is to support better management of mobility between the EU and India while preventing and addressing challenges related to irregular migratory flows. Building on the successes and lessons of Phase I, the project focuses on two specific objectives: strengthening legal migration pathways within the EU-India corridor and reinforcing institutional capacity while raising awareness about the risks of irregular migration.

Year 1: Progress, challenges and lessons learned

During the inception phase, the Project Advisory Committee convened to collaboratively prioritize and plan Year 1 activities, with project implementers developing concept notes for these priorities. In the subsequent delivery phase, implementers engaged with EU and Indian officials to brief them on the project and its workplan. Efforts focused on consultations with stakeholders, addressing feedback, briefing senior officials, and collaborating with the Indian Council on World Affairs to establish a shared vision for the project's first year.

The project successfully initiated or completed multiple activities; during which the government partners from the EU and India recognized the efforts to engage all stakeholders and highlighted the project's role in strengthening collaboration on migration within the broader EU-India strategic partnership. It was emphasized that the (extended) inception phase would ensure the efficient delivery of remaining activities and maintain momentum for the project's second phase.

Collaboration between Project Implementers and Project Oversight:

The project is structured around a collaborative partnership between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). These organizations play complementary roles in implementing the project's objectives. To ensure seamless coordination and progress, the ILO and ICMPD hold biweekly meetings to review developments, share updates, and align efforts on project activities. This regular engagement fosters strong communication and effective collaboration, enabling the project to stay on track and achieve its goals efficiently.

This structure is further supported by key committees to ensure robust governance and stakeholder engagement. The Project Steering Committee, comprising representatives from the donor (the EU) meets regularly, oversees strategic guidance and coordination. Additionally, the Project Advisory Committee, which includes representatives from the Government of India and the donor, focuses on reviewing the work plan and making key decisions in consultation with stakeholders. Together, these mechanisms ensure alignment, transparency, and smooth implementation of the project.

Role of India Partner-ICWA:

The project activities have been carefully designed and reviewed in collaboration with key partners. The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), a think tank under the Ministry of External Affairs, plays a vital role in supporting the project. While ICWA primarily focuses on research, it also contributes valuable insights into political and economic aspects of migration. By anticipating challenges and strategies, ICWA provides critical feedback on the project, helping to contextualize activities within the Indian framework. This includes reviewing concept notes for planned activities, offering comments, and refining the content to align with Indian perspectives and language. The review process for concept notes typically takes 4-6 weeks, during which the team interacts regularly with government stakeholders and encourages active feedback, ensuring a streamlined and collaborative review process.

The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) has been a key partner in the project, collaborating closely on specific activities such as student mobility in coordination with the project implementers. While there were initial delays due to staff turnover, significant progress was made in developing concept notes, with a strong focus on agreeing on objectives, timelines, and terminology. Once these foundational elements were established, efforts shifted to contextualizing activities, identifying stakeholders, and tailoring approaches to align with the Indian context. The process of preparing and executing these

activities, which typically takes around six months, has greatly benefited from ICWA's academic expertise and their ability to provide in-depth contextualization and insights.

The project implementers' involvement has also been critical in ensuring alignment and fostering collaboration. Regular interactions and clear communication have helped secure their buy-in, enabling the resolution of challenges and the successful execution of activities. This collaborative approach has worked well, as reflected in meeting minutes and the productive outcomes achieved.

The project's relationship with ICWA has also strengthened significantly. With a well-established rapport and mutual trust, the partnership now operates efficiently, with short turnaround times and a reduced risk of delays or rejections. This positive working relationship has been instrumental in maintaining momentum and ensuring the smooth delivery of project objectives.

Delivery of Workplan for Year 1:

The first year of the project involved an extended inception phase to ensure that all partners were aligned and could develop a joint approach. Concept notes for all activities are shared with partners for review, with some still under consideration. Key planned activities, in Year 1, include a workshop on labour market information sharing (conducted between July and September 2024), workshop on student mobility, and the development of knowledge tools that promote legal pathways such as the EU Blue Card checklist and background paper on ICT linkages in the EU-India corridor. Additionally, on the irregular migration pillar, an officials' workshop on return and readmission was held in Brussels. These initiatives aim to foster deeper understanding and collaboration in addressing migration-related opportunities and challenges.

These workshops were marked by open and candid discussions on the challenges and opportunities in this area. The events provided a platform to strengthen relationships between the EU and the Government of India (GoI), with both parties recognizing and appreciating the coordination efforts led by the implementers. GoI's active interest and commitment to participate in project activities, at senior levels, even without explicit requests, underscores the strong foundations laid by the project and its lasting impact on fostering mutual engagement.

Ensuring balance between both pillars:

The project has adopted a balanced approach to addressing both regular and irregular migration pillars, as well as topics such as return and readmission. The strong interpersonal

relationships developed through the project played a key role in securing the participation of the Indian delegation at the Return and Readmission workshop held in Brussels. This engagement is increasingly organic, as reflected in the valuable inputs and feedback provided by the Indian delegation (GoI) on concept notes. Such contributions highlight the growing alignment and shared commitment to the project's objectives.

Establishing the project as a platform for dialogue:

In addition to workshops, the project facilitated the development of background papers and stakeholder management discussions, ensuring comprehensive engagement. Consultations led to shifts in the project's scope, transitioning from a focus on rigid steps and recommendations to establishing the project as a platform for dialogue, knowledge-building, and fostering understanding. Engagements and exchanges have become central to this effort, reflecting the project's evolving role as a facilitator of discussions rather than a prescriptive actor.

The annual workplan established a framework for implementing interventions in line with the project's core pillars. While these interventions followed a structured approach, each activity underwent adjustments through concept notes to reflect shifting priorities and stakeholders' inputs. This flexible approach allowed the project to remain responsive and relevant, ensuring that Year 1 activities were effectively completed while laying a strong foundation for future engagement.

Enhancing monitoring and evaluation for improved impact

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) exercise is expected to deliver key outcomes that enhance the project's accountability, alignment, and effectiveness. A critical focus is on reviewing the log-frame and its alignment with project goals. This includes strengthening the M&E matrix with both quantitative and qualitative indicators, and providing clear, actionable insights. The exercise will also work on refining the language of attribution to better connect activities with their intended outcomes. Additionally, the M&E process will map the project's contributions to the EU's global indicators, ensuring coherence with broader priorities.

Guidance will also be provided on addressing ad hoc activities that were not initially foreseen in the Delegation of Authority (DOA). This involves determining how such activities can be effectively integrated into the logframe and what language adjustments are required to reflect their contributions accurately. The M&E exercise is therefore a crucial step in

refining reporting mechanisms, improving impact assessment, and ensuring that all activities are appropriately contextualized and aligned within the project framework.