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Governance of Labour Migration in South and South East Asia (GOALS) – Independent Midterm evaluation

QUICK FACTS

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BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

GOALS is a joint programme implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). GOALS works to support the Colombo Process, a member-driven, regional dialogue platform for countries of origin in Asia to hold dialogue and enhance cooperation on the management of migration through the entire migration cycle. A series of thematic working groups (TAWGs) have been established around particular themes relevant to migration for the member states within the Colombo Process. GOALS aims to work to support the TAWG process through engaging focal points of member states and enhancing the capacity of the representative organisations of migrant workers, trade unions, employers' federations, and other stakeholders to participate in the TAWGs and influence policy making. The overall goal of the programme is: Labour migration is safe, orderly and regular for all women and men from the Colombo Process Member States through strengthened collaboration and effective labour migration governance. The programme has three inter-linked and inter-related outcomes. Outcome 1 focuses on strengthening the TAWG process, Outcome 2 pilots policies and practices in selected member states, focusing on skills recognition, fair recruitment and reintegration, and Outcome 3 works to strengthen the regional knowledge base on migration.

Present situation of the project

The programme has made progress in delivering outputs in all three outcomes of the results framework. However, implementation was delayed by both the COVID-19 pandemic and the setting up of institutional arrangements between the three participating UN organisations (PUNOs). To date in Outcome 1, three online and two hybrid in-person/online TAWGs have been held, with another to be held in late August. Capacity building training led by SARTUC and MFA has been started and consultations with migrant workers held. In Outcome 2, a group to support the development of a Regional Qualifications Framework (RFQ) has been formed of government representatives, the migrant recruitment advisor webpage has been launched in Bangladesh, dialogues on the role of recruitment sub-agents have been held in Pakistan, and a toolkit for Gender-



	<p>Responsive Employment and Recruitment was translated and disseminated in Nepal. In Outcome 3, the SALAM network has been successfully launched, training of national statistical officers has taken place, and the initial draft of a gender assessment of skills development opportunities for migrant women in Sri Lanka has been completed.</p>
<p>Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation</p>	<p>This was a mid-term evaluation, which focused on two aspects of learning; programme improvement and organisational learning. The evaluation covers the implementation to date in all aspects of the results framework and countries of implementation.</p> <p>The primary clients of the evaluation will be the management team of the GOALS programme, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and the IOM, ILO, UN Women headquarters, regional and field offices, and evaluation units.</p>
<p>Methodology of evaluation</p>	<p>The evaluation used qualitative methods. The evaluation was framed within the principles of democratic evaluation, utilization-focused evaluation, and theory-based evaluation. The evaluation also ensured the integration of human rights and gender equality into the methodology and analysis of findings.</p> <p>The methods used in the evaluation included a document review, key informant interviews, the development of case studies, and workshops with programme stakeholders. Interview participants included government officials, employer and workers’ representatives, civil society groups that represent migrants, academics, and consultants, as well as programme staff, country office staff, and technical back-stoppers from the three PUNOSs. A total of 18 interviews were held with 24 external stakeholders (9 women and 15 men) and 26 interviews with internal stakeholders (12 women and 14 men). A workshop to review the theory of change and the results framework was held with programme staff. A results workshop to discuss the findings of the evaluation was held with the programme team followed by a final workshop with the programme steering committee and donor, programme staff, technical back-stoppers, and other key stakeholders.</p> <p>The major limitation the evaluation faced was the difficulty in arranging interviews with government representatives who participate in the Colombo Process. This in itself is considered a finding for the evaluation. This limitation was mitigated as much as</p>



possible by extending the period of data collection and interviewing representatives of non-state actors from all the key countries of implementation.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

The evaluation found the programme to be relevant to the needs of Colombo Process Member States (CPMS) with the caveat that it was difficult to engage many of the member states in the evaluation. Government stakeholders who participated in interviews for the evaluation shared a belief the GOALS programme was relevant to their approach to labour migration regulation. The three themes of the programme were reported by government officials to align with the major challenges of labour migration they are currently facing. However, the programme has had difficulties in arranging TAWGs and engaging governments during the pandemic, although there has been considerable progress on this between June and August 2022, which was after the collection of data for the evaluation. The inability to hold in-person meetings was cited as an impacting the relevance to government officials and the COVID-19 pandemic has led to various competing priorities. Activities between June and August 2022 have been reported to have led to considerably more engagement from government officials. Some of the CPMS have not been active at all in the TAWGs.

NSA stakeholders were generally supportive of the programme, believing it addressed several current gaps and have opportunities to build their capacities to influence policy. However, the limited number of TAWGs to date did mean some NSAs questioned the relevance of the Colombo Process and the space available for them to participate. Gender responsiveness was built into the programme, with the mainstreaming of gender being included in most activities.

Coherence

Stakeholders believe the programme utilises the comparative advantages of the different PUNOs. Each agency brings different technical competencies which complement each other and strengthen the programme response. They also bring the partnerships and relationships the different organisations have built up through many years of working in the countries of intervention.



There are though challenges in working with three agencies, specifically the lengthy process for decision making, which impact the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme. Although the inclusion of UN Women has greatly strengthened the gender responsiveness of the programme, stakeholders did raise the issue as to whether the programme was as gender responsive as possible and highlighted the importance of gender mainstreaming being the responsibility of all and not just UN Women, whilst noting that some attention is paid to gender mainstreaming by other agencies. It was also suggested awareness of the overall work of the programme at the country office level could be improved through a stronger communication structure.

The programme aligns with key normative frameworks including the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as various ILO conventions. The focus on strengthening regional dialogue platforms, gender mainstreaming, fostering fair and ethical recruitment, skills development and qualifications recognition, and sustainable reintegration are key elements of the GCM. GOALS is also designed to support SDG 8 on decent work, SDG 5 on gender equality, and SDG 10 on reducing inequality. The programme supports the achievement of international labour standards and aligns with various ILO conventions.

The programme also has developed synergies with other UN migration programmes in the region which complement the GOALS programme's work on these key normative frameworks.

Validity of Design

The programme is delayed in implementing a number of activities and as such this makes it challenge to assess the theory of change too deeply, however certain observations are possible. The programme has developed theories of change for each outcome which are fairly comprehensive but need some review at the mid-stage of the programme. The linkages between the different outcomes should be given stronger attention.

The programme has recently updated the risks matrix. A review of it suggests the risks are up to date and accurately reflects the risks the programme faces. However, given the need for long-term support from some of the programme's initiatives, an additional risk related



to the identification of longer-term funding could be added. The delays in implementation make it difficult to assess many of the assumptions, particularly the outcome level assumptions. Those that can be tested to date are generally valid, however some assumptions in Outcomes 1 and 3 should be reviewed and additional strategies considered if necessary.

Effectiveness

The programme has been delayed in many of its outputs in the results framework, although implementation has accelerated in recent months. As a result, achieving many of the outcomes, and even some outputs, within the timeframe of this programme will be challenging. While some of the output targets may be achieved, the programme is likely to need a no-cost extension in order to meet others. It is unlikely that the programme will achieve the target number of policy level outcomes in Outcome 1. Outcome 2 targets the development and implementation of frameworks and policies. The development of these may well be achieved by the end of the programme, but the implementation will take longer and is likely to need more support. Outcome 3 is the most advanced to date.

However, the outcome indicator requires the research done under this outcome to be used to influence policy makers which given the delays in Outcome 1 may be challenging to achieve.

Despite the challenges, the programme has a number of strengths which are contributing towards the achievement of many of the outputs. These include the strong teamwork among the programme team, the support the programme team gives to the external stakeholders, leveraging the broad technical resources of each agency outside of the programme team, and the design allowing progress in one output to be made independently of the other outputs, so even if the programme cannot achieve all of its goals, significant results in some areas can still be achieved.

Challenges the programme has faced include the lack of an inception period which led to delays at the start of the programme, some agencies not being able to recruit staff for a number of months, the lack of resources for positions at the national level, and



a lack of awareness among stakeholders of the broad coverage of the programme.

Human Rights and Gender Equality

The programme was designed to ensure gender mainstreaming in each output, and the inclusion of UN Women in the programme team was a response to importance of gender responsive programming. The PRODOC notes that while it will take a gender responsive approach to identifying the barriers faced by women and men migrants, it recognises that structural inequalities tend to construct more barriers which directly affect women. As such, the programme's gender mainstreaming is specifically focused on the needs of women. The evaluation reflects this in its assessment of gender mainstreaming. The programme does not directly engage with migrants themselves but through the inclusion of trade unions and CSO representatives of migrant workers, the programme is responding to the needs of women migrants and addressing some of the specific vulnerabilities they are exposed to, including gender-based violence and challenges in sustainable reintegration. The programme is though not disability inclusive and thus excludes one particularly vulnerable group and does not address the intersection of vulnerability which women with disabilities face.

The programme's initiatives are framed to align with key international human rights and labour standards frameworks, thus supporting the programme's human rights approach.

Organisation Efficiency

The timeliness of delivery of the programme and the bureaucracy involved in three UN agencies involvement in the programme means the efficiency of the programme has been affected. The lack of an inception period, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to agree working modalities, and the lengthy processes for approval on programme activities have all reduced the timeliness of delivery of the programme. The programme has responded to the challenges by revising the budget to streamline contracting processes and financial management.

The programme has been effective in leveraging other resources from within the agencies and ensured synergies with other

programmes. However, the lack of resources for national level staff contributes to the delays in programming and investing donor funds in this area could have increased efficiency overall.

The involvement of the three agencies provides mixed results on efficiency. The increased administration costs and the delays in implementation reduce efficiency. However, the programme does apply cost saving through the sharing of technical resources.

Potential Impact and Sustainability

There is a strong connection between impact and sustainability in this programme. The impact of the programme depends strongly on how effectively the policies and frameworks can be developed and implemented, and this requires them to be sustainable in the long run. The programme will probably require a no-cost extension to ensure the development of many of these frameworks is completed and pilot testing can be undertaken. The programme should also try to identify longer term funding to provide support in future initiatives for the roll out and implementation of the policies and frameworks. The sustainability of the Colombo Process TAWGs is a challenge if IOM is unable to identify funding to provide secretariat support. Government stakeholders shared they believed it important for IOM's continued involvement or it would be unlikely the TAWGs will continue to meet.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

1. Amend the results framework to be clear what can be achieved by the end of the programme, what needs a no-cost extension, and which results cannot be achieved in this programme. It is important to note though this should ensure the programme continues to measure potential changes at an outcome level and the challenges of the programme delays do not lead to a focus only on outputs.
2. Develop a no-cost extension proposal.
3. Review the theory of change and strengthen the linkages and pathways of change between the three outcomes. Assumptions



and risks should also be reviewed during this process and updated as necessary.

4. Engage other donors to try to identify a broader base of funding for the Colombo Process TAWGs and the initiatives being undertaken by the programme. Ensure the member states are broadly engaged in this process.

5. Consider initiating regular update meetings with country offices and national staff members to broaden awareness of progress in the Colombo Process and the GOALS programme as a whole.

6. Ensure either an inception period is built into future ONEUN programmes or that the design phase includes clarity on individual agency roles and the modalities of working together.

7. Ensure the work in developing templates for inter-agency cooperation are capitalised within the UN system.

8. Ensure that gender mainstreaming is addressed by all partners in the programme.

9. Discuss with Member States the conducting of an external evaluation focused on the TAWGs. This should not be done immediately but towards the end of the programme to allow time for any impact of the recent acceleration of activities to be understood and measured.

10. Encourage the informal meetings of TAWG members to compliment the more formal meetings.

11. Identify opportunities for conducting research into the vulnerabilities persons with disabilities face during migration and consider how to address these in future programming.

12. Strengthen awareness of the SALAM network and its partnerships with other programme stakeholders.

13. Consider expanding the programme steering committee to include external stakeholders, such as key members of the TAWGs.

Main lessons learned and good practices

Lessons Learned

1. An inception period is particularly necessary in a complex ONEUN programme where the modes of operation and individual issues are not decided during the design phase.

2. Starting the recruitment process for key positions prior to the contract being signed can help minimise delays to the start of a programme.



3. Ensuring sufficient funding for national level positions is important to maximise the benefits of the elevator approach in a regional programme such as GOALS.

4. Ensuring individual budget lines are limited to one PUNO as much as possible can reduce delays from administrative processes.

Emerging Good Practices

1. Establishing a weekly coordination process has helped facilitate good communication between the programme team.

2. Ensuring different elements of a programme can make progress and have individual impact, even if there are delays to the overall programme, is a useful approach in a complicated multi-agency and multi-country programme.

3. Bringing together CSOs and Trade Unions has helped strengthen the links between these two types of entity who have similar missions and goals with regards to migrant workers, but who often do not interact effectively.