Skills Mobility Partnerships:
Recommendations and Guidance for Policymakers and Practitioners

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* References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

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Acronyms

BLMA	Bilateral labour migration agreement
CGD	Center for Global Development
GFMD	Global Forum on Migration and Development
GSPM	Global Skills Partnership for Migration
ICT	Information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOE	International Organization of Employers
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IT	Information technology
MATCH	Migration of African Talents through Capacity-building and Hiring
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
MPF	Migration Partnership Facility
MRC	Migrant resource centres
NGO	Non-governmental organizations
PROMISE	Poverty Reduction through Safe Migration, Skills Development and Enhanced Job Placement
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMPs	Skills Mobility Partnerships
THAMM	Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa
TSMP	Transnational Skills and Mobility Partnerships
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UN	United Nations

Glossary of terms

This glossary presents common terminology relevant for Skills Mobility Partnerships as compiled in the IOM Glossary on Migration and the ILO Glossary of Skills and Labour Migration, as well as in relevant IOM and ILO publications as indicated.

Bilateral labour migration agreements (BLMAs): Bilateral labour migration agreements are arrangements between two States or agencies. They describe in detail the specific responsibilities of each of the parties and the actions to be taken by them with a view to accomplishing their specific goals in terms of governance of labour migration. The term includes legally binding bilateral labour agreements and Memoranda of Understanding. It can also include specific bilateral agreements between government ministries or agencies in countries of origin and destination, dealing with different aspects of labour migration. It can also cover framework or cooperation agreements that include labour migration, along with other migration topics such as irregular migration, readmission, and migration and development.[1]

Brain circulation: The effect of the movement of skilled migrants among their countries of origin and other countries, bearing knowledge and skills that can benefit countries of origin as well as countries of permanent or temporary destination. The exchange of knowledge and skills of migrants with communities and institutions in their country of origin and destination that allow migrants to apply the benefits of the knowledge and skills they have gained while living and working abroad.

Brain drain: Depletion of human capital in a specific occupation or economic sector resulting from the emigration of skilled workers engaged in this occupation or sector from the country of origin to another country (or from one region of a country to another – internal migration).

Brain gain: From the perspective of a country of destination, immigration of skilled workers into the country resulting in the acquisition of human capital. From the perspective of a country of origin, the positive spillover effects of the emigration of highly skilled workers such as brain circulation, or the motivational effects of migration that spur aspiring migrants to acquire further skills. Brain gain also occurs when migrants return back to their country or communities of origin and bring back with them new skills and knowledge acquired in migration.

Brain waste: In the migration context, the underemployment or unemployment of migrant workers who are unable to find jobs matching their skill level, owing to, for example, the lack of skills recognition, informality of employment relations or discrimination.

Circular migration: A form of migration in which people repeatedly move back and forth between two or more countries.

Country of destination: In the migration context, a country that is the destination for a person or a group of persons, irrespective of whether they migrate regularly or irregularly.

Country of origin: In the migration context, a country of nationality or of former habitual residence of a person or group of persons who have migrated abroad, irrespective of whether they migrate regularly or irregularly.

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1   See also United Nations Network on Migration (2022). Guidance on Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements.

Deskilling: In the migration context, the loss or decline of a migrant's skills and/or knowledge after a significant time of unemployment or employment at a lower skill level in the employment market of the new country.

Global Compact for Migration: The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (A/RES/73/195), is the first intergovernmental agreement, prepared under the auspices of the United Nations, to cover all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. It was adopted at an intergovernmental conference on migration in Marrakesh, Morocco on 10 December 2018. Objective 18 of the Compact contains a commitment to "Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences."

Emigration: From the perspective of the country of departure, the act of moving from one's country of nationality or usual residence to another country, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.

Highly skilled migrant worker: A migrant worker who has earned, by higher level education or occupational experience, the level of skill or qualifications typically needed to practise a highly skilled occupation.

Immigration: From the perspective of the country of arrival, the act of moving into a country other than one's country of nationality or usual residence, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.

Labour migration: Movement of persons from one State to another, or within their own country of residence, for the purpose of employment.

Labour mobility: Labour mobility – or mobility of workers – can be either occupational (movement along the occupational ladder) or geographic (movement across geographic locations). In the context of migration, geographic labour mobility is implied.

Low-skilled migrant worker: A migrant worker whose level of education, occupational experience, or qualifications make them eligible to practise a typically low-skilled occupation only.

Migrant worker: A person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.

Migration: The movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State.

National labour migration policy: A national labour migration policy for countries of destination usually sets out: (i) the extent to which States intend to manage and regulate the impact of migration in their national context, by defining clear objectives and outcomes, priorities and action plans for implementation; (ii) to ensure that labour migration has a positive impact on the national labour market, particularly in sectors where there is a shortage of skilled people, as well as in sectors where the need for workers exceed the number of workers available in the country; (iii) to address the challenges (as well as opportunities) that emerge, not only in the workplace, but also more broadly in terms of social and cultural dynamics; and (iv) in the longer term, to be responsive to changing dynamics in the national labour market. A national labour migration policy for countries of

origin may be more explicitly focused on the following: (i) Safeguarding the human rights of their citizens who are employed as migrant workers in another country; (ii) Promoting ethical recruitment and decent work; (iii) Ensuring access to social security for migrant workers; and, (iv) Ensuring that outward labour migration contributes to the development of the country of origin through the leveraging of remittances and diaspora networks.

Pre-departure orientation programmes: Courses designed to help prospective migrants, including refugees, acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to facilitate their integration into the country of destination. They also address expectations and provide a safe and non-threatening environment in which to answer migrants' questions and address concerns.

Recognition of skills and qualifications: The recognition of qualifications and skills covers two main areas: academic and professional. Academic recognition allows for the continuation of studies at the appropriate level, as well as facilitating access to an appropriate job. Professional recognition provides the opportunity to practise professional skills acquired abroad. Professional recognition covers both regulated and non-regulated professions. Regulated professions are usually governed by legal acts requiring registration, certification or licensing. Non-regulated professions do not imply any specific process, as the employer assesses qualifications and professional competency.

Return migration: In the context of international migration, the movement of persons returning to their country of origin after having moved away from their place of habitual residence and crossed an international border. In the context of internal migration, the movement of persons returning to their place of habitual residence after having moved away.

Skilled migrant worker: A migrant worker who has the appropriate skill level and specialization to carry out the tasks and duties of a given job.

Skills: Skills are the ability to carry out the tasks and duties of a given job. They refer to the relevant knowledge and experience needed to perform a specific task or job and/or the product of education, training and experience which, together with relevant know-how, are the characteristics of technical knowledge.

Skills mismatch: Skill mismatch refers to a situation in which a person in employment, during the reference period, occupied a job whose skills requirements did not correspond to the skills they possess. Skill mismatch may refer to mismatch of overall skills or to types of skills. The mismatch by type of skills includes: (a) mismatch of job-specific/technical skills; (b) mismatch of basic skills; (c) mismatch of transferable skills. A person in employment may experience: – Over-skilling, which occurs when the level and/or types of skills of the person in employment exceeds those required to perform their job; – Under-skilling, which occurs when the level and/or types of skills of the person in employment is lower than those required to perform their job.

Upskilling: Training that supplements and updates existing knowledge, skills and/or competencies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Labour mobility globally offers significant labour market and development opportunities, if harnessed, by addressing pressing labour needs, elevating human capital and productivity, and facilitating trade and innovation.

As many countries undergo demographic shifts and face profound labour market and employment transformations, be it through the digitization of work or the greening of economies, there has been renewed and growing attention on labour mobility and migrant workers.

While some countries experience a lack of workers to maintain key productions and services, the need for new skills is global. Digital, green and adaptive skills will not only be needed in selected countries but will be required across the globe.

To harness labour mobility not only to address labour shortages but to bridge cross-regional skills gaps, IOM has developed a global approach to skills development and labour mobility – captured in the model of Skills Mobility Partnerships.

SMPs describe bilateral or multilateral cooperation agreements or arrangements between States that promote skills development and skills-based mobility for the benefit of all stakeholders involved. They vary in terms of form, modalities and level of stakeholder involvement, but all focus on skills development.

While SMPs are not the first attempt to govern skilled migration, they aim to offer a different and potentially more beneficial approach than other models. SMPs promote a skills-focused approach to labour mobility that is grounded in labour market and skills data and centred around skills development, recognition and matching to the benefit of labour markets, employers, communities and migrants.

Previously, the governance of skilled migration has not always protected the interests of all parties involved in an equitable manner, that is, destination and origin country governments, migrants themselves, the private sector, training institutions and communities. On the other hand, migrants may lose out, perhaps by working in jobs below their skill level due to poor recognition of qualifications, or by working in exploitative conditions. Similarly, for countries of origin, the emigration of skilled workers can be a barrier to development, particularly if it exacerbates existing labour and skills shortages.

To address this, SMPs aim to share the benefits of skills development and skills-based mobility between all parties. This is achieved in one way, through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, that involves all parties in the SMP design and implementation process. SMPs aim to not only limit the brain drain effect of labour migration on countries of origin, but to contribute actively to their socioeconomic development through skills development in priority sectors for the countries involved. SMPs also aim to bring benefit to migrant workers themselves, by providing them with opportunities to reskill and upskill, presenting

them with employment opportunities to match their skill level, and encouraging better cost-sharing between all parties to mitigate large costs being borne by migrants themselves.

Moreover, SMPs respond to goals 4, 8 and 10 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which pertain to supporting safe working conditions for labour migrants, equal access to education and training for men, women and youth and regular migration channels. SMPs are also in line with Objective 5 and 18 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

About this guidance

This guidance provides interested stakeholders with practical advice and orientation on how to effectively set up Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs) or strengthen their essential elements. The document outlines policy recommendations and practical guidance for operationalizing SMPs, while acknowledging that SMPs can take various forms and need to be adapted to various contexts.

The contents of the guidelines include concepts, approaches, practical challenges, illustrations and existing approaches on how to effectively set up structures in support of SMPs.

The guide is based on a comprehensive desk review of existing literature on the topic of skills and mobility partnerships, semi-structured interviews and further consultations with key stakeholders and envisaged end user of this document. The guidance draws on the experience of existing IOM interventions on skills and mobility as well as pilot schemes facilitating labour mobility in the context of skills development. These will provide illustrations for encountered challenges and good practices.

This guide is intended for government officials, practitioners, businesses, training institutions, private and public recruiters, NGOs and diaspora organizations working on working on labour migration and skills development in the context of dedicated partnerships. Its principles can be applied in countries of origin, and destination, and in developing and developed contexts. Given that countries face different challenges when setting up SMPs and have various capacities, it is impossible to come up with a one-size-fits-all solution, the guidance is therefore intended as a general blueprint and is not region- or country-specific. The guide should be regarded as a living document, subject to revisions and improvements taking into account future lessons, challenges and good practices.

2. WHAT ARE SKILLS MOBILITY PARTNERSHIPS?

Skills mobility is not a new phenomenon. Various countries have implemented and experimented with agreements as well as specific schemes, initiatives, or pilot programmes to test sector-specific solutions and to account for the temporary needs of labour migrants. Several models and concepts linking skills development and migration in the context of international partnerships have been developed by think tanks and international organizations over the past decade. A selection is shown in Table 1. Most of these models describe similar concepts, but may vary in emphasis and objectives.

Box 1:	Skills mobility in the Global Compact for Migration

The idea of linking skills development with mobility and migration to achieve benefits for migrant workers, communities and countries of origin and destination, has been part of the negotiations of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. In 2018, as part of the Global Compact, Heads of State and governments have agreed to build global skills partnerships among countries. Global Compact Objective 18 commits countries to invest in skills development, facilitate the recognition of skills, qualifications and competences and calls for partnerships that strengthen training capacities of national authorities and relevant stakeholders and to foster skills with a view to prepare workers and trainees for employability in labour markets of participating countries.

Skills partnerships in migration have been recognized as an important tool in intergovernmental consultations that led to the development of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (see box 1). IOM, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) have established the Global Skills Partnership on Migration (GSPM) – a global platform for coordination among United Nations agencies at Headquarters level. Drawing on each member's mandates and expertise, the GSPM joins forces and mobilize expertise for the development and recognition of skills of migrant workers. It supports governments, employers and workers as well as their organizations, educational institutions and training providers, and other stakeholders to rethink migration in a way that is of mutual benefit to all stakeholders, principally migrant workers, including those who return (with a particular focus on women and youth), employers in need of skilled workforce, as well as the countries of origin and destination.

IOM formally formulated the model of **Skills Mobility Partnerships** (SMPs) in 2019 to promote partnerships that can respond to the global need for a skilled workforce.[2] They are an innovative mechanism to share the benefits of migration and mobility and to strengthen development outcomes in both countries of origin and destination as well as serving the

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[2] IOM Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance (2019). Skills-based Migration and Partnerships: Elements and Essential Prerequisites.

interests of migrants, communities and employers. While, SMPs can vary in form, modality, specific objectives and sectors, targeted skill level, included type of mobility (temporary, long term), as well as the level of stakeholder involvement, they all include the following five components:

Formalized State Cooperation | Multi-stakeholder Involvement | Training | Skills Recognition | Migration/ Mobility

Table 1: A selection of models linking international skills development with migration and mobility

Name	Institution	Characteristics
Global Skill Partnerships	Center for Global Development	The Center for Global Development (CGD) developed the Global Skills Partnership (GSP) model in 2014, in response to skill shortages in high-income countries and the lack of meaningful work for increasingly skilled young people in low- and middle-income countries. The GSP, which aims to ensure that mobility contributes to the development for all, takes the form of a bilateral labour migration agreement between two countries and includes involvement of private sector actors. The model promotes training and education in countries of origin and introduces cost-sharing, as the country of destination provides technology and finance for the training as well as broader systems support, while receiving migrants with needed skills who can integrate quickly. With the aim to avoid brain drain, it includes a "dual-track" model – candidates can choose to migrate or remain in their origin country.
Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs)	IOM	The Skills Mobility Partnership model described in this section encompasses similar features to that of CGD's Global Skills Partnerships, but explicitly adds several conditions and essential elements, such as the importance of a whole-of-government approach; taking into account the perspectives and development interests of all countries involved; migration procedures and regulations, social aspects of employment and mobility, and investing in skills development in countries of origin.
Skills Mobility Schemes	OECD	The OECD also defined the term Skills Mobility Partnerships as simply being those approaches and frameworks that aim to share the benefits of migration through a modality defined and supported by involved partners. In a recent study, Skills Mobility Schemes (SMSs) are defined broadly as labour migration programmes which involve a mobility aspect that helps address labour market demand in the countries of destination.
Transnational Skills and Mobility Partnerships (TSMP)	Bertelsmann Foundation	The TSMP concept draws on key characteristics of the GSP concept and expands its characteristics to respond to criticism of the GSP model above. TSMP can be defined as "an agreement between institutions that aims to link up issues associated with skills and training placement, the recognition of qualifications and (circular) migration across different policy fields in such a way that this creates a fair distribution of benefits to key stakeholders."

Name	Institution	Characteristics
Talent Partnerships	European Commission	Talent Partnerships are the European Union's specific model introduced as part of its new Pact on Migration in 2020. The entry point is strategic cooperation with partner countries to match skills with European Union countries' labour market needs. It builds on experiences gained through European Union Pilot Projects on Legal Migration and further aims to enhance legal pathways to the European Union, while engaging partner countries strategically on migration management. First frameworks for talent partnerships are currently under negotiation with the first batch of North African countries.

It targets various skill levels and may include temporary, circular or long-term migration. Talent Partnerships envisage including tailor-made cooperation to address labour market and skills needs in partner countries. |

SMPs and similar models are not fully prescriptive and leave flexibility beyond adopting a number of principles. Their aim is to be relevant to a variety of contexts, settings and migration corridors. Setting up and implementing SMPs, therefore, requires making several choices on the following aspects, which can also be used to build typologies of different approaches and models.[3]

Form of engagement	MoU, BLMA, trade-related agreement, placement agreements, wider migration partnership, etc.
Type of migration	Short-term, circular, longer-term, permanent migration
Time frame for implementation	Especially for publicly funded interventions, the time frame for implementation is often linked to donor funding cycles
Skill level	High-, mid-, low-level skills
Sector	Economic sectors for which skills are needed or supplied
Location of skills training	Skills training in the country of origin, destination or a mix of both
Level of flexibility	Are there flexible possibilities to change sectors, skill levels and migration and mobility opportunities (length of stay)
Funding structure	Public, private, international organizations, foundations, a combination thereof

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[3]   See, for example, a typology based on where training takes place and who pays developed by the OECD and another typology according to time frame, target group and development benefit developed by MPI.

Essential elements and conditions for SMPs

Successfully implementing SMPs and making their contributions sustainable requires conducive and well-structured environments as well as cooperation frameworks. The success of SMPs is contingent upon institutional capacities and infrastructure, policy and legislative frameworks, administrative practices and overall migration governance structures, as well as data availability in both countries of origin and destination. IOM's SMP model is thus based on eight "essential elements" as shown in Figure 1. This guide will provide further information and entry points on how to address these essential elements when designing and implementing SMPs.

Figure 1: IOM's eight essential elements for SMPs

1. Long- and mid-term planning
- Plan for long- and medium-term horizon
- Synchronize with Sustainable Development Goals
- Define needs of all stakeholders in policy planning
- Analyse and incorporate aspects related to the future of work

2. Multi-stakeholder approach and policy coherence
- Consider all policy aspects and interests of stakeholders
- Ensure benefits for origin and destination communities, States, private sector and migrants

3. Data for evidence-based policy
- Build SMPs on evidence-based policy
- Base SMP on comprehensive and real-time data and analysis

4. Local develoment and job creation
- Build skills development based on local labour market needs
- Support job creation

5. Skills classification and recognition at national level and beyond
- Inter-State cooperation on recogntion, legal certification
- Alignment of national systems and link to regional and international agreements

6. Address the social aspects of employment and mobility
- Include diaspora engagement, remittance facilitation
- Encompass return and reintegration, taxation, social and health insurance
- Ensure good communication with migrant and non-migrant workers

7. Incorporate migration considerations
- Ensure alignment between SMP objectives and migration procedures

8. Cost reduction and sharing
- Analyse, monitor and anticipate costs
- Fairly distribute costs among all benefiting stakeholders

Source: Author's design based on the eight essential elements described in IOM (2019).

Who is involved? Actors and stakeholders relevant for SMPs

Given the partnership nature and the aim to achieve benefits for all those involved and affected, it is important to ensure that a **variety of actors** from all countries involved contribute to and steer SMPs. In this pursuit, SMPs follow a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach that aims to ensure that cooperation on skills mobility is coherent and holistically designed across thematic areas and resorts, governance levels and stakeholders.

Relevant actors in countries of origin and destination cover skills development and training, employment, labour market needs and skill shortages, migration and mobility, development as well as (re-)integration and social aspects. In practice, the exact stakeholders that matter will vary depending on the constellation of countries involved, where labour migration is placed within the administrative and political systems and where capacities exist for designing and implementing SMPs.

Figure 2 presents an overview of important stakeholders in implementing SMPs successfully. They comprise private and public educational institutions, government actors, including line ministries, local authorities and state certification institutions, businesses and associations, employers' organizations, private recruiters, NGOs, workers' organizations as well as migrants and communities in countries of origin and destination.

Figure 2: Relevant actors involved in Skills Mobility Partnerships
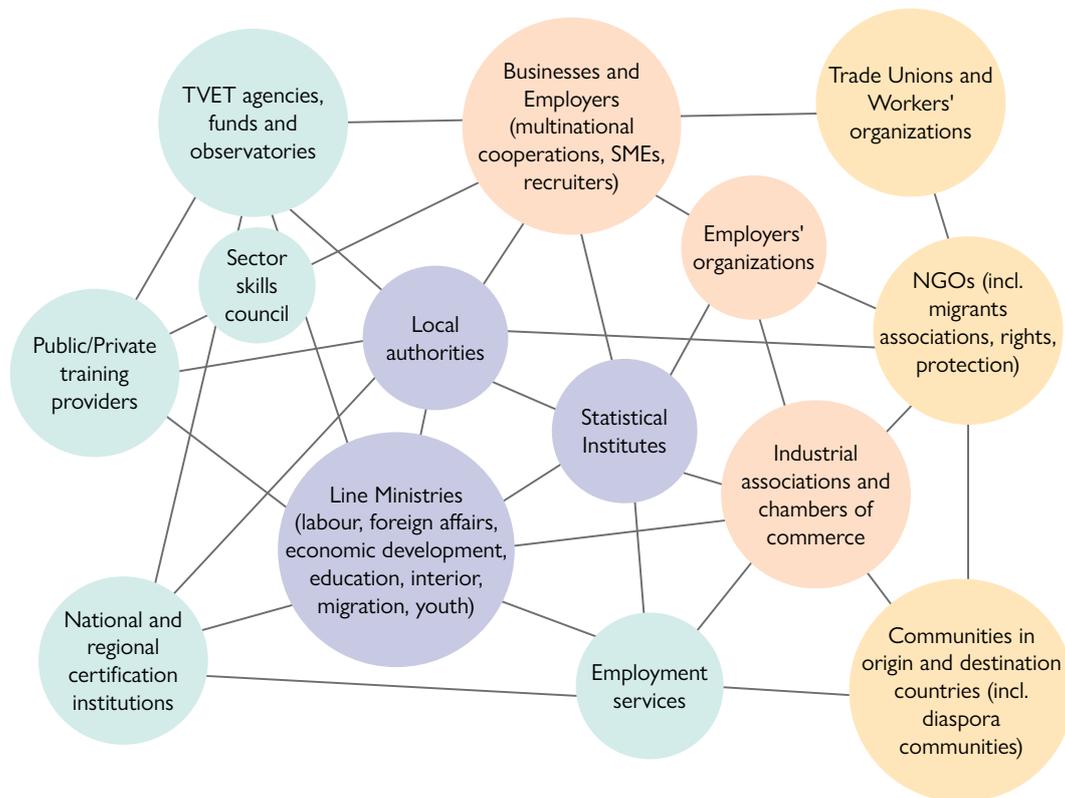
Key Steps in designing and implementing SMPs

The design and implementation of SMPs include a number of key steps, as illustrated in Figure 3. Each country has a specific context, institutional background and capacities, which affect the processes of setting up and implementing SMPs. Some countries may be more advanced in developing systems and carrying out activities described in these steps than others. The speed of the journey towards SMPs can thus vary. The actors involved have different roles and the forms and modalities for their engagement vary along these steps.

For instance, carrying out a matching process will require working with public employment agencies or private recruiters. Carrying out accompanying professional or language training as part of an SMP may require working with public educational institutions and private training providers, as well as employers.

Figure 3: Key Steps of Skills Mobility Partnerships[4]

Skills Mobility Partnership formulation
Joint definition of scope. objectives, sectors, type of migration and other characteristics through multi-stakeholder engagement and based on labour market analysis and forecasts

Training and Education
Skills development of potential migrants and non-migrants

Employment and upskilling

Evaluation and learning

Investment in Training, Education and Skill recognition systems

Job search, labour market matching, skills recognition

Stay/Return (Reintegration)/ Onward migration

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4   Key steps for designing and implementing SMPs will depend on institutional capacities and frameworks, therefore, this cannot be understood as a linear process that applies in every context.

3. LONG- AND MID-TERM PLANNING FOR SMPs

Labour mobility can address cyclical and short-term labour market needs, as well as structural shortages that require longer-term solutions. SMPs may respond to both, yet partnerships on skills and mobility are more sustainable and effective if they take a medium- and longer-term perspective. This means responding to future developments in a dynamic way. It requires considering a number of trends and frameworks affecting the future of skills, technological developments, environment and climate changes, labour markets and demographic developments during the design and planning of SMPs, while introducing flexibility to respond to changes.

Box 2:   The "Future of Work" and relevance for international migration and mobility

We are witnessing increasing diversification of forms of work, as well as myriad social, technological and economic changes, which together are being described as the "future of work". These changes profoundly reshape labour markets and the geography of jobs. For instance, automation may create new jobs and new markets through more affordable capabilities, while other existing jobs disappear or are being redesigned. Hybrid and remote work have become more common in some sectors. It is important to analyse and take into account these developments in order to understand what skills are needed in a dynamic context and how SMPs can add value. Changes in the world of work may also affect migrant workers already present in destination countries. SMPs should thus consider how migrant workers can be best protected from adverse effects and equipped for emerging opportunities in the context of such changes.

Labour markets are constantly changing. Factors such as globalization, automation and digitalization, and new ways of organizing work, as well as other social and economic factors need to be analysed and taken into account to understand what skills and systems are necessary for labour markets. Moreover, global climate change is likely to negatively affect employment opportunities. This is especially true in the agriculture, mining, energy and transport sectors in Asian and African countries. According to Deloitte (2022), "more than 800 million jobs worldwide – around one quarter of the global workforce today – are highly vulnerable to both climate extremes and economic transition impacts." At the same time, a green transition and decarbonization process has great potential to create additional employment opportunities and SMPs can play a role in supporting new skill needs (for example, "green skills" needed for a green transition).[5] Such labour market changes will need to be analysed, anticipated and incorporated into the planning of labour migration and

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[5]   The transition to a net-zero economy will require and help create a Green Collar workforce. See Deloitte (2022) for more details on how rapid decarbonization and active transition policies in the coming decade can lead to more jobs being created in the long term, given that the right policy supports from governments are in place. See also ILO (2018) on how climate adaptation measures can create jobs and protect workers.

educational policies, as well as SMPs, to help avoid situations in which skills acquired through training lose relevance, and labour and skill gaps widen or change.

Governments, their institutions and other key actors may have different levels of knowledge, data and capacity to anticipate and plan for an SMP and formulate a mid- or long-term vision. This is why it is important that the different needs of stakeholders are known and that – as part of an SMP – their capacities are strengthened and that support is given for longer-term planning.

SMPs that take a longer-term view rely on sustained political support and will need to be responsive to changes and resilient to shocks or crises. In order for SMPs to remain relevant as changes occur in the economy and on labour markets, it is important to involve a broad-based coalition of actors that have both have the

> Within the framework of IOM MATCH, stakeholders in Nigeria and Senegal have been keen to receive support from IOM and other specialized agencies in order to develop forecasting tools so that they can better anticipate the future trends of their labour market.

relevant knowledge and have an impact on or are impacted by SMPs. They will need the (financial) support and lobbying of private sector umbrella associations, such as federations of industries or chambers of commerce, with the power to influence government policy and interest in a skilled workforce. Moreover, SMPs will need to integrate flexibility in their design so that they can be adaptive.

SMPs are conceptualized, planned and implemented not only against the background of longer-term national and regional development strategies, but also in the context of longer-term global migration and sustainable development frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Compact for Migration for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration ("Global Compact"). These frameworks are geared towards making migration contribute towards sustainable development in the longer term. They directly include migration and skills-related objectives, and highlight how well-managed migration can contribute to wider sustainable development. SMPs should take into account these strategic frameworks and make explicit links to them during planning and when agreeing on SMPs' objectives. As part of monitoring and evaluating the success of SMPs, corresponding SDG/ Global Compact goals and targets should be integrated into monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks.

SMPs support several objectives of the Global Compact beyond the above-mentioned target on building skills mobility partnerships, notably objective 5 (enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration) and objective 18 (facilitation of mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competencies). SMPs can contribute particularly to the following SDGs:[6]

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[6] See IOM (2018). *Migration and the 2030 Agenda: A Guide for Practitioners*, its accompanying Booklet and the SDG Indicators metadata repository. Moreover, the Sustainable Development Goals include 10 indicators that are directly related to migration issues, as well as 24 indicators for which migrant-relevant disaggregation of data is important. For more information, see DESA.

SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

SMPs can contribute to strengthening education systems in involved countries

Target 4.3: By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.	Target 4.4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Target 4.5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

SMPs can contribute to supply skills needed for economic growth and support decent work for all, including through involving the diaspora

Target 8.6: By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.	Target 8.8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular, women migrants and those in precarious employment.

SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Skills development as part of SMPs can make a tangible difference in terms of reducing skills divides and inequalities within and between countries

Target 10.7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

SMPs can make a contribution to building skills for green transitions, thereby enhancing adaptive capacity, human and institutional capacity, and reduce negative impacts

Target 13.1: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.	Target 13.3: Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

SMPs can contribute to raising additional financial resources for developing countries in the form of remittances, leveraging diaspora investment and enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development, as well as global partnerships for sustainable development and public, public–private and civil society partnerships

Depending on the sector in which the SMP is supporting skills development and the building of education systems, other SDGs may be relevant. An SMP that includes skills development for areas relevant to a green transition or climate-smart agriculture, for instance, supports reaching climate-related SDGs. Ways for SMPs to contribute actively to climate-related goals (for example, as part of COP goals or also in the context of sustainable food systems, as well as regional frameworks such as the European Union Green Deal) include addressing labour demand in green sectors with migrant workers; improving the environmental impact of migrant jobs; and contributing to green skills for migrant workers.[7] Through training in green skills, migrants can contribute to climate-related goals in both the country of origin and destination.

Recommendations

➜ **Decide on what long-term objectives** SMPs should predominantly achieve by taking into account all stakeholders' perspectives.[8] While objectives may vary, each SMP should be clear on long-term goals. These can include, among others:
  • Testing new labour migration pathways or specific recruitment for sectors;
  • Developing a skilled workforce;
  • Flexibly meeting labour market needs of the future;
  • Jointly developing training programmes and curricula for new skills needed in both countries of origin and destination;
  • Supporting employers to recruit workers with relevant and needed skills;
  • Supporting wider sustainable development aspects for migrants, countries of origin and destination;
  • Improving education, migration, skills recognition and labour-matching systems on their own as well as in conjunction;
  • Building capacity to manage skills development and labour migration;
  • Improving labour migration data collection, use and sharing.

➜ **Check if planned objectives of SMPs are compatible with each other** (policy coherence), for example, through carrying out a feasibility analysis in which objectives are mapped and possible tensions identified.

➜ **Check available forecasting and analysis tools**, either by public (statistical/ employment) agencies or private actors, or see how they could be developed in order to anticipate future trends relevant for the labour market, including those relevant in the context of "future of work", globalization of labour market, skills anticipation (See box 13) in view of automation, green transition and digitalization.

➜ **Map the capacity needs of involved institutions and stakeholders** and integrate capacity-building measures as part of SMP implementation.

➜ **Factor in possible labour market developments due to anticipated climatic changes** and necessary green transformation of the economies to meet climate goals. SMPs should make links to existing and future employment, education and labour (market) policies and strategies, and involve relevant ministries in countries of origin and destination (see section 4).

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[7] See ODI (2022). Migration for climate action: how labour mobility can help the green transition | ODI: Think change.
[8] This can be achieved through engaging various stakeholders (see section 4 on multi-stakeholder approach and policy coherence) and needs assessments.

➔ **Assess how digitalization and automation will impact the demand for labour (migration)** and how it changes the skills and skill levels needed.

➔ **Set up SMPs to serve objectives and long-term skills needs of regional and global long-term development and migration agreements and strategies**
  • Sustainable Development Goals
  • Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
  • Global and regional strategies addressing climate change and strengthening green transition (for example, COP, European Union Green Deal, ASEAN Strategies on the Environment and Renewables in Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative)

➔ **Introduce flexibility provisions**. For SMPs to serve a long-term vision, they will need to be flexible to accommodate possible changes and shocks (for example, changes in demand for work and skills due to economic fluctuations and crises). Implementing parties of SMPs should thus be able to adjust if conditions change in the face of unforeseen threats or opportunities, including through redirecting funds, changing sectors, mobility opportunities and so on.

➔ **Where appropriate, assess the possible contribution of the envisaged SMP to broader development and migration frameworks (SDGs, Global Compact for Migration)** and introduce explicit links with existing indicators at regional and national levels. Establish links to relevant stakeholders involved in these policy processes (for example, the unit within the relevant ministry responsible for reporting and follow-up of the SDG and Global Compact frameworks).

➔ **When designing an SMP, opportunities for skills development should be considered** at different stages of the migration process.

➔ **When designing skills development intervention, take into account existing migration considerations.** It is important when designing the skills development element of an SMP to first map what legal labour pathways exist for migrants to travel, to avoid investing in skills development interventions that will prove unsuccessful due to migration constraints.

Further resources

Future of work in the context of migration and mobility
- Deloitte (2022). *Work toward net zero. The rise of the Green Collar workforce in a just transition*.
- ILO (2019). *The future of work and migration*.
- WEF (2022). This is the future of work, according to experts at Davos 2022.

Sustainable Development Goals
- United Nations Summary presentation of SDG Targets and Indicators.
- *Migration and the 2030 Agenda Practitioners Guide*.

Global Compact Implementation
- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.
- United Nations Migration Network: Implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration – Guidance for governments and all relevant stakeholders and Booklet.

Migration for Development
- IOM (2022). All resources: Tools, manual and guidance for integrating migration into development.
- IOM (2022). *Migration Governance Indicators Data And The Global Compact For Safe, Orderly And Regular Migration A Baseline Report*.
- IOM (2020). *IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development*.

World Economic Forum
- Future of Jobs Report 2023. INSIGHT REPORT MAY 2023.

Center for Global Development
- Huckstep, S. and M. Clemens (2023). *Climate Change and Migration: An Omnibus Overview for Policymakers and Development Practitioners*. CGD Policy Paper 292. Washington, D.C.

4. MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH AND POLICY COHERENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF SMPs

International skills development and mobility, organized as part of SMPs, covers cross-cutting issues and may address multiple policy objectives.

Developing a comprehensive approach to skills and mobility across countries as part of SMPs requires **balancing different interests and priorities in several policy sectors and between various actors**. This can be a challenge at the national, bilateral and multilateral levels. SMPs aim to achieve this balance also between countries, which adds a further layer of complexity.

Policy coherence for migration and sustainable development across various policy domains is important in this context. Prioritizing the interests of one single policy domain increases the risk of "producing unwelcome and unintended consequences both domestically and in partner countries".[9]

For SMPs to attain meaningful and sustainable outcomes, a wide range of stakeholders, institutions and networks, therefore, needs to be involved. Successful SMPs are predicated on **multi-stakeholder cooperation** (see box 3). This is crucial, not only between governments, but also between employers, educational institutions and other training providers in countries of destination and origin as well as migrants themselves.

The engagement of various actors helps to ensure that all relevant areas of knowledge are integrated and that SMPs serve the interests of countries of origin and destination, businesses and employers, and those of migrants. This in turn can help ensure that SMPs are coherent with national and local-level development priorities. For instance, governments will need to work with the private sector to understand changing patterns, structures and practices of employment, which in turn can help identify relevant changes to migration policy and law, as well as adjustments needed for educational policies and training curricula. Migration policies are an integral part of the framework necessary to support business environments that are conducive to economic growth and development.

Effectively managing and making the most of multi-stakeholder dialogues and participation requires **governance structures** to coordinate strategic engagement at different levels and both horizontally and vertically.[10] It requires enabling ecosystems that pave the way for effective communication, coordination, collaboration and engagement.

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[9]   Newland and Salant, 2018.
[10] Coordination will need to take place both horizontally, that is between ministries and bodies of the central government, and vertically, linking national and subnational levels to guarantee connected and sustainable implementation of SMPs. See UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab: In-country coherence and coordination.

Such systems are needed to facilitate multi-stakeholder processes at various stages (from defining objectives of SMPs, skills matching, upskilling, to labour market matching, regulations regarding entry and stay/immigration policies, and supporting return and reintegration) in order to **build a common understanding and trust and to manage expectations and interests**. Experiences from existing skills and mobility initiatives have shown that they often fail because of incompatibilities between educational and training systems, job standards and skill requirements, migration and employment policies, and a lack of strategic engagements across actors to bring such elements together.

Box 3:   Multi-stakeholder, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches

A **multi-stakeholder approach to skills and mobility governance** describes a framework for policymaking and implementation that views skills and migration as cross-sectional and conceptually and politically reflected in various institutions and policy fields that require the engagement of various actors.[11] The approach aims to coordinate and reconcile political, administrative – and increasingly societal – strategies and actions, both conceptually and in terms of content and administration. It involves a policy approach that transversally discusses and shapes objectives, policies and responsibilities, which are shared across regional, national and local levels.[12]

To account for the multi-dimensional nature of migration, "whole-of-government" and "whole-of-society" are similar concepts aiming to identify the sum of interests that cut across migration and provide holistic and integrated solutions to migration governance. The United Nations Global Compact for Migration[13] and other frameworks before[14] have called for "effective migration policies and practices [characterized by] **a whole-of-government approach** […] to ensure horizontal and vertical policy coherence across all sectors and levels of government" (Global Compact, 2019:5). Contributing to the 23 objectives set out by the Compact demands different policy domains to work together and to coordinate their approaches. Two important areas in which a whole-of-government approach are particularly important according to the Global Compact is border management and in international cooperation on migration. The Global Compact also promotes a **whole-of-society approach**, which means "including migrants, diasporas, local communities, civil society, academia, the private sector, parliamentarians, trade unions, national human rights institutions, the media and other relevant stakeholders in migration governance".[15]

Following such approaches can help identify joint objectives and support **policy coherence**, which aims at:
• Pursuing synergies to advance shared objectives;
• Actively seeking to minimize or eliminate negative side effects of policies;
• Preventing policies from detracting from one another or from the achievement of agreed-upon international goals and development objectives.[16]

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[11]   There are various reasons why such an approach can be useful, which are beyond the scope of this document to lay out. A summary can be found for example in Hong and Knoll (2016).

[12]   The approach can refer to both horizontal and vertical communication, coordination and cooperation within politics and public administration, as well as to cooperation with civil society actors or the private sector.

[13]   The United Nations Global Compact for Migration aims to "leverage the potential of migration for the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals" (Global Compact, 2019:5).

[14]   The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015; The Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) in 2005; and the IOM Council, 2015.

[15]   See Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

[16]   See Hong and Knoll (2016).

For SMP to be effective, the 3C model can be useful.[17] It requires the synchronization of objectives, strategies, goals and outcomes (Coherence). The collaborative design and implementation of strategies, programmes and projects, while taking into account specific organizational mandates and interests (Cooperation). Agreed mechanisms and structures for reporting, monitoring, evaluation, review and ongoing planning, as well as clearly defined levels of autonomy, authority and accountability (Coordination)

IOM promotes whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches in the context of migration governance. It supports governments in understanding how governance areas are interrelated and are affected by migration. In support of a whole-of-government approach it has provided guidance on how to "mainstream" migration into local and national policy planning.[18]

The area of labour migration and mobility is characterized by political sensitivity and high levels of bureaucratic complexity. There are several key challenges that need to be considered and addressed when developing SMPs that strive to foster multi-stakeholder approaches and integrate policy coherence.

1. Who instigates and leads the SMP?

The agency or country leading and instigating the SMP often has a strong input in how to design the SMP and whom to involve. In existing schemes and initiatives, destination countries have often led the initiative and have provided funding for the implementation.

2. Absence of joint objectives across all stakeholders

There may be instances where it is difficult to balance different interests and where joint visions or aligned objectives do not emerge with all partners. This is for instance the case if there is no clear business case for labour migration for envisaged employers. There may also be instances in which partners are involved, but do not strongly engage in the SMP process. Line ministries may compete among each other and may not find a common coordinated position.

3. Trust

Lack of initial trust may be a challenge across actors. Private sector actors may not want to engage in public processes that are perceived as being inefficient or slow (due to the nature of public administration and systems). Governments across countries may not fully trust that there will be win-win partnerships, but believe that each has an incentive to further their own economic interests with such partnerships.

4. Existing capacities

Limited institutional capacity to coordinate, organize and implement multi-stakeholder approaches has been a key issue with existing skills and mobility initiatives. Involving multiple stakeholders requires adequate institutional structures to manage such approaches effectively.

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[17] This model was first used in the 2005 report of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), titled "*Migration in an Interconnected World: New Directions for Action*".

[18] See United Nations Joint Migration and Development Initiative (2017): *Guidelines on mainstreaming migration into local development planning*.

5.   Degree of complexity

A balance needs to be found between the involvement of all actors and stakeholders in the process of setting up and operationalizing the SMPs, while still keeping simplicity in their design, which is "often key to ensuring that pilot initiatives can be scaled up, replicated and transformed into permanent legal pathways that can be sustained without public funding".[19]

6.   Absence of partners

A key challenge may be the actual absence of adequate partners. In some contexts, there may not be quality service providers that are adequate to join the implementation of an SMP. In this case, capacity-building and support would need to be put in place first.

Table 2: Interest in SMPs by category of actors

Actors	High-level interest in SMPs
Governments in countries of origin and destination	• Increase in productivity in specific sector that benefit from large-scale investment in skills • Increase competitiveness in specific sectors that benefit from large-scale investment in skills • Attract foreign direct investment in sectors that benefit from large-scale investment in skills • Increase trade in services in sectors that benefit from large-scale investment in skills
Governments in countries of origin	• Provide mobility, training and employment opportunities for their nationals at home and abroad, especially in sectors where there is a labour surplus, added value of existing skills or of upskilling for labour markets abroad • Avoid "brain drain": exacerbating skills shortages • Reduce costs for governments of irregular migration and reintegration • Increase remittances and socioeconomic contributions from diasporas • Create possibility to contribute to development through a transfer of skills via circular, return migration or via diaspora engagement, as well as through trainees who remain in the country of origin and can fill skills shortages • Create balanced partnerships based on mutual benefit rather than conditionality • Provide financial and technical assistance to support participation
Governments in countries of destination	• Fill labour market gaps and structural skills shortages: effective matching of available skills with labour needs • Design skills-based labour migration pathways in line with political support and with domestic public opinion in mind (may favour circular rather than permanent migration for lower-skilled workers) • Facilitate cost-sharing with other stakeholders to limit financial burden as well as improve the chances of a sustainable partnership • Enable migration in a safe and orderly manner, contributing to skills development and avoiding brain drain as part of a commitment to the Global Compact for Migration

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19   Chirita and Stefanescu (2021). Tapping into Global Talent – Putting the EU Talent Partnerships in Motion.

Actors	High-level interest in SMPs
Businesses and employers in origin and destination countries	• Access to a well-trained and skilled workforce at different skill levels (from low- to higher-skilled workers) • Skills training that matches employers' needs, because employers participate in the design of the skills, education and training programmes • Continuous professional development of (migrant) workers • Depending on the sector: possibility to retain workers or hire the same worker multiple times • Positive return on investment when investing in skills development: favouring longer-term stay of workers rather than short-term circularity, immediate employability of the worker, no bridging courses needed • Provision of information on labour market and employers' skills needs with a view to adapting labour market, education and migratory systems • Investment in skills development and training to access domestic and foreign markets • Building international investment opportunities and networks • SMEs: interest in schemes that support them in lowering costs of hiring internationally and accessing foreign markets • Increase productivity, efficiency and innovation • Improve reputation and enhance social responsibility
Training institutions	• Understand skills needs in different markets and how skills development curricula can help serve both domestic and foreign skills markets in the future • Enhance capacities to design, adapt and deliver training curricula that provide students with relevant and marketable skills that correspond to employers' skills and labour market needs
Trade unions and civil society organizations	• Labour immigration does not distort conditions for domestic workers • Terms of recruitment and working conditions are decent and fair, labour rights are respected • Migrants receive support throughout the duration of the SMP • Career opportunities and access to continuous individual professional skills development are available • Inclusion and access for disadvantaged groups of workers
Migrant Workers	• Continuous professional development and acquisition of new professional skills • Higher earning potential • More practical ethical recruitment (e.g. no recruitment fees) and protection from labour exploitation • More opportunities to find employment according to skill level • Mobility opportunity • Professional employment • International-quality training • Access for students from low-income backgrounds

Recommendations

Creating an enabling environment for whole-of-governance approaches, multi-stakeholder processes and policy coherence

➔ **Make SMPs a collaborative effort between stakeholders.** A review of existing experience shows that involving all relevant actors early on and from the outset of planning is a key element for success. SMPs should ensure that all stakeholders (ministries, businesses and employers, federations and associations of companies, national employment agencies, diaspora, etc.) participate right from the start of the design of the SMP, and not only as part of the start-up and implementation phases. In some countries, in order to get all stakeholders on board it may be required to obtain a security clearance from the government. In this instance, it might be the case that the SMP is designed first with the private sector and donors, before involving other actors which require security clearance, such as international organizations, later on once clearance is obtained. Ideally, public and private sector actors in both countries of origin and destination (for example, as part of multi-stakeholder dialogues) build and drive the SMP together and agree on relevant sectors, curricula, governance roles, cost-sharing, training needs and so on. SMPs may also be fully initiated by industry representatives (including chambers of commerce) together with public actors to work on reform of the skills system and education to serve labour market needs. The involvement of all actors can take place as part of dedicated advisory committees including social partners, employers, public actors and diaspora, and other civil society actors.

➔ **Ensure that there is sufficient time for SMP design, development and implementation**. Plan in sufficient time for trust-building among actors. Establishing a relationship of trust among the actors is essential for making the project more sustainable. SMPs may need lead-in time (during design or start-up phases) to build partnerships and experiment with new sectors and new actors, as well as get systems up and running. For SMPs that emerge from donor-funded interventions, a time frame longer than the normal project cycle of three years seems preferable (see box 4). SMPs should provide opportunities for continuous dialogue about respective interests, needs and possible alignment strategies, as well as for monitoring, evaluation and integrating lessons learned.

Box 4:   ILO's and IOM's lessons learned and recommendations from the THAMM project

THAMM is a regional programme supporting institutions in North Africa to draft and implement policies and mechanisms for safe, orderly and regular migration, thereby contributing to improving the governance of labour migration. One of the key lessons learned from ILO's and IOM's experience with the THAMM project is that a project that pursues comprehensive objectives in the area of labour migration governance, labour migration statistics, skills anticipation and qualifications and competency recognition, social protection and capacity of public employment services, requires structural and long-term intervention. For ILO and IOM, a project like THAMM requires whole-of-government approach from the very outset, as well as suitable time frames (beyond the normal project cycle of three years) as well as appropriate resources.[20] Ideally involving all partners from the beginning leads to partners seeing the programme as a window of opportunity to reform policies and innovate operationally.

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[20]   See the THAMM entry in the United Nations Migration Network repository of practices.

➔ **Introduce transparency about all (policy) goals.** This can take the form of a published MoU or agreement that transparently notes all objectives and ensures that expectations of SMPs are clear by all stakeholders involved.

➔ **Consider carrying out a feasibility analysis.** A comprehensive potential or feasibility analysis before starting an SMP, and revisiting lessons learned from previous experiences and evaluations of similar interventions or agreements, can help to well prepare and test a planned SMP.

Box 5: Carrying out a feasibility analysis: Lessons learned from a skills and mobility scheme between Germany and Kosovo[19]

A skills and mobility scheme between Germany and Kosovo[21] focusing on the construction sector involved a synthesis of existing relevant analytical evaluations in the planning phase. This helped ensure that the design of the partnership included multiple-win outcomes. Evaluating the experiences gained through predecessor schemes was particularly helpful in ensuring realistic and sustainable planning. Based on this experience, this project recommends conducting a comprehensive potential or feasibility analysis before starting any skills and mobility scheme, such as SMPs.[22]

➔ **Assess the institutional and legal frameworks and infrastructure** in place in countries of origin and destination to implement and pilot SMPs. Consider institutional departure points of involved governments, stakeholders and organizations, especially in light of their independence and ability to implement agreements. This should include finding out is a security clearance is required before involving different stakeholders. Consider gaps in internal and external coordination between partners and stakeholders, as well as gaps in capacities for implementation.

➔ **Build political and administrative support networks prior to setting up SMPs**
Think about the political and administrative support needed for SMP implementation. Find champions with relatively high standing actors in the political system (in different involved ministries) willing to support the SMP with the leverage to help resolve blockages and to overcome challenges.

➔ **Establish well-structured governance structures** for the SMP with different layers (decision-making, operational) and thematic or sectoral working groups.

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21   References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
22   See Sauer and Volarević (2020). *Transnational Skills and Mobility Partnerships (TSMP) – Contextual factors, conceptual design and application.*

21

The MENTOR I project (2017–2018) provided a working example of multi-stakeholder coordination spanning all governance levels. The project implemented a city-to-city cooperation model, in which cities successfully took the lead in coordination with public and private institutions, development cooperation agencies and international organizations in the region. According to the project evaluation, the public–private cooperation established by the project was influential in creating traineeships for the 30 beneficiaries. Building on the MENTOR I project, MENTOR II (2021–2024) demonstrates a renewed emphasis on the multilevel and multi-actor aspects of the partnership, achieved through the bringing together of local and regional partner institutions and employment agencies from Italy, Morocco and Tunisia.[23]

➔ **Provide dedicated opportunities for research, preparation and incubation of pilot partnerships as a way to help create an enabling environment, build capacity and assess further capacity needs.** Stakeholders, specifically public and private actors, may first need to invest in fully understanding different priorities and identify and define common interests and (capacity) needs before entering an SMP. Only if these are clear can strategies and tools be designed together. Smaller-scale pilot schemes can help reveal mutual interests and can help build relationships and systems, but they may then need to be more modest on envisaged skills and migration outcomes.

➔ **Develop capacities along the way.** An SMP can support the development of the necessary enabling environment for multi-stakeholder engagement and effective implementation by including tailor-made capacity development (utilizing different methodologies, including through technical assistance measures, peer-to-peer support, round-table discussions and workshops, refresher training, etc.). The capacities that can usefully be strengthened depend on the context and stakeholders involved. Common areas include capacities for skills recognition and related procedures (including skills anticipation), BLMAs, ethical recruitment, pre-departure and post-arrival orientation and skills-matching. Experience of existing interventions has shown that capacities are built often through accompanying actors in carrying out activities as part of the implementation process (for example, accompanying skills matching processes). A "learning-by-doing" through accompaniment throughout may thus be more successful than classroom-based training. Capacity-building for public agencies can also be key for retaining trust with the private sector (for example, when it concerns the quality of matching of candidates).

Experience from the project Accessing Overseas Employment Opportunities for Moroccan Youth has shown that retaining trust with German private sector actors was linked to the capacities of the public employment agency ANAPEC (Moroccan National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Skills) in providing oversight of matching and recruitment processes and in vouching for candidates. Close engagement of employers who visited Morocco to take part in recruitment processes with ANAPEC built capacities on both sides.[24]

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23   See MENTOR Project: MEditerranean Network for Training Orientation to Regular migration.
24   See Marie-Nelly (2018). Young Moroccan professionals make it to the German tourism job market. World Bank Blogs.

➔ **Ensure that regional authorities are also included in SMPs.** National governments play a role in setting legal frames and defining procedures regulating skills migration and mobility. However, local and regional governments play a vital role in creating sustainable urban development infrastructures catering to in- and outflows of migrants. They often are committed to supporting the skilling of migrants for employment in partnership with national and international counterparts. Involving them is essential to ensure that designed policies are effective and rooted in local data and realities.

➔ **Know the diaspora by identifying diaspora groups, organizations and their capabilities.** This can be done through mapping exercises or through updating existing mappings.[25] These should include their skills, interests and their willingness to contribute to SMPs. Where possible, the roles of the diaspora in SMPs, given their capacities, can be defined in the design phase. Diaspora may be involved as entrepreneurs, employers, providing networks to support welcoming/onboarding and integration of migrant workers in their host communities, and engaging in skills transfer with their countries of origin as part of the SMP. These roles may be linked to existing skills development activities being undertaken by diaspora organizations.[26] IOM has developed iDiaspora as an online platform to engage with a global diaspora community and to explore resources and tools.

➔ **Consider engaging intermediary professional and international organizations to help manage complex multi-stakeholder processes.** These bodies can take care of reliable and inclusive project implementation and administration. They may also play an important role in enabling the smooth working of SMPs. This is especially important in case there are capacity constraints in involved governments. These organizations facilitate exchange and cooperation between multiple stakeholders with various interests. Such intermediaries may need a high level of political and administrative skills, as well as a broad political support base so they can effectively mediate interests and navigate tensions that may arise in multi-stakeholder and public–private partnerships. These organizations could also act as knowledge depositories to help increase institutional memory and encourage strategic programming.

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[25] See for example IOM (2022). *Diaspora Mapping Toolkit*.
[26] See ECDPM (2021). Implementation of the talent partnerships: What potential role for the diaspora? EUDiF and MPF case study, implemented by ICMPD.

Strengthening public–private collaboration on SMPs

➔ **Aim for businesses, industry and employers' associations to take part in and invest in the SMP.** Public actors setting up SMPs should involve employers early in the inception and design, for example, when selecting sectors, skill needs and job profiles for training. Employers can provide advice throughout and be involved in the evaluation and monitoring phases by sitting on steering committees or Advisory Councils. Yet, ideally, they invest financially and act as co-implementers of training programmes for specific professional groups within SMP schemes. This will help ensure that SMPs are relevant and effective.

➔ **Identify a clear business case and (economic) benefits for employers.** Involvement and financing of SMPs by private sector employers requires a positive cost-benefit calculation on their part. A strong business case may involve economic benefits, the reduction of risks, and benefits in the form of finding skills and talent otherwise impossible to recruit. Incentives can also take the form of accessing new networks, pioneering and entering into new markets, gaining knowledge and experience. Consider carrying out a cost-benefit analysis to have strong data backing up the business case.

➔ **Include structural exchanges with all private bodies involved** (chambers of commerce, employer´s associations, sector skills councils and others) and invest in establishing a climate of trust.

Box 8: Points for public actors to consider when involving business in public sector-initiated skills and mobility interventions

The following points are based on lessons learned from several European Union-funded skills and mobility interventions and provide ideas on involving businesses in destination countries.

- **Design the SMP as something pioneering,** exploring new horizons and driving innovation rather than another project of the public sector.
- Carefully **identify and select employers** to include in the SMP process (SMEs chosen based on size, interest and being pioneers).
- **Give involved businesses control** over the process from design to implementation.
- **Include perks** for those businesses to be included, for example, strengthen their network (business trips to the country in question as part of official delegations to countries of origin).
- **Offer attractive forms of mobility**. Consider how long migrants will be able to stay as part of the envisaged SMP. Some businesses may not join if the SMP envisages temporary stay of migrants. For instance, in one scheme some companies were hesitant to join the initiative because of the limitations to the length of stay (for example, a temporary one-year limit).
- **Communicate with the private sector in their language.** Especially when involving businesses and employers, understanding their incentives and adopting their language can help to develop joint goals and secure their interests.

IOM has developed a toolkit for integrating migration into private sector development and trade interventions. The guide also includes advice for engaging with the private sector, such as considering to include enterprise incentives (e.g. access to special funding pools) and to identify interlocutors within industry representative bodies.

Further resources

- IOM's Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF) emerged from the migration objectives in the Sustainable Development Goals. It aims to define what is meant by the "well-managed migration policies" to which the SDGs aspire.
- OECD Dashboard of indicators for measuring policy and institutional coherence for migration and development.
- IOM toolkits on how to mainstream migration into international cooperation and development (MMICD) (for example, see links here for governance, employment and education policies and interventions). These toolkits highlight a number of areas important for policy coherence between migration and sectoral policies. They also provide practical guidance, checklists and diagnostic tools for carrying out problem, stakeholder and risk analyses.
- The IOM platform iDiaspora includes many tools that governments and other stakeholders can use to mapping diaspora organizations and to enhance their engagement. One important tool is IOM's *Diaspora Mapping Toolkit*.
- IOM has developed a toolkit for integrating migration into private sector development and trade interventions. The guide also includes advice for engaging with the private sector, such as considering to include enterprise incentives (e.g. access to special funding pool) and to identify interlocutors within industry representative bodies.
- IOM's IRIS Ethical Recruitment Initiative brings together policymakers, regulators and private sector on the topic of ethical recruitment and regulation of international recruitment. It has shared practical guidance on how to move forward jointly on these topics. See for instance the *Montreal Recommendations on Recruitment: A Road Map towards Better Regulation*.
- IOM (2022). Fair and Ethical Recruitment Due Diligence Toolkit.
- IOM (2023). *Labour Migration Process Mapping Guide. Understanding and Assessing Human and Labour Rights Risks to Migrant Workers During Recruitment, Employment and Return*.
- ILO (2019): *The role of social partners in skills development, recognition and matching for migrant workers*.
- ILO (2017). General practical guidance on promoting coherence among employment, education/training and labour migration policies.
- ILO (2021). *Manual on participatory assessment of policy coherence* and (2020). *Coherence of labour migration, employment, education and training policies in the ECOWAS subregion*.

5. DATA AND INFORMATION FOR EVIDENCE-BASED SMP DESIGN

Effective and sustainable SMPs require an evidence base that is factored into design, planning and implementation phases. Choices during these phases will need to be based on comprehensive and real-time data from various sources. This includes statistical, administrative and other types of data (including employer surveys, skills foresight exercises, etc.). Foresight work is important in this context as it allows to develop scenarios that can help prepare for different scenarios. SMP design ideally integrates foresight exercises early on in the preparation and strategy planning, as well as when defining concrete objectives.

This section summarizes key data and information needs that are required to inform choices on partner countries, most suitable sectors and skill levels, among others.

Box 9: The Migration Data Portal of GMDAC
IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) has developed the Migration Data Portal as a unique access point to timely, comprehensive migration statistics and reliable information about migration data globally. It includes immigration and emigration statistics as well as statistics on labour migration.

During the initial stages of setting up an SMP, it is important to carry out a thorough analysis and assessment of current and future labour market and skills needs in countries of origin and destination. Governments will need to have a clear understanding of their own and partner countries' human capital requirements, demographic developments, employment structures, labour market demands and economic trends in specific sectors. Moreover, analysis of existing migratory corridors, trends and existing regular pathways for labour migrants,[27] as well as for those in the diaspora, should be conducted and used to inform the design of SMPs. It is important that both the provision of data as well as the interpretation and analysis are carried out through multi-stakeholder cooperation and involving governments, businesses and their associations, trade unions, migrant organizations and those recruiting skilled workers (see section 4 on multi-stakeholder processes).

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[27] SMPs are likely to be implemented initially within the existing legal framework without requesting modifications of laws and regulations. Yet, they can also highlight shortcomings that can inform changes and modifications.

Box 10: Important questions for information collection when designing an SMP[28]

The following set of questions is an indicative non-exhaustive list. Specific questions might arise depending on each case and countries involved.

Choosing partner countries for SMPs
- Which countries have similar labour shortages and labour market needs?
- Which countries have industries with similar skills and interests in investing in skills development? Which countries have similar education and trainings systems and standards?
- Where are the existing migratory ties (including diaspora), cultural linkages, foreign policy ties and trade linkages?
- What are the existing migratory corridors?
- Which countries have political ambitions and willingness to engage in SMPs for their skills or labour markets?

Choosing sectors for SMPs
- In which sectors are skill shortages and skill gaps related to labour market needs?
- How are the labour market and specific sectors affected by the changing world of work, environment and climate change, globalization and digitalization trends in the medium to long term? How will this affect shortages?
- Are there particular labour gaps that need to be filled to transition to a low-carbon economy?
- Where is there demand from employers and businesses for skills, including from migrant workers?
- Where is public interest and political will in expanding migration to work in these sectors?
- Where are specialized training requirements?
- Where is there potential for remittances and skill transfer?

Skills and qualification
- What is the structure of the qualification system and how is quality in the education/ training system assured in both country of origin and destination?
- Where are differences in sectoral skills needs or requirements between labour markets that would need to be bridged by additional skills development for labour migrants?
- Are migrant workers typically able to utilize their education and skills in destination countries, or do they face underemployment or overqualification?
- What are the systems of skills and qualifications recognition that exist in both countries of origin and destination or at the regional level?
- How are skills issues regulated in other bilateral or multilateral labour agreements in which involved countries are already part?
- What skills development opportunities exist for migrant workers? Are migrants able to access lifelong learning opportunities compared to workers in the country of destination?
- Are there procedures for documenting and recognizing prior learning for migrant workers? What is the process, which institutions are responsible and what procedures are followed for which occupations/qualifications?
- Is there pre-departure and post-arrival orientation training for migrant workers? Who is organizing this?

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28 Partly adapted from World Bank (2021). Expanding Legal Migration Pathways from Nigeria to Europe – From Brain Drain to Brain Gain and ILO (2020). *Training manual on the ILO Guidelines for skills modules in bilateral labour migration agreements*.

Skills matching
- What skills-matching services exist, including for migrant workers?
- Which institutions/agencies are in charge of skills matching of migrant workers before departure? How is the process organized?
- What role can Public Employment Services (PESs) have in providing assistance to migrant workers and businesses in skills matching and recognition processes?

Legal environment for labour migration (migration laws and policies)
- What legal environment for labour migration exists and is this accessible to migrant workers as part of the envisaged SMP?
- What procedures will need to be followed to access labour migration pathways, what are the requirements and required documents and time frames for processing visas, as well as work and residence permits?

Policy coherence
- What are relevant development, employment, education/training or migration-related objectives and policies that can support SMPs and which can be served by SMPs?

Gendered analysis
- Does gender-responsive analysis exist regarding skills supply and demand, and labour market needs?
- What potential impact will an SMP in a specific sector have on gender-related objectives?

Challenges exist due to the fact that there is often insufficient data on labour needs, immigration statistics and labour mobility, which makes it difficult to assess trends, opportunities and shortages. At times, data exist, but are owned by different institutions, which do not share and exchange data. Many countries do not have a functioning or comprehensive labour market information systems (LMISs) in place and if they do, labour migration aspects may not be fully integrated. LMISs are however essential to respond to labour market needs effectively. SMPs can support and provide incentives for building capacity and introduce new tools for gathering data and information on these aspects, strengthening ministries of labour, public employment services, national statistical offices and social partners. These tools should provide data disaggregated at the local and regional levels, and systems should be capable of keeping up with dynamic sectors and changing labour markets. Consultations between public and private actors, including employers but also research institutions, can ensure that live data on skills requirements and certification needs are shared and incorporated into data collection and analysis systems. This helps to ensure that the design of SMPs can rely on strong evidence.

> **Box 11: Lessons learned from support to data collection on labour migration in North Africa**
>
> The International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) adopted new guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration in 2018. Putting these guidelines into practice, the ILO has, since 2019, been supporting national statistical offices in North Africa to strengthen data collection efforts, harmonize statistical and administrative data sources, mainstream labour migration into labour market information systems, mainstream gender in labour market information systems, and contribute to broader and better dissemination and use of labour migration data for policymaking. Lessons learned include the need to build capacity at different levels (in terms of international statistical standards, migration modules in Labour Force Surveys, data collection methodologies, requirements for harmonization between statistical and administrative data, mainstreaming labour migration into broader LMIS, making use of data for policy-making). Based on this experience it is key to focus on 4 components when building and strengthening LMIS: (a) data collection and compilation, (b) building an accessible repository for labour market information (software/platform), (c) strengthening analytical capacity and tools and (d) strengthening institutional arrangements to share, analyse data jointly and facilitate the creation of networks of users and producers of data.[29]

The following data sources and methods can play an important role in sourcing relevant knowledge and information:[30]

- Traditional statistical sources: labour market and other surveys (population censuses, household surveys, labour force surveys);
- Forecasting based on macroeconomic modelling, the Delphi Model or other methods;
- Administrative data sources: Visa and permit records, border entries, taxes and social security, etc.;
- Big data sources: Internet platforms, online job advertisements and postings, etc.;
- Innovative data sources (including from private sector such as private business surveys);
- Employers' needs assessments (e.g. surveys among employers);
- Foresights and scenario planning through qualitative methods (e.g. focus groups, round tables, expert interviews, foresight workshops);
- Tracer studies for skills anticipation and matching as well as for graduates that underwent skills training.

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[29] See United Nations Network on Migration (2019). North Africa – mainstreaming and strengthening labour migration into national labour market information systems.

[30] For a discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of the data sources and methods, see ETF, CEDEFOP and ILO (2016). *Using Labour Market Information – Guide to anticipating and matching skills and Jobs Vol 1*. See also the overview of national and international data sources with relevance to labour migration included in IOM's The Essentials of Migration Management (EMM2.0) handbook.

Both traditional information sources, such as official labour force surveys, as well as emerging new real-time "big data" sources, have advantages and disadvantages when collecting information on skills needs. Labour force surveys may not be conducted regularly and take time, which risks the data becoming obsolete. Such surveys also have a high cost and may also only provide proxies for understanding actual skills needs. New big data sources that have emerged with digitalization (such as data on the content of job advertisements and vacancy data from the Internet) can provide information in real time and are often more cost-effective than running surveys. However, there are also limitations with such data: samples of vacancies collected may be representative and skills needed for informal employment or for lower skills (often less advertised) are underrepresented. Skills listed in vacancies may also not follow an occupational competency standard.[31] Moreover, web-based big data often require more effort to prepare for analysis than data collected using conventional approaches.[32] Innovative LMISs include both data sources to capitalize on their combined strength, as is the case in Norway and the Republic of Korea.[33]

Another important aspect is to establish links between the analysis of skills and labour market needs and labour migration policies. There is currently little research and information as to what extent and how countries inform labour migration policies and strategies through skills and labour market assessments.

The process of skills-matching as part of SMPs requires specific data on the type and extent of existing skills mismatches, the availability of skills, and knowledge about employers' skills requirements. There are several mechanisms that allow matching skills supply and demand in the labour market (for example, platforms, employment services, sectoral bodies, etc.). The matching of skills to the demands of labour markets in countries of destination and origin is often complex and challenging. Competencies may lie with public employment services that do not have sufficient capacities for the process.

Recommendations

➔ **Map SMP-specific data, information needs and sources, as well as data gaps.** Devise strategies on how data gaps can be filled through SMP implementation, for example by facilitating the sharing of labour market and skills development information as part of multi-stakeholder collaboration, and strengthening capacities with regards to LMISs, migration statistics and real-time monitoring.

➔ **Equip relevant stakeholders with tools to strengthen labour market information and labour migration data and research**. For example, as part of SMPs, support the national or regional development and strengthening of LMISs and build related capacities. LMISs should be able to capture current and future trends including by sector, and include dynamic mapping systems capable of keeping up with changing features of the labour market. Regional harmonization of systems and information sharing across partner countries can support skills matching.

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[31] For more information, see ILO (2020). *The feasibility of using big data in anticipating and matching skills needs*.
[32] Cedefop (2021). *Perspectives on policy and practice: tapping into the potential of big data for skills policy*.
[33] See Janzz.technology (2022). Strengthening the economy through advanced labor market information systems.

As part of the THAMM programme participating governments were able to participate in training exercises, including dedicated training on skills anticipation with four modules. The training was received very positively by the government officials involved, equipping them with practical knowledge on methods for collecting data to better anticipate labour market skill needs and to strengthen skills anticipation systems.

➔ **Carry out joint labour market needs assessments in the country of origin and destination** and assess labour market and skills needs in specific sectors by involving employers and businesses.

➔ **Reach out to industry experts to gather input on how to design skills programmes** in order to transmit relevant skills for employers when designing SMPs.

➔ **Mainstream labour migration into labour market information systems and data collection** of participating countries in the SMP. In this context, the 2018 ILO Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration can also provide useful information.

➔ **Set up systems to share and analyse live data** on skills needs requirements and certification needs between private and public actors, in order to anticipate and match skills. This exercise can take various forms. It could be part of an online automated system that also aims to match skills, such as the European Union's Data Space for Skills (DS4Skills) project or the EU Talent Pool Pilot, or take the form of a wider sector-level consultative working group including social partners, civil society, and skills and qualification experts. Employers and businesses (and their networks) are a useful source of information and should be consulted, including through interviews, focus groups or surveys, when gaps in knowledge and data exist about specific sectors. As part of SMPs, dedicated resources could be envisaged for regular market research on specific markets or skills segments in order to inform where SMPs can add value.

➔ **Carry out a mapping of skills assessment procedures** for migrants carried out by statutory and non-statutory professional bodies in terms of requirements and implementation in practice.

➔ **Analyse and interpret data as part of multi-stakeholder processes** and with tripartite actors/processes. Engage in multi-stakeholder discussions on what the data mean for policy development in the context of the SMP.

➔ **Identify the need to provide support to public institutions** (labour ministries, statistics offices) and public and private employment services to gather and analyse relevant data important for SMP development and implementation.

➔ **Define clearly the skills-matching process part of the SMPs** and assign roles for institutions or agencies in the involved countries (e.g. in pre-departure, post-arrival and sector-related training), which can assist in the skills anticipation and skill-matching process.

➜ **Build strong learning, monitoring and evaluation systems as part of SMPs** (see box 14). Beyond traditional M&E, consider integrating action research and capitalization processes into SMP implementation that allows for learning and corrective measures.

Box 14: Monitoring, evaluating and learning as part of SMP implementation

A dedicated learning, monitoring and evaluation framework that includes specific and measurable quantitative and qualitative indicators is essential, not only to demonstrate the impact and added value of the SMP, but also to foster learning to improve systems, processes and policies. A robust learning and M&E system can also support adaptations or revisions to the SMP should challenges arise.

A lack of detailed evaluations has been a shortcoming of existing interventions on skills and mobility to date. Only a few have tracked participants over time or considered including wider economic indicators. Limited resources for M&E systems may be part of the reason for these gaps and can present a challenge. Other such interventions did not clearly articulate the objectives in relation to systems, outcomes for individuals, businesses and economies at large.

Indicators are selected based on the objectives of the SMP (see also section 3). They ideally reflect both quantitative and qualitative measures of success and seek to asses a variety of envisaged impacts on both countries of origin and destination, employers and training institutions, as well as migrants. Indicators fall into the following impact categories:
- Impact on broader economic performance and development in origin/destination countries, especially at sectoral and subnational level for which skills are trained;
- Impact on migration, education and other sector systems in origin/destination countries (upgrades in training curricula, performance of support services, running of systems);
- Impact on individual earnings, salaries and remittances sent;
- Impact on skills taught and obtained, as well as usage and transfer of skills learned;
- Impact on businesses, including business expansion, innovation, networks, etc.;
- Impact on satisfaction of participation in SMP;
- Impact on norms, such as gender norms and narratives about labour migration;
- Change in legal and political framework in immigration systems.

Feasibility for data collection and interpretation should be considered when selecting the indicator framework. Experience of IOM's PROMISE intervention has shown that including too many indicators may make it difficult to operationalize the M&E framework.

Data for indicators are ideally collected at several points in time: before training starts; at the end of training, but before migration/employment locally is sought; and further down the line during employment, or in case of time-limited migration possibilities, after return (e.g. after one year following the end of a temporary scheme).[34]

One example of good practice in this regard is New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer programme, which produced a longitudinal study that examined the development benefits for participating households and their local communities in Tonga and Vanuatu. By tracing outcomes such as household income, spending decisions and well-being before departure and up to two years after participation, this analysis offers a robust picture of the impact of the scheme.[35]

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34 See World Bank (2021). *Expanding Legal Migration Pathways from Nigeria to Europe: From Brain Drain to Brain Gain*.
35 See Bailey (2019). *New Zealand's Recognised Employer Scheme (RSE) – 10-year Longitudinal Case Study*.

Further resources

International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Migration Governance Indicators;
- Big Data for Migration Alliance.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2021. Spotlight on Labour Migration in Asia. IOM. Geneva.
- IOM's E-Campus offers tutored and bi-modal learning modalities on a variety of migration topics including migration governance and data. They are open to government officials and other interested stakeholders, though some based on invitation only. The course catalogue can be found here: www.ecampus.iom.int/pluginfile.php/7904/block_html/content/Course_Catalogue.pdf.
- *Improving Access to Labour Market Information for Migrants and Employers*;
- *Skills mapping through big data – case study of Armenian diaspora in the United States of America and France*.
- IOM toolkits on Mainstreaming migration into international cooperation and development (MMICD). The guidance papers on mainstreaming migration in governance, employment and education policies highlight important questions to ask in the design and programming phases.
- Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines.
- IOM (2023). *Harnessing Data Innovation for Migration Policy: A Handbook for Practitioners*.

International Labour Organization (ILO)
- *Training manual on the ILO Guidelines for skills modules in bilateral labour migration agreements* (2021) provides step by step guides for what type of information needs to be collected for BLMAs that is also relevant for SMPs.
- *The feasibility of using big data in anticipating and matching skills needs* (2020).
- ILO shares resources (guidance, good practices, technical assistance) on Labour Force Surveys.
- ILO Compendium on Skills Needs Anticipation.
- ETF, CEDEFOP and ILO: *Developing Skills Foresights, Scenarios and Forecasts* (2016).
- *Anticipating skill needs for green jobs (a practical guide)* (2015).

Regional and national-level sources

Africa
- Youmatch (2020). Working Group: Labour Market Information (LMI) Guidelines on establishing Labour Market Information Systems To Support effective Labour Market Governance in Africa.
- African Union Commission, ILO, IOM, UNECA (2021). *Labour Migration Statistics in Africa* 3rd Edition (Addis Ababa).
- IOM (2023). *Labour Mobility and Regional Integration in East and Horn of Africa*.

America
- IOM (2023). Recent Migration Trends in the Americas.

Asia
- ILO, IOM and SDC have provided recommendations for setting up an integrated LMIS in the case of Bangladesh.
- IOM (2023). *Labour Migration in Asia: What Does the Future Hold?*

Europe
- CEDEFOP publishes country studies and forecasts of skills needs in the European Union.
- CEDEFOP Guide to anticipating and matching skills and jobs.
- CEDEFOP *Perspectives on policy and practice – Tapping into the potential of big data for skills policy*.
- VOLUME 1 – Using labour market information.
- VOLUME 2 – Developing skills foresights, scenarios and forecasts.
- VOLUME 3 – Working at sectoral level.
- VOLUME 4 – The role of employment service providers.
- VOLUME 5 – Developing and running an establishment skills survey.
- VOLUME 6 – Carrying out tracer studies.
- CEDEFOP Information tool on matching skills: This database showcases a collection of policy instruments from European Union's Member States that use information on labour market trends and anticipated skill needs to inform and shape upskilling or other skills-matching policies for the current and future world of work.
- ETF toolkit for skills anticipation (skills lab).

Latin America
- IOM and ILO (2019). *Sistemas de Información sobre mercados laborales informe regional*.
- Tendencias Migratorias en América Latina.

6. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION

Skills mobility partnerships seek to contribute to local economic development by responding to local labour market needs and by spurring innovation, job creation, investment and broader economic development, especially with a view to strengthening development at subnational levels and along migration corridors.

Labour markets and skills needs tend to be localized and impacts of migration are foremost generated locally. Focusing on specific corridors can make activities more concrete and tailored to the specific needs of subregional and territorial actors and their challenges. A number of existing skills and mobility initiatives have focused on building partnerships between municipalities and on strengthening development aspects locally along specific migration corridors so as to strengthen territorial development. This is for instance the case with the MENTOR I and II project – a multi-stakeholder initiative that applies a territorial approach to develop sustainable cooperation and dialogue across local, regional and national governance levels.[36] In some countries, labour migration decisions and labour market governance lies at the subnational level. The role of regions and municipalities in both countries of destination and origin are thus important.

SMPs can integrate a number of elements in order to maximize their contribution to local development:

- SMPs can focus on enhancing education systems, so that these produce market-relevant skills in origin and destination countries enabling businesses to grow. This requires close collaboration between private and public actors (including training institutions) along migration corridors (see also section 8 on the approach to skills development). A better skilled and trained workforce may not automatically lead to additional job creation and opportunities, yet it can contribute to a more competitive, productive and skilled private sector that is able to attract FDI and increase its growth potential.
- SMPs can support transitions to formal economies in specific sectors through skills development and recognition of skills.
- SMPs can cover various sectoral objectives linked to sustainable development. For instance, they can increase the availability of needed skills for a green transition, while meeting labour market demand in emerging (green and climate-smart) industries. By diffusing and transferring skills, knowledge and technology they can further support a green transition.
- SMPs can introduce safeguards against brain drain and incentivize skills transfers and social remittances between countries of origin and destination and along migration corridors.
- SMPs can increase businesses networks, knowledge and interest to invest and venture into new markets through having had exposure to talent from these countries (see box 15).

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36   See MPF (2022). *Mediterranean Network for Training Orientation to Regular migration (MENTOR) II*.

Recommendations

➔ **Establish links to or embed SMPs in broader economic and business development activities, investment relations and programmes financed by overseas development assistance.** For SMPs to support local development efforts, they should ideally be part of wider efforts in support of labour migration governance, economic development and local job creation between and within partner countries. Donor countries and/or the private sector in donor countries can invest development finance in education or training systems, skills recognition and labour market information systems, infrastructure development for business growth and entrepreneurship to spur economic development. SMPs can also aim to link to ongoing initiatives in the area of green economic development/green transition or to trade and investment programmes. Viewing SMPs as part of broader economic relations can support its effectiveness, given that new skills can be absorbed by competitive and innovative economic sectors in both countries of origin and destination.

➔ **As part of SMPs and partnership with employers, provide incentives and possibilities to create business links, networks and knowledge** in support of possible business expansion, foreign direct investment (FDI) and other economic linkages. This can take the form of inviting business delegations on official demarches and visits to countries of origin and destination, providing further information on commercial sectors and conditions, and connecting SMEs in the same sector. By facilitating and encouraging relationships between businesses in the same sector along migration corridors and between regions, SMPs can create further positive externalities.

➔ **Set up training components in countries of origin in such a way that they support the development of the educational sector as well as systems and structures.** In this way, SMPs can contribute positively to human capital formation as well as the quality of staff trained in the countries of origin in the long run (see section 8). Employers' associations and businesses in countries of destination can co-invest in training capacities in origin countries, explore business opportunities in countries of origin and invest for job creation.

→ **Enhance skills transfer to countries of origin as part of SMPs** through considering introducing incentives for more circular forms of migration versus more permanent migration ones, while also taking into account the preferences of employers. Diaspora communities can provide support through sharing technology and engaging in knowledge exchange and transfer activities, among others.

→ **IOM toolkits on Mainstreaming migration into international cooperation and development (MMICD)**. The guidance papers on mainstreaming migration in governance, employment and education policies highlight important questions to ask in the design and programming phases.

7. SKILLS CLASSIFICATION AND RECOGNITION AS PART OF SMPs?

In order to access labour migration pathways, especially for employment, migrant workers, professionals, apprentices or students usually need to confirm and signal, validate and prove relevant skills and qualifications (through diplomas, certificates, etc.) to potential employers and immigration officials. Some sectors include predefined industry standards that need to be met for workers to be hired and for work permits to be issued (so-called regulated trades).[37] Recognition of skills is also important for employers who want to understand whether foreign qualifications match the desired skills. Skills thus need to be transferable between countries and jobs as well as easily recognizable by employers.

The Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in its Objective 18 highlights the need to "invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences". Member States have committed to invest in innovative solutions that facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences of migrant workers at all skill levels. At international level, ILO Conventions 143 (Article 14(b)), 142 and 195 (Part VI, paragraph 12) call for the recognition of migrant workers' skills and qualifications.

Box 16: Defining skills and qualifications and their recognition

Skills: Skills are the ability to carry out the tasks and duties of a given job. They refer to the relevant knowledge and experience needed to perform a specific task or job and/or the product of education, training and experience which, together with relevant know-how, are the characteristics of technical knowledge. (ILO Glossary of Skills and Labour Migration)

Qualifications: The official confirmation, usually in the form of a document certifying the successful completion of an educational programme or of a stage of a programme. Qualifications can be obtained through: (a) successful completion of a full programme; (b) successful completion of a stage of a programme (intermediate qualifications); or (c) validation of acquired knowledge, skills and competencies, independent of participation in such programmes. This may also be referred to as a "credential". (ILO Glossary of Skills and Labour Migration)

Recognition of prior learning: A process of identifying, documenting, assessing and certifying formal, non-formal and/or informal learning against standards used in formal education and training. Thus, recognition of prior learning provides an opportunity for people to acquire qualification or credits for a qualification or exemptions (of all or part of the curriculum, or even exemption of academic prerequisite to enter a formal study programme) without going through a formal education or training programme. (ILO Glossary of Skills and Labour Migration)

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37   Requirements can differ quite strongly between countries. For instance, within the European Union the requirements for care workers differ greatly between the Kingdom of the Netherlands (high level of entry barriers) and the Czechia (fewer formal qualifications required).

> **Recognition of skills and qualifications:** The recognition of qualifications and skills covers two main areas: academic and professional. Academic recognition allows for the continuation of studies at the appropriate level, as well as facilitating access to an appropriate job. Professional recognition provides the opportunity to practice professional skills acquired abroad. Professional recognition covers both regulated and non-regulated professions. Regulated professions are usually governed by legal acts requiring registration, certification or licensing. Non-regulated professions do not imply any specific process, as the employer assesses qualifications and professional competency. (ILO Glossary of Skills and Labour Migration)

While many countries have put in place national processes and tools to classify skills and recognize foreign qualifications (unilateral skills classification and recognition processes),[38] not all of them are effective and procedures can be costly and slow. This can lead people not to migrate or to drop out of work permit application processes.

Lack of knowledge and awareness about skills and training obtained in countries of origin or required in countries of destination on the part of employers and migrants respectively can be another factor in inhibiting labour migration. Employers may lack awareness of the nature and content of foreign qualifications; workers may not know how their domestic qualifications could be deployed abroad; and officials taking decisions on whether skills are sufficient when assessing work permit applications may not have sufficient details on qualifications, industry practices and standards in other countries.

Recognition of skills and qualifications between countries requires targeted policy approaches. To facilitate skills classification and recognition, strong coordination and cooperation on common frameworks that help determine sector-specific skills standards is important. This can take the form of bilateral or multilateral cooperation to coordinate mutual recognition of skills – a process that involves comparing standards between countries, determining gaps in recognition opportunities and identifying possibilities for recognition.[39]

Mutual recognition arrangements or agreements can be linked or integrated into SMPs and can take various forms, ranging from Framework Agreements that contain detailed guidelines on how to follow horizontal recognition agreements (general mechanisms covering almost all occupations) to more limited vertical recognition in a specific sector or occupation.[40]

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[38] This is not the case for all countries, however, and formal national qualifications standards are lacking in some. About half of the 84 countries of IOM's Migration Governance Indicator participate in international common qualification frameworks and slightly fewer than half account for migrant workers' skills when deciding to admit them. See IOM (2022). *Migration Governance Indicators Data and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration – A baseline report.*

[39] See ICT-ILO. Training Package on Labour Migration Module 8 for more details on types of recognition agreements, their forms and steps to take in setting them up (under point 3.3).

[40] See ILO, 2021. Skills Guidance, p. 34 for an overview table of approaches to Mutual Recognition Agreements.

> ### Box 17: Skills dichotomy in migration policies: reflections on skills classifications
>
> Regular migration pathways target workers according to their skill level.
>
> At the national level, States adopt differing criteria for the determination of migrants' skills. Typically the skills of a migrant are delineated by level of education, occupation and income, or a combination of these, and are often categorized as either being "high" or "low" skilled. At the international level, education and occupation are the most relevant criteria. The ILO has developed the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08). Occupations classified at Skill Level 1 are typically considered as low-skilled occupations.[41]
>
> However, despite these international standards, there is no universally accepted definition of what determines a person's skill level.[42] While educational qualifications can be a good indicator of skill level, there are many soft skills that are also important for employers, but which are overlooked in the definition based on educational qualifications.[43] Moreover, many occupations that are classified as lower skill have been referred to as "essential professions" amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Categorizing workers according to their educational qualifications also cements workers into these skill levels, which can prevent workers from moving out of these categories even after they have undertaken further training.[44] IOM Glossary on Migration recognizes this in the definition of "low-skilled migrants", stating that the term should be "treated with caution as it does not reflect the alternative ways in which skills can be acquired and the varying levels of skill of migrant workers within this category. Moreover, it is important to distinguish between "low-skilled jobs" and "low-skilled migrant workers", as low-skilled jobs are often performed by skilled migrants, which results in their deskilling.[45]

Some countries and industries have also started to work on cross-border certification of skills at the regional level. An example, which also covers middle- and lower-level skills, is the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals. Other such examples exist in the European Union (The European Qualification Framework and the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations framework) or in the Caribbean context. The number of initiatives aiming to set up or strengthen regional qualifications frameworks (RQFs) has been growing in recent years, particularly in countries in the southern hemisphere. These are often instruments developed by regional economic communities aiming to promote trade, stimulate growth and greater labour mobility and to cooperate on broader sociocultural development in the regions covered.[46] Overall, however, according to the IOM's Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) Report, fewer than half of all countries surveyed for the MGI report have participated in international schemes with common qualifications frameworks to date, with wide regional differences – for example, 70 per cent in Europe, 44 per cent in Africa, 39 per cent in the Americas and 53 per cent in the Asia-Pacific region.[47]

Collaboration on the mutual recognition of skills and training as well as harmonization of qualification frameworks and standards, requires input from various stakeholders in both countries of origin and destination (see also Section 4 on multi-stakeholder engagement).

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[41] See *IOM Glossary on Migration* (entry on low-skilled migrants) and ILO International Standard Classification of Occupations 08 (ISCO-08).
[42] See www.cgdev.org/blog/we-analyzed-57-legal-migration-pathways-heres-what-we-found.
[43] See https://lampforum.org/what-we-do/thought-leadership/policy-notes/skills-mix-foreign-born-workers-bring-more-than-university-degrees-to-high-income-countries/.
[44] See www.cgdev.org/blog/theres-no-such-thing-low-skill-worker.
[45] See IOM (2019). *IOM Glossary on Migration* (entry on low-skilled migrants).
[46] See RQF initiatives around the globe.
[47] See IOM (2022). *Migration Governance Indicators – Baseline Report*.

A key challenge in the past has been that there are not always strong political incentives across countries to cooperate on skills recognition, especially for workers working in lower-skill sectors. This has been the experience of the ILO's work on skills and mobility, as well as that of IOM's PROMISE programme, which supports skills mobility and skills recognition across Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand. Political will to cooperate on harmonizing qualification standards and skills recognition seems stronger in sectors with occupations that are relatively similar in both partner countries, and where skills and labour needs are large. However, such processes often take a long time, as many differing perspectives and conflicts of interests (for example, between trade unions and employers) have to be resolved when classifying qualifications and setting required skill levels for workers.

Box 18: Certification and Qualifications Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean

ILO, together with the Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (CINTERFOR) and vocational training institutions, has worked on the creation of a regional scheme for skills certification for Latin American and Caribbean countries hosting Venezuelan refugees and migrants. While this was not in the context of a skills and mobility intervention, a key lesson from the project has been that a regional skills certification scheme for Venezuelans is easier to achieve in the short term, while a more ambitious regional qualifications framework would require the more complex involvement of many governmental institutions. A regional scheme for skills certification is more viable for countries that still need to standardize certification programmes. Such a scheme should be flexible and adaptable to national contexts, given that each country has a different level of development regarding its own qualifications framework.[48]

In some instances, organizing a process of joint skill recognition as part of SMPs may not be possible or desired. In such cases there may still be avenues to ensure that skills courses and training developed as part of SMPs are recognized both in destination and origin countries. For instance, specific courses or training institutions can be accredited by international accreditation organizations and provide double certifications recognized in both origin and destination countries.

In some sectors, including the IT sector, the practical application of the formal skills recognition approach can lead to challenges to obtain necessary work permits for migrant workers. For instance, in the IT sector, horizontal mobility across functions is common: a technical support engineer may later switch to programming and then become a data scientist or product manager. Such IT specialists then have skills, but not necessarily a higher education diploma that corresponds to the title of their specialization. Skills may also be obtained through non-formal education institutions or be self-taught.

Systems that build in flexibility in recognizing skills, especially when they are a key criterion for labour market access, may be preferable for those sectors.

Moreover, in some sectors, such as ICT, informal and self-taught skills may play an important role. However, these are not easily captured by formal skills recognition processes, and innovative and pragmatic solutions will need to be included in SMP implementation to ensure that such skills are valued and recognized.

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[48] United Nations Migration Network Repository of Practice Entry – Regional Skills Certification in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Recommendations

➔ **Integrate skills development and recognition explicitly in SMPs** (e.g. as part of clauses in MoUs, BLMAs or other formal agreements). These should ideally include access to recognition of foreign qualifications, recognition of prior learning and certification, services to facilitate skills matching and skills development, career progression opportunities and lifelong learning.[49]

➔ **Understand the existing national and regional skills frameworks** and their requirements for specific sectors and professions. Map information about existing skills and qualification classification and recognition systems in origin and destination countries, as well as relevant regional frameworks. Understand the process of skills recognition in practice. Factor in existing policy, institutional and process realities when planning an SMP. In order to effectively map the skills classification frameworks in a country or region, SMP designers could make use of skills councils or similar organizations in the country to map the different classification systems in a country.

➔ **Support inter-State cooperation on bilateral or multilateral skills recognition**, especially when skills requirements are similar for both labour markets (in terms of both sector and level) and governments show political interest in such cooperation. As part of an SMP in a specific sector, this can take the form of agreements on standard criteria, assessment parameters or the joint creation of skills profiling tools and registries that can provide transparency.

➔ **Develop creative solutions to the (mutual) recognition of skills as part of SMPs.** While SMPs can, and if possible, should, support systemic changes and work towards bilateral or regional alignment of standards and related frameworks,[50] the time frame for changes in broader political frameworks or a harmonization of qualifications and skills standards is often long and low. Additionally, the lack of political incentives for cooperation or regionalization may inhibit progress. SMPs may want to lay out conditions of mutual recognition of qualifications and explore possibilities to harmonize education and training for specific professions while preserving high standards.

➔ **Provide double certification with a national and internationally accredited degree** as part of SMP skills training. This is helpful in case of the absence of a functional qualification framework in one of the SMP countries and when there is no bilateral or multilateral arrangement for skill and qualification recognition.

➔ **Exchange with employers on their skills needs and what type of certification they would trust and accept** when hiring staff and workers. Arrangements on skills certification as part of SMPs need to be sensitive to employers' needs and respond to their realities on the ground. If skills certification criteria are too prescriptive, there is a risk that they will undermine the overall objectives of the SMP. Employers need to be effectively involved in these discussions, as certifications are only trusted and recognized by employers if they are meaningful and certify the right skills in practice.

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[49] See United Nations Network on Migration (2022). *Guidance on Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements* for examples of how skills recognition, matching and development is included in existing BLMAs (Box 6).

[50] Ideally, SMPs can help strengthen the alignment of skills standards and accreditation systems across countries so as to bring benefits for the sectors and labour markets for each country. This in turn can support the further development of context and country-specific skill standards in countries or origin.

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➜ **Strengthen coordination mechanisms across SMP partners that facilitate joint certification of labour competencies**, as well as the recognition of certifications across partner countries. The implementation of (joint) certification and recognition frameworks and mechanisms require both horizontal and vertical coordination between governments and regulatory officials, as well as among universities, training providers, schools and employers involved in certification and recognition processes.

➜ **Incorporate innovative ways of recognizing migrant skills before departure, as well as validate and capture learning throughout migration and mobility processes** so that they can also be used to seek further employment or educational opportunities, including in support of reintegration processes (see for instance the model of the Skills Passport described in Box 19 or also the Indian Skills Card of Box 25). Skills passports can also help when skills are obtained informally and without formal training.

Box 19: Skills passports

The skills passport model is a record of migrant workers' skills and qualifications and facilitates skills portability. Skills passports contain information on the general competencies and qualifications obtained by an individual. Skills passports provide employers with greater confidence as well as clarity when assessing the skills of migrant workers. Better understanding of migrant workers' skills by employers can mitigate the problem of migrants working in jobs below their level of qualification. Skills passports can also benefit public employment services to better address labour needs through more efficient matching of workers with employment opportunities. Example skills passports are: the UNESCO Qualifications passport for refugees and vulnerable migrants; the Sri Lanka Skills Passport; and Europass. However, there are associated challenges, such as: overcoming digital and gender divides regarding access to skills documentation that is web- or new technology-based; gaining trust and acceptance for the skills passports by relevant stakeholders, particularly with regard to data protection issues; and ensuring that skills passports remain free and costs are not passed on to migrants.[51]

➜ **Analyse existing skills and qualification recognition as well as certification systems, standards and requirements in order to gather information on how they can be most effectively used** in the context of the SMP. This information is helpful for all relevant stakeholders: governments, agencies, private employers and migrants.

➜ **Ensure buy-in from relevant institutions and actors** involved in skills recognition processes of labour migrants in the sectors covered by the SMP. This can help ensure that administrative barriers can be circumnavigated or lowered and that exceptions can be introduced as part of SMPs, such as fast-tracking recognition procedures.

➜ **Aim to make procedures more efficient and consider introducing fast-track provisions for recognition of skills included in the SMP.** Such fast-track procedures and other special measures can help overcoming existing bottlenecks for labour mobility due to skills recognition systems.

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51 See www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_840276.pdf.

➔ **Strengthen systemic and regulatory capacities of public employment agencies and ministries** for the process of qualification and skills recognition of migrant workers, both prior to departure and upon return. Utilize digital aspects and tools in systems and procedures of skills recognition.

➔ **Include clear references to existing recognition of skills or prior learning mechanisms in the SMP agreement.** Establish clarity about the process to be followed and the roles of various actors in both countries of origin and destination, as well as the modalities for recognition of qualifications and skills, including procedures and financial responsibility.

➔ **Provide information on skills and recognition procedures to potential migrants, so that they can prepare accordingly.** This can take the form of a common platform that provides information on migration procedures, which is centred around the migrants' experience and be available in relevant languages. Sectoral associations and public consultations or events could highlight changes to skills requirements and the practical application of existing systems.

➔ **Create one-stop shops for skills recognition systems.** These can provide relevant information to migrants and their employers on how skills and qualifications can be assessed. They may also offer screening mechanisms for credentials prior to departure or the recruitment process or testing platforms to check actual skills, in cooperation with educational actors and employers.

➔ **Carry out identification and accreditation of training institutions as part of an SMP**. Having accredited training institutions that can provide required training and issue recognized certificates can support mutual skills recognition and trust of employers.

➔ **Devise an overview list of already checked or verified diplomas and their equivalences** valid for the countries involved in SMPs. Documentation and information tools, which provide an overview of a worker's credentials, skills and qualifications and how they are recognized in countries of origin, transit and destination can support employers in evaluating the suitability of migrant workers. It can provide the necessary transparency and highlight where additional training may be demanded. Employers and potential labour migrants can benefit from such tools and overviews as it shows whether upskilling is required prior to migration.

Box 20: IOM's THAMM project support to skills recognition

IOM Morocco, under the THAMM project, developed a methodology to render Moroccan diplomas in two professions more readable for European employers by supplementing these diplomas with annexes that translate acquired skills into the European Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO) terminology. Such approaches contribute to increasing the visibility, readability and portability of migrants' skills and qualifications for potential employers and foreign labour markets.

➔ **Establish processes for recognizing prior (informal) learning.** SMPs can also help to establish processes for recognizing prior learning (including informal learning and self-taught skills) in which regulatory bodies, education and training institutions, and possibly employers assess non-formally and informally acquired skills outside the classroom against predefined standards, competencies or learning outcomes. This can

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support non-traditional pathways to formal employment. SMPs could also include consultation mechanisms between employers (or industry associations) and staff of migration departments regarding qualifications of foreigners. For instance, as part of consultation mechanisms, staff from migration departments of foreign embassies involved in skills recognition processes could contact sector associations to help assess the suitability of an applicant.

➜ **Allow for on-the-job training and qualifications to be recognized in the work permit application process**. If possible, introduce pragmatic solutions to balance strict skills recognition criteria and standards for issuing work permits with recognizing informal or self-taught skills valued by employers in specific sectors, such as IT. Create awareness and exchange among employers in these sectors and migration officials deciding on issuing work permits regarding skills and qualifications.

➜ **Involve diaspora and migrant organizations** in supporting, businesses as well as migrant workers and applicants with practical information and guidance. Given their experience of having gone through the same processes, they can support migrants in the same process.

Further resources

- ILO (2020). *How to Facilitate the Recognition of Skills of Migrant Workers: Guide for Employment Services Providers* and ILO (2018) *Recognition of prior learning – learning package*.
- ILO (2020). *Guidelines for Skills modules in Bilateral Labour Agreements.*
- ILO (2019): *The role of social partners in skills development, recognition and matching for migrant workers.* The European Training Foundation Qualifications for the Mediterranean project included a common reference framework for a number of occupations. It includes guidance on developing common reference profiles. See *Qualifications for the Mediterranean.*
- ICT/ILO: Training Package on Labour Migration: Module 8. Chapter 3.3 on Recognition Agreements in particular provides details on arrangements and steps for mutual, regional, unilateral and multilateral recognition of qualifications, skills and prior learning.
- ETF: Regional Qualifications Frameworks Initiatives around the globe 2020.
- The European Qualifications Framework.
- ASEAN Mutual recognition arrangement on Tourism Professionals.
- IOM (2015). *Recognition of Qualifications and Competences of Migrants.*
- ILO (2020). *Guide on Making TVET and Skills Development Inclusive for all.*
- ILO (2019). Policy brief on Skills and Migration.
- ILO (2017). General practical guidance on promoting coherence among employment, education/training and labour migration policies.
- UNESCO (2020). Global Skills Academy.
- UNESCO (2016). *Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)* (2016-2021).
- UNESCO (2019). TVET qualifications frameworks.
- UNESCO (2015). Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).
- IOE (2020). *Future Skills Assessment report.*
- IOE (2021). *Addressing Skills Development to Improve Access to Foreign Skills.*

8. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING AS PART OF SMPs

The SMP approach places a strong emphasis on developing capacities and systems in the area of education, skills development and training in countries of origin. For SMPs to have a structural impact, they need to link to sectoral policies (for example, education, economy, environment) and ideally improve systems and build structural capacities. Such investment in skills and education sectors in countries of origin can foster their development and potentially support the local economy. This has advantages over the simple recruitment of (trained and qualified) workers to fill labour market needs in destination countries, because it ensures benefits for countries of origin.

However, training, skills development, reskilling and upskilling as part of SMPs may take different modalities and forms, with varying structural impacts. The preferences and needs of employers in the relevant sectors should be taken into account. Some employers may prefer on-the-job training in countries of destination, while others will prefer "classroom" training that can be organized in countries of origin. Mobility as part of SMPs can also contribute to upskilling of migrants in destination countries. Modes of training as part of existing skills and mobility interventions include recruitment of qualified workers with adaptation training and upskilling to the recognized skill in the destination country, recruiting workers with first experience who become trainees in the country of destination, as well as full SMPs with investment into training structures in countries of origin, which leads to a recognized qualification for those entering foreign labour markets.

A key question revolves around whether the country of origin, in the context of an SMP that trains a workforce for all involved countries, is interested in aligning its own education standards and adopting those of the destination country or countries for the skills or sector in question or for specific curricula (see also section on skills classification and recognition as part of SMPs). Harmonizing education standards would have the benefit of responding better to the needs of employers as well as facilitating skills recognition processes in the country of destination.[52] Countries of origin may not share an interest in training a few of their nationals to obtain high-level skills sought after in destination countries without their own systems and skill levels benefiting overall and with a view to serving local needs.

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[52] Countries of origin that export a significant amount of labour migrants may be pushed to take into account international standards of education and training, as well as the needs of the global labour market, in their national education systems.

Regional or bilateral harmonization of qualification standards in the context of an SMP is complex, takes time and, depending on the scope of the SMP, may not be feasible or desirable for involved parties. Other options include bilateral or regional skills certification schemes. This can also take the form of jointly issuing a mutually recognized certificate by means of accreditation of the training developed under the SMP without necessarily aligning with qualification standards.[55] Assessing the interests and needs of different stakeholders involved will be important to find models that work for all.

Employers have an important role to play in determining the training curriculum in SMPs. Skills training that ignores or fails to meet the expectations of employers in destination countries can lead to the disengagement of private actors. Employers should thus be consulted, provide input and ideally also invest in training activities and programmes. One example of origin countries cooperating with destination countries to design training programmes is in India, where the Indian National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) has increased the role of actors in its partner country, the United Arab Emirates, in designing training material. The United Arab Emirates will have a role in the training of trainers in India, and the skills training will be provided according to employers' demands in the United Arab Emirates.[56]

In the context of several labour mobility projects, employers have emphasized **the importance of soft skills** training in addition to (or sometimes in place of) vocational/technical training, such as good communication and social interaction, discipline, motivation, networking, reliance and punctuality. Analytical skills ranging from problem-solving capabilities to critical and innovative thinking are also sought after. While in demand, soft skills are however harder to capture and document through existing tools and methodologies. A tool that aims to capture soft skills as part of CVs is the "Show your Skills" platform used in Germany, France and Türkiye, which includes a specific Competency Card toolbox.[57]

Other important cross-cutting skills include language skills, IT skills (many employers now require computer skills for jobs that previously had no relation to the digital sphere) and

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[53] See https://ethiopia.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl996/files/documents/The%20State%20of%20Play%20of%20Skills%20Mobility%20Partnerships%20between%20Africa%20and%20Europe.pdf.

[54] See www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/docs/256/Outline.pdf.

[55] In order to institutionalize training as part of SMPs, schools and training institutions will need to be involved to help to formalize training programmes and accredit and issue skills certificates to graduates.

[56] https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nri/study/india-uae-agree-to-strengthen-skills-based-cooperation/articleshow/91522078.cms?from=mdr.

[57] See www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/skills-dimensions-migration-setting-context.

financial management skills, as well as intercultural and interpersonal skills to navigate workspaces in the country of destination. These skills can, among others, be covered as part of pre-departure training, but are also important skills to be acquired during onboarding processes.

> **Box 22:** Importance of soft skills in IOM's PROMISE project
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> In IOM's PROMISE project, employers emphasized the need for soft skills training of employees. Training on soft skills was conducted via in-service training and by institutionalizing candidates into existing skills development providers in the target regions and provinces. IOM also worked with the Government of Cambodia (the Directorate General of Technical and Vocational Education Training) to develop a training package for the training of trainers on safe migration and soft skills. The Government then also took steps to take into account soft skills as part of TVET curricula when reviewing their policies on Recognition of Prior Learning.[58]

In addition to training for employees, **employers also need an orientation towards hiring international talent** and addressing potential issues of intercultural communication. For international and large businesses, there are already measures in place to address these challenges, as they are used to working in a large multicultural context. However, for medium and smaller businesses, it is important to ensure that these practices are integrated into their ongoing work processes. Also, it is important for employers to be aware of issues such as discrimination and racism, and to know where and how to address them when they emerge. To this end, IOM's project MATCH not only provided training for prospective migrants, but also for employers in destination countries on diversity and intercultural communication. MATCH also explored cooperation connecting participants who have an interest in entrepreneurship with experts and mentors from the diaspora.[59]

Recommendations

➔ **Take the interests of all stakeholders into account when deciding on the level of skills development in which to invest, the type and location of training, education and upskilling.** Decisions on the mode and model of skills training (location, type, mode) should be taken as part of multi-stakeholder processes (see section 4).

➔ **Involve migrants in the design of skills development interventions.** Involving migrants in the design of skills development interventions can ensure interventions are provided according to migrants needs and not solely the needs of employers. This could mean for instance that skills training provides migrants with information on their rights as migrant workers, or that it prioritizes improving skills recognition systems which can allow migrants to find decent work using their pre-existing skills, rather than a solely market-responsive approach to skills development.

➔ **Set up skills development and training in the context of SMPs so that broader development benefits and improvement in systems are generated for countries of origin.**
An option for an SMP to do this is to invest in reforming education and skill systems in a given sector in countries of origin, so that all people can be trained to a higher level,

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58   IOM Conference Paper: Recommendations for Actions to Enhance Skills Development for Migrant Workers in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand.
59   IOM (2021). Looking at Labour Mobility Initiatives from the Private Sector Perspective: Key lessons learned. See report of the dedicated workshops, p. 13.

improving the availability and quality of skills locally while at the same time bringing skill levels closer to the envisaged standards of the destination country. Those that do migrate abroad could still receive further upskilling to reach the required level and certification, either through specialized tracks within the country of origin or at the destination and through employers.

➔ **Involve employers in determining training content, sectoral curricula and training modalities.** Employers in the country of destination and in the country of origin could be engaged in sectoral curricula development processes in order to match education and (vocational) training with future labour market needs in participating countries. They could for example participate in the design of training programmes established under SMPs. Employers and industry experts have practical know-how as to which skills matter and should have the possibility to provide input in the design of training programmes so that they are relevant.

➔ **Consider strengthening public educational institutions** for skills training and invest in developing upgraded or new skills courses, rather than engaging private educational actors as part of SMPs. Public institutions are generally more inclusive and open to the larger population in countries of origin, which is important for the scalability as well as reducing the per capita costs of SMPs. Private institutions tend to be more exclusionary and with fewer benefits to the population at large.

➔ **Consider involving diaspora groups as part of training.** Increasingly, diaspora organizations or diaspora-owned companies are providing training on soft skills for migrant workers as part of their pre-departure orientation and onboarding processes. This helps to better integrate migrant workers into the workplace and processes. Diasporas are also better positioned to carry out this training as they speak from a place of personal experience, having bridged both cultures, and they can offer the training in the language of the employees (if different languages are involved). Diaspora organizations or diaspora-owned businesses also offer training to employers and managers in the context of employing talent from abroad. Such training covers issues such as discrimination, racism, intercultural communication and creating work processes that take into consideration multicultural contexts.

➔ **Skills development interventions could be made at all stages of the migration process.** Skills training interventions can be effective prior to recruitment, prior to departure, post-arrival, throughout employment and upon return.

➔ **Assess and take into account gender-specific needs in designing training packages, curricula and courses in soft skills.**

Further resources

- ILO (2020). *Guidelines for skills modules in bilateral labour migration agreements*.
- ILO (2020). *Guide on Making TVET and Skills Development Inclusive for all*.
- IOM/UNESCO/UNICEF (2021). Integrating Migration into Education Interventions.
- IOM (2022). *Integrating Migration into Employment: A toolkit*.
- The Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programme (CIOP).

9. HOW TO INTEGRATE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF EMPLOYMENT AND MOBILITY IN SMPs?

SMPs will be successful in filling labour market shortages, building skills and contributing to sustainable development only if they take into account people's aspirations, (migration) plans, and personal and family circumstances.

People's aspirations matter in that they determine whether migration and skills development opportunities are taken up. Evaluations of previous skills and mobility interventions, such as the Belgian–Tunisian mobility scheme implemented by IOM, have shown that a focus on participants' aspirations and plans is a crucial success criterion. This is why SMPs and broader migration and skills governance must be responsive to migrants' aspirations, plans and personal circumstances in each step of the migration continuum in order to be successful.

Key areas that shape choices and should be considered are the following:

(a) **What types of mobility and migration policies support people's plans and aspirations**: This concerns mainly opportunities for family reunification, possibilities for spouses to access the labour market in the destination country, as well as options for circularity to support visits in countries of origin (e.g. possibilities for multiple-entry visas), as well as options for family members to access visas to visit in the country of destination.

(b) **What types of policy make mobility and migration more attractive and easier to navigate, facilitating both integration as well as reintegration**: This concerns policies that help facilitate migration journeys and minimize potential "losses" for migrants, such as double taxation agreements, custom waivers, cross-country cooperation on social and health insurance mechanisms (portability of social security and pensions), documentation of skills gained abroad, simplified registration and deregistration in national registry systems, access to consular support, etc.

(c) **What types of policy facilitate migrant workers' inclusion and social cohesion**: Access to basic services, including health, housing, educational and legal services, as well as a country's stance towards migration and how it welcomes migrant workers can impact and inform a migrant's decision of choosing one over another country. How easy or cumbersome it is to access language learning opportunities, participate in civic and political life, and make use of opportunities for longer-term residence, further shapes the degree to which migrants see their aspirations and ambitions realized and considered.

(d) **What types of policy support transfer of remittances**: The ability to send remittances is often a strong motivation for labour migrants to consider employment in countries of destination along many migration corridors. The facilitation of inter-State banking and financial transfers, among other things through expanded access to banking services for migrant workers and reduced remittance costs, is thus an important area.

(e) **Which gender-specific aspects need to be taken into account and how does gender shape experiences, preferences and plans:** Gender matters when it comes to uptake of skills development opportunities, as well as migration choices. Policies around social aspects, for example, affect men and women differently and SMP design will need to take into account differences related to gender.

An important element is transparency and communication with migrant and non-migrant workers around these aspects. This provides clarity in what to expect and can help calibrate expectations, improving the chance of success of SMPs. Diaspora networks and groups can play an important role in supporting new migrants under SMPs to navigate integration and social aspects of employment and mobility in countries of destination and when returning to their origin country.

Social inclusion of migrants also means addressing discrimination and xenophobia in countries of destination, including in businesses and organizations employing migrants. This has become especially important in the context of COVID-19 and response and recovery efforts.[60] Private sector associations play an important role in strengthening a balanced narrative on migration and communicating to societies and communities the value of migrants for business operations.[61] They can also support members in establishing welcoming structures and approaches towards migrants. SMPs can explicitly address these issues and make positive contributions towards more social inclusion, not least due to their whole-of-government and whole-of-society nature.

SMPs need to be flexible to respond to changing circumstances and have built-in risk and flexibility mechanisms. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown not only that policies around migration and mobility can change quickly, but has also shed light on how people make choices and what aspirations they have in relation to employment and migration. SMPs that are able to respond to changes in aspirations and social aspects are more successful (see also section 3 on long-term planning).

Recommendations

➔ **Study and understand social aspects and people's aspirations for all genders** and anticipate how they will affect choices around skills development, employment, migration and mobility journeys and ultimately the success of SMP implementation. Gathering information on life aspirations of groups targeted through surveys and focus group discussions and gathering experience from previous programmes and evaluations, as well as existing research, can provide necessary input. It is also important, in order to manage the expectations of migrants, to make migrants aware of any uncertainties involved in SMPS, such as the event of not being able to travel after having received training.

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[60] See IOM Joint Global Initiative on Diversity, Inclusion and Social Cohesion (DISC). IOM's response to xenophobia and discrimination in the COVID-19 response and recovery.

[61] See for example IOE's Business Advisory Group on Migration involvement in IOM's "It takes a community" global campaign.

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How to Integrate Social Aspects of Employment and Mobility in SMPs?

➜ **Include sufficient flexibility in SMP design to respond to unforeseen aspects and changes** in aspirations of targeted groups. SMPs will need to have in-built flexibility and risk mechanisms, including sufficient time and flexible resources in order to respond to aspects that were not foreseen and emerge during implementation. Introducing budgetary flexibility, cushions to cover for unforeseen elements and possibilities to change elements (e.g. sectors, skills training) as part of an SMP is important.

Gender and inclusion

➜ **Carry out a gender analysis before and after an SMP**, which helps with understanding specific gender considerations when setting up a scheme. Disaggregate all relevant labour migration data by sex; assess the gender implications of any planned labour migration action; and carry out further research if gender imbalances or inequalities have been identified to find out what needs to be done to redress these. Consider differential effects of the scheme on men and women when evaluating impacts and outcomes.

➜ **Incorporate gender-specific aspects and gender balance into all aspects of the SMPs**. This includes issues related to gender-sensitive skills training and education, migrant worker protection and gender-related vulnerabilities (gender-based-violence, pregnancy, etc.). Allow women and men to hold positions in implementation of training schemes and provide gender-sensitive training for all those involved in provision of TVET schemes and SMPs more generally.

➜ **Consider gender aspects in selecting the type of jobs and skills**, education methods and modes, accompanying measures, onboarding and soft-landing support, as well as reintegration support as part of SMPs. Ensure provisions that can support equal access.

➜ **Build in extra safeguards for migrant women in SMPs.** Safeguards are important in SMPs and in labour migration agreements for the particular challenges faced by migrant women. For example, domestic and care workers are at a particular risk of exploitation and sexual harassment and need protection for maternity. This is particularly important given that migrant women are not always covered by labour law in destination countries.

➜ **Build in extra safeguards for I+people of various gender identities, sexual orientations and sex characteristics.** Safeguards are important in SMPs and in labour migration agreements for the particular challenges faced by these groups and to ensure inclusivity of a wide range of labour migrants. Information related to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) could for example included in orientation curriculums, so that people with diverse SOGIESC know their rights and responsibilities in new countries.

> **Box 23:** When designing training schemes, they need to be made inclusive, for example by ensuring equal gender access inclusion of people from rural areas[62]
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> Gender mainstreaming is at the heart of IOM's PROMISE interventions. This includes developing and delivering skills development training that meets the needs of men and women; ensuring appropriate gender balance in the establishment of community-based working groups and initiatives to support women's empowerment; and incorporating gender-sensitive measures into return and reintegration service provision to all migrants. For example, considering that women migrant workers often face more challenges upon return, IOM has put more efforts in facilitating their access to skills training and job-matching.
>
> In addition, IOM has proactively encouraged participation from women migrant workers and migrants with diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) in skills development training and certification. It has encouraged participation of people with diverse SOGIESC in all parts of programme activities, for instance by encouraging them to become trainers at Migrant Learning Centres for training courses that do not necessarily target SOGIESC learners.[63]

Migration and mobility policies responding to social aspects

➔ **Include provisions for family reunification and visits** in SMP planning (if this is not possible under current legislation, consider options for exemptions/reform). This includes options for spouses and children to join migrant workers in the country of destination and access labour markets (visa, residence permit, work permit), as well as possibilities to facilitate visits (multiple entry visa for both migrant and family members to travel between country of origin and destination or third countries).

➔ **Consider improving systems for registration and deregistration in national registry systems** for migrant workers

Support integration in country of destination

➔ **Consider integrating "soft landing" aspects into SMPs** that support and facilitate integration of migrants. This includes support with taxes, finding houses, accessing education opportunities (including for family members) and opening bank accounts. Migration and mobility as part of SMPs can be understood as a "package deal" including more than just the employment and remuneration element.

➔ **Establish support structures for migrant workers under SMPs** that provide information and guidance. This can take various forms. Some countries such as the Kingdom of the Netherlands have opted to establish "Expat Centres" that welcome migrants and provide support for integration. Some skills and mobility interventions and pre-departure training, as well as onboarding processes, include specific elements to inform candidates and dedicated resources to support migrants in navigating administrative procedures. Enabel's PALIM project for instance aimed to facilitate integration through mentors within companies that welcomed them.

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[62] See *Guide on Making TVET and Skills Development Inclusive for all.*
[63] PROMISE II interim report, p. 23.

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How to Integrate Social Aspects of Employment and Mobility in SMPs?

Support return and reintegration

➔ **Support migrants to accumulate human, financial and social capital during their migration experience** and facilitate their portability and opportunities to re-invest their social, human and financial capital in the country of origin. As part of SMPs, this can include additional trainings in countries of destination useful for origin countries or support in job matching and placements also when returning to countries of origin. Countries of origin can include additional incentives (e.g. social security, decent work) as part of SMP processes to encourage a temporary nature of migration if the objective is to achieve circulation of knowledge and skills. There are a number of further supply-side interventions that can be carried out with financial institutions as part of SMPs.[64]

Box 24: The Skilled Workers Arrival Database for Employment Support (SWADES) Card in India

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), under the Skill India Mission, has partnered with the Ministries of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and External Affairs (MEA) and created a database of qualified citizens – based on skill sets and experience – to ensure that returnees have opportunities for post-return employment. Returning citizens are obliged to complete a SWADES skill form as part of the SWADES programme, after which a SWADES skill card is awarded. The Ministry then provides the companies with appropriate placement opportunities in the nation with the information it has gathered. (See EUDiF, 2021).

➔ **Assess the current state of and facilitate further cooperation on the portability of social rights and on fiscal policies** (retirement, social security cover, pension plans, taxation) between countries of origin and destination as part of SMPs.

➔ **As part of the SMP, envisage the creation of one-stop centres** (e.g. migrant resource centres) for potential future as well as return migrants that provide information on skills development opportunities and labour market needs locally and abroad, offer job-matching services, and can refer to relevant practical skills training.

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[64] For more details, see IOM-UNDP: Advancing the Financial Inclusion of People on the Move and Host Communities: Lessons learned from Peer Exchange.

Returning migrants can be an important source of growth for the home country through their accumulated knowledge and skills. Several interventions can help ensure that migrant workers are supported in job-matching and job placements upon return to their countries of origin. These additional measures after returning from employment in destination countries are to ensure that migrant workers are supported in their countries of origin. This can be linked with local development goals and providing for their families. More so, the skills that the migrant workers have gained in their employment abroad can be used to develop local quality and can also serve to fill employment gaps in the domestic labour market (see also section 6).

In IOM's PROMISE programme, Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) set up at the borders of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Malaysia with Thailand, assist returning migrant workers with several services such as counselling, grievance registration and advocacy, as well as job placement. They also offer skills development programmes to boost migrants' potential for finding local employment upon return, and assisted migrants when they had to return during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Cambodia, these MRCs successfully promoted job-matching for return migrant workers and have developed a referral Standard Operational Practice together with Job Centres. Moving forward, IOM will work with the SDC-funded Cambodia Skills Development Programme to include a section on returning migrant workers in the Job Profile and Employment Counselling guide of Cambodia's National Employment Agency.

Remittances

➔ **Assess the capacity of and engage in discussions with financial service providers to develop financial products designated for potential migrants and returned migrant workers** with a particular focus on women and persons with disabilities.

Diaspora engagement

➔ **Involve diaspora organizations as part of SMP design and implementation in the context of a multi-stakeholder process**. Diaspora organizations can be included in the design and implementation of SMPs especially because of their knowledge of both destination countries and home countries from where the talents may be recruited. They are able to provide information about people's aspirations and can help guide migrants in navigating life in destination countries.

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How to Integrate Social Aspects of Employment and Mobility in SMPs?

Box 26: Involving the diaspora in the design and implementation of SMPs

Diaspora can play an important role in bridging information and communication gaps between employers and potential employees, offering training on soft skills and supporting the integration of employees. They can also help by amplifying the opportunities that exist for employment in destination countries and link employers to the local talent pool in different sectors in their home countries. However, involving the diaspora in the implementation of SMPs should not be ad hoc. It should be well thought out, commencing with a mapping of the various diaspora segments with the aim of identifying the sectors and areas to which the diaspora can potentially contribute.

Diaspora can also assist employees with mentorship activities through which they can give back to their communities of origin, thus working together to counteract brain drain and contributing to the development of their communities of origin. Diaspora engagement can be integrated into skills mobility partnerships through several entry points. For example, diaspora can be used to promote the outreach of the programmes in their countries of origin, thus directing skilled participants towards the existence of the programme. Also, the diaspora can have a role in driving the content of these SMPs. They can be involved in the governance structure of these projects, for example through participating in steering committees or project advisory bodies.

As a first step, it is important to carry out a mapping of the diaspora, and identify with which segments of the community, in which sectors, and along which corridors, the diaspora links. Next, identify key persons in the diaspora who will be able to link the project with other diaspora segments or organizations. However, it is important to note that such key persons may also act as gatekeepers or may be biased in cases where the diaspora communities are fragmented. Next, determine to what extent the diaspora can be included in the SMP, based on the demand from the diaspora and their capacities. It is important to note that most diaspora organizations are based on voluntary participation and the free time of their management, who may also have full-time jobs. Therefore it is important to include a level of flexibility in determining the administrative and organizational structure within which they can play a role.

Further resources

Resources on gender
- IOM (2021). *Gender and Migration Data: A guide for evidence-based, gender-responsive migration governance.*
- IOM (2018). Guidance for Addressing Gender in Evaluations.
- UN Women (2021). Policies and Practice: A Guide to Gender-Responsive Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (and pdf version).
- Bridges (2021). *Guidelines on how to include the gender perspective in the analysis of migration narratives.*
- KNOMAD (2016). *Understanding Women and Migration: A Literature Review.*

Social Inclusion' with the following publication:
- IOM has a variety of resources and tools for social inclusion in IOM Programming, which can be found here: www.iom.int/social-inclusion-iom-programming.

Social Protection
- IOM (2022). Global Guidance on Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements.

Diaspora engagement
- ECDPM, EUDIF and MPF (2021). Implementation of the talent partnerships: What potential role for the diaspora?
- International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2022). *Diaspora Mapping Toolkit.* IOM, Geneva.

Remittances and Financial Inclusion
- IOM and FIIAPP (2014). *Handbook to develop projects on remittances – Good practices to maximize the impact of remittances on development.*
- JRC (2022). Social connections and remittance flows: an exploratory analysis of Facebook data.
- IOM, UNDP, SDC and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador (2022). Advancing the Financial Inclusion of People on the Move and Host Communities: Lessons learnt from peer exchanges.

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How to Integrate Social Aspects of Employment and Mobility in SMPs?

10. REGULAR PATHWAYS, ADMISSION PROCEDURES AND VISA REQUIREMENTS[65]

SMPs are set up within broader migration and immigration policies and legal frameworks. For each SMP, there needs to be a vision of how it contributes to realizing the migration, skills and labour market objectives of all involved countries and how it fits into existing systems and frameworks of all involved countries. Immigration regulations may be such that some objectives of SMPs are not easy to realize, or that they do not optimally facilitate mobility and migration objectives of SMPs. If this is the case a more general debate about the priorities of various objectives would need to be had.

Legal migration frameworks and migration processes are often complex. Sometimes several possible legal pathways exist in destination countries that can facilitate the mobility envisaged by the SMP; in other contexts, legal migration frameworks and procedures create barriers. Institutional processes and clarity on the requirements related to work permit and visa issuance are important for the effectiveness and efficiency of SMPs. Notably, skills recognition (see section 7) could be one of the eligibility criteria for the applicable immigration procedure. Navigating these realities when recruiting foreigners for employment, exchange or skills development as part of SMPs is not always straightforward. It requires an understanding of legal requirements, as well as how the processes of obtaining work or residence permits and visas or recognizing skills work in practice.

In this context, the role of national migration agencies must be given due consideration and incorporated into SMPs from the planning stage. This is not least since it is migration agencies that process and issue the relevant permits and visas that allow for cross-border mobility. Likewise, they often have the discretion to issue the work authorization along with the permit or visa, sometimes in consultation with their labour counterparts. This calls for an SMP design that takes into account existing legislation and procedures, while migration procedures may also be adapted in accordance with objectives of the SMP.

Legal frameworks and policies governing migration are important for procedures at all the different stages of the migration continuum.

Aside from the impact on the overall implementation and success of a SMP, migration considerations should also be assessed from a migrant worker's perspective. While there is a collective element to participating in a SMP scheme, an immigration procedure is a personal, legal application subject to individual assessment. It is also often a first encounter with the mode of operations of the destination government and her institutions. Complicated, time-consuming or ambiguous procedures can be unsettling and lead to uncertainty and stress. Access to information channels and adequate support ensures ownership and boosts the start of the SMP experience for the migrant worker.

Pre-departure: Immigration procedures may include post-arrival and registration requirements. Moreover, in the pre-departure phase, migration policies and related legislation govern possibilities and conditions for accessing labour migration pathways, the process and institutional set up of issuing visas and work permits, and recruitment procedures, as well as skills recognition processes (skills training and education needs to lead to recognized qualifications that are accepted by migration officials when issuing work permits).

Stay and integration: Policies and legal frameworks governing possibilities for integration, including family reunification, lifelong learning and access to public services, as well as citizenship laws, are important for how attractive countries of destination are for the migrant workers they aim to recruit through SMPs, next to economic benefits.

Onward migration, return and reintegration: Policies and legal frameworks governing opportunities for circular mobility, and onward migration and reintegration (including portability of skills), are important in facilitating the overall migration cycle.

Existing experiences of skills mobility interventions have revealed a number of potential migration challenges in existing migration processes that require specific attention. These relate especially to the need to ensure that workers trained under an SMP in fact have access to immigration opportunities and can meet required criteria.

Policies and procedures throughout the migration continuum

Effective SMPs must factor into their design the reality of the migration procedures and the experiences of the migrants themselves. This includes analysing existing migratory corridors and harmonizing aspects of the programme (training, pre-departure meetings, preparation for employment, migration, employment abroad and return or other pathways, etc.) within the migration continuum.

Figure 4: The migration continuum

EMIGRATION

Permanent stay
(*Sustainable reintegration*)

Permanent stay /
onward migration

Permanent stay

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

COUNTRY OF DESTINATION

ANOTHER COUNTRY OF DESTINATION

RETURN
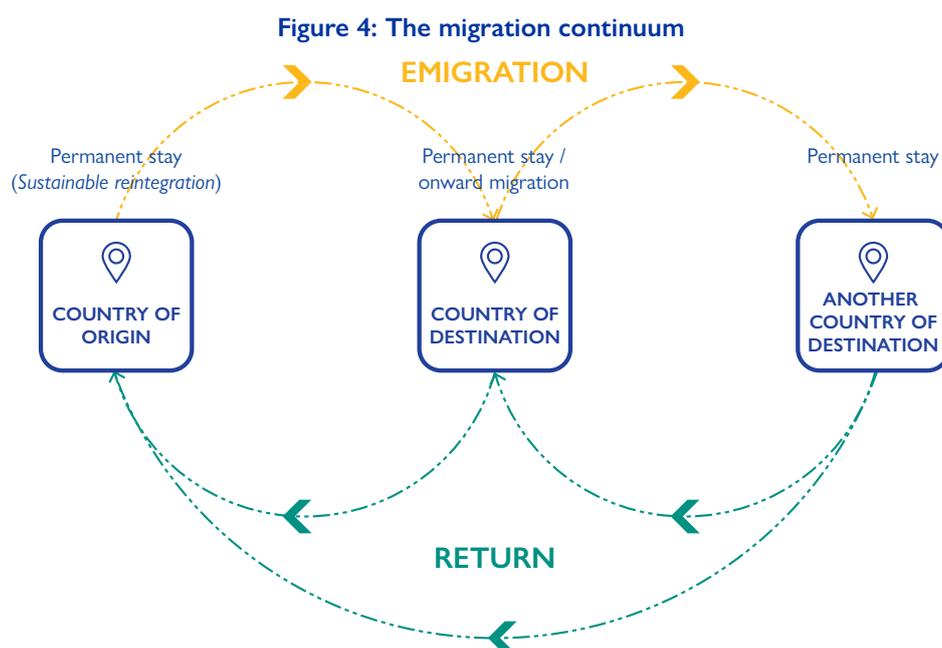
Source: EMM2.0 Handbook, Phases of migration.

The migration continuum refers to the different possible stages of a migration process, each of which follow different institutions and institutional processes and procedures, influenced and governed by different policies and legislations. It is therefore crucial to understand how SMPs fit into existing systems, legislation and regulations that regulate around the different aspects crucial for each of the phases.

Box 27: The importance of mapping policy and procedures

Mapping of various country-specific migration policies and procedures is essential in the initial stages of creating an SMP, while continued monitoring and evaluation of involved stakeholders and participant experience vis-à-vis such policies and procedures is needed to understand a programme's effectiveness.

Below is a non-exhaustive checklist of information needed to properly assess migration policies, including bilateral migration agreements (BLMAs).[66] Please refer to the ILO-IOM Tool for the Assessment of Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements Pilot-tested in the African region to expand upon this list.

- Who are the authorities in charge of developing the BLMA?
- What type of labour migration is covered by the policy/BLMA? (e.g. circular, permanent, seasonal, etc.)
- Is a standard model employment contract included in the agreement?
- Which specific groups of migrant workers are covered? (by gender, profession and skills)
- Were social partners involved in skill needs identification for the labour market?
- Are clauses included for protection of migrant workers' rights, including the principle of equality of treatment?
- Are health care and other social benefits included in the agreement for migrant workers?
- Have the social partners, NGOs, public and private stakeholders been involved in the preparation of the agreement?

In order to understand an international programme or bilateral agreement's effectiveness, policy mapping and legal review is an exercise that consists of a **comprehensive stock-taking and analysis** of the policies, legislative and regulatory frameworks, and to subsequently assess their degree of alignment with country level policies and initiatives. Furthermore, existing institutional and administrative processes and their practical application should be mapped to identify potential obstacles and barriers to the functioning of the SMP. Policies and procedures to be mapped might include:

- **Pre-departure**
    - Recruitment procedures
    - Visa and work permit application
    - Pre-departure orientation and information
    - Skills and certificates recognition
    - Access to financial support / funding

- **Arrival**
    - Border security
    - Verification of entry requirements
    - Information centres
    - Administrative procedure assistance
    - Job matching
    - Access to essential services and service providers

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66   ILO-IOM (2019), Tool for the Assessment of Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements Pilot-tested in the African region, p. 22–25.

- **Stay and integration**
  - Post-arrival registration requirements
  - Housing
  - Health services
  - Access to public services and citizenship laws
  - Finance support (e.g. remittances transfer, credit)
  - Family reunification

- **Onward migration**
  - Portability of social security benefits
  - Recognition of skills and certificates

- **Return and reintegration**
  - Pre-return orientation and information
  - Finance assistance and access to credit
  - Job placement
  - Verification of skills and certificates

The role of national migration agencies

Integral to the incorporation of migration considerations is the involvement of **national migration agencies**. Their inputs must be taken into account throughout the planning and development stage of SMPs as these agencies interact directly with the migrants and hold valuable insights into the reality of migratory procedures and the overall migratory experience.

Who does this involve, at what level?

National migration agencies, both during pre and post-departure, can play a pivotal role in a migrant **worker's** experience and their ability to excel as workers, as well as their ability to **exercise their rights** as human beings in their host country. This is largely because migrant workers often rely on migration agencies to **access key information** pertaining to their status in the country, their pathways to social integration and inclusion, as well as their access reporting mechanisms and to justice more broadly. In this regard, national migration agencies should be considered as **midway actors** between state institutions, migrant workers, and key non-state actors, such as the private sector and civil society actors. Migration agencies should therefore be equipped to provide migrant workers with a pre-departure information package, a welcome package in the host country containing accurate information pertaining to migrant worker's rights, referral mechanisms to service providers, and other key resources for migrant workers to orient themselves in the host country.

How does this link to the multi-stakeholder approach?

Given that migration agencies hold a unique position as midway actors between migrant workers, state institutions, and non-state actors in civil society and the private sector, developing a diverse network between multiple stakeholders is key to ensuring that migration agencies are able to support migrant workers, both during pre and post departure. For example, if migrant workers are seeking housing in their host country, migration agencies should be able to refer them to relevant sources of information. Similarly, if migrant workers with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics

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(SOGIESC) are looking for safe service providers for migrants with diverse SOGIESC, migration agencies should be able to refer migrants to the appropriate service providers or civil society organizations. This is where the multi-stakeholder approach is key to ensuring that migration agencies are able to support migrant workers, both in host countries and during pre-departure.

Visas and work permits

Where possible, migrants will choose to migrate through regular pathways on visas. The migration experience can have a profound impact on migrant workers and their family members including those who may remain in the country of origin.

- Visas denote authority to enter a country and so offer a form of legitimacy when arriving in and travelling through a country. A valid visa provides a greater chance of being safeguarded against exploitation.
- Travelling on visas is easier logistically, as the availability of travel options is far greater. In some cases, it can mean the difference between a journey being feasible or not.
- Visas provide a greater level of certainty and confidence in the journey, which is much more likely to take place as planned, including in relation to costs. Travelling on visas is more likely to be safer, more certain and more easily able to accommodate greater choice, such as length of journey, travel mode and with whom to travel.
- There exists great variety of how and when countries issue authorizations to travel to, and reside and work in, a country. In some immigration systems, work authorizations can initially take the form of visas, allowing the holder to work temporarily. These visas could then be renewed or converted into a work permit prior to expiration. In some cases, a residence permit also allows the person to work without requiring a separate work permit.[67] Knowing when to apply for what type of visa or permit is essential to ensure compliance.

The *IOM Glossary on Migration* defines a work permit as a legal document issued by a competent authority of a State authorizing a migrant worker to be employed in the country of destination during the period of validity of the permit.

In many migration systems, work visas (especially temporary work visas) are tied to a specific employer, meaning that the workers cannot leave their employers without the risk of losing their visa status. Single employer-tied permits are of particular concern, creating the conditions for dependency and exploitation. They also hinder flexibility in the labour market and workforce to adapt to employers' and workers' needs. Often, mechanisms such as quotas, shortage occupation lists, and labour market tests are implemented in a way that blocks or creates over-burdensome administrative hurdles to the employment of migrant workers. A good practice to facilitate mobility is to introduce job-search visas to allow particular groups of potential labour migrants (e.g. graduates) to come to the country to search for work on the ground.

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[67]   IOM (2017), World Migration Report 2018, Chapter 7 - Understanding migration journeys from migrant's perspectives.

> **Box 28: Considering family dynamics and reunification in SMPs**
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> Family reunification is a subcategory of family migration,[68] and refers to reunification with a family member who migrated earlier. Family (re)unification programmes are developed to ensure the right to a family enshrined in Article 16 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and research shows that such practices influence integration outcomes such as wages, employment, and language proficiency.
>
> Favourable policies for family members and long-term settlement are relevant for migrants when choosing countries in which to study, work and invest – or join a mobility programme.
>
> In their planning and implementation, SMPs should therefore take into account what provisions for family reunification and visitation are foreseen by the current legislation of the countries involved and, if not favourable, consider options for exemption/reform. In addition to the option for spouses and children to join the migrant worker in the country of destination, such considerations should also look at the option for them to access labour markets (visa, residence permit, work permit), as well as options to facilitate visits (multiple-entry visas for both the migrant and family members to travel between the country of origin and destination or third countries).[69]

Simplifying migration procedures

Efforts to address the practical and logistical aspects of migration must be incorporated into SMP design and revisited through regular monitoring and evaluation of both employers and migrant workers' experiences. This includes the development of robust programmes supporting simplified and linguistically accessible migration procedures, including registration systems for visas, residency permits, taxation, health insurance, and financial institutions. Inter-State cooperation is necessary in order to address these concerns and ensure adequate service provision and administrative capacity to handle an influx of requests in an efficient and timely manner.

Simplifying procedures and modernizing infrastructure helps labour migration systems to be more efficient, flexible and attractive to foreign labour, and thus ultimately to create successful partnerships.

Actions that can contribute to improve procedural efficiency, while reducing the time and/or monetary investments made by States, employers and migrants, include:

- **Eliminating paper-based applications and procedures** for work and residence permits in favour of digital and electronic procedures for applying to visas and work permits, including functions to submit supporting documentation and pay fees. For example, the United States has an **Electronic System for Travel Authorization**,[70] where citizens of countries who participate in the United States Visa Waiver Programme (VWP) can travel to the United States with an approved travel authorization instead of a visa. This system was developed on the basis of 97 per cent of visas being approved on the first application from a number of countries.

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[68]   Definitions of both family migration and family reunification can be found in *IOM Glossary on Migration*.
[69]   ECDPM, Policy Recommendations, Guidance and Methodology on effective governance of skills-based mobility and cooperation, December 2022.
[70]   EMM IOM, Electronic System for Travel Authorization.

- **Streamlining permits and visas systems and their application procedures.** This includes avoiding creating too many different subclasses and tiers of admission, as well as alleviating the administrative burden from migrant workers as they navigate their visa procedures. For example, **Visa Application Centres (VACs)**[71] are services run by IOM, private companies or partnering organizations that support migration pathways. VACs facilitate visa procedures both for migrants and governments through working efficiently, upholding state security standards, and safeguarding the rights of migrants. The multiplication of rules, permits and statuses creates a complex regulatory framework for authorities, employers and workers to navigate, that can lead to fragmentation of the labour market and thus contributing to informal work.

- **Shortening process times**, to allow selected candidates to arrive in the country quickly. Labour migrants might be reluctant to join a programme if they face uncertain waiting times to pass migration procedures, at the same time employers may renounce recruitment when the process is long. VACs play an important role, as dignified visa application centres, in ensuring that these centres are adequately staffed to meet the needs of applicants, uphold standards of efficiency, and that migrants are kept informed on the processing times of their visa applications.

- **Mainstreaming gender considerations:** Moreover, border management must be careful to **mainstream gender considerations**,[72] given that gender groups will experience their migratory journey differently. As such, governments should consider gender-related barriers and vulnerabilities, particularly the **power dynamics** associated with male, female, and non-binary gender roles, and whether a migrant identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or intersex (LGBTI), which likely increases migrant workers' vulnerability. Intrinsic to the **simplification** of migration procedures is increasing their **accessibility** to all, which implies developing **gender and LGBTI sensitive** migration procedures and processes.

Strengthening the links between Reintegration and Development

Planning ahead requires thinking of the end of the SMP process and of the migration continuum, turning to planning for return and reintegration. Again, the whole-of-government approach, and both country of destination and origin cooperation are needed to plan for the sustainable reintegration of migrant workers. Evidence shows that migrants are often unprepared for reintegration. As Cassarino (2014) explains, an over focus on the securitization of temporary labour migration can lead to gaps in alignment and development of instruments that can support the return of migrants, and their reintegration needs.

The return and reintegration of migrant workers has to be planned and thought through following the same principles as the rest of the SMP process – to respond to migrants' rights and needs, their aspirations and dreams, as well as further coordination at all levels of government and society.

To this end, the European Return and Reintegration Network Member States commissioned Samuel Hall in 2022 to develop an operational framework on reintegration and development

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71   EMM IOM. Visa policy, categories and application management.
72   EMM IOM. Gender and Border Management.

to plan from pre-departure to post-arrival. Partnerships and coordination with an ecosystem of actors are central, alongside referral mechanisms, to contribute to inclusive and cohesive societies after migration.

Box 29: Return and reintegration policies in the context of SMPs

SMPs must also encompass return and reintegration, and facilitate mobility through **simplified procedures for mutual visits**, and **temporary and permanent residence**. Other solutions that can be considered to leverage potential "losses" in origin countries, including of human capital, involve simplified registration and de-registration in national registry systems, double taxation agreements, facilitated inter-State banking and financial transfers, customs waivers, and cooperation on social and health insurance mechanisms. Proper information for and communication with migrant and non-migrant workers will ensure that SMPs and the global partnership have an even higher chance of success.

The IOM acknowledges that return migration may occur for a variety of reasons and in a variety of security contexts. The strategic objectives of IOM's work on return, readmission and sustainable reintegration include **(i)** ensuring that return and readmission occur in a safe and dignified manner and that migrants are able to make an informed decision and freely change it, **(ii)** support returnees, communities and authorities through holistic approaches to sustainable reintegration, **(iii)** act as an honest broker to provide advice and support to, and foster cooperation with and capacity development of governments, as well as other stakeholders, on developing rights-based return, readmission and reintegration policies, **(iv)** ensure accountability and evidence-based programming throughout the return, readmission and reintegration spectrum.[73]

Moreover, IOM's approach to supporting the full spectrum of return, readmission, and sustainable reintegration is underpinned by **guiding principles** that inform all IOM return and reintegration activities.

These principles include:

1. Rights-based approaches through active protection and upholding of migrant rights
2. Gender-responsive, child- and vulnerability-sensitive perspectives
3. Do no harm
4. Migrant agency
5. Accountability
6. Confidentiality
7. Safe environments for return
8. Sustainability of reintegration
9. Whole-of-government approach and government ownership
10. Partnership and cooperation
11. Relevant international legal frameworks

SMPs should ensure that all mechanisms related to the return and reintegration of migrants align with the above guiding principles and strategic objectives.

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[73] IOM's Policy on the Full Spectrum of Return, Readmission and Reintegration, p. 1–12.

Migration corridors[74]

Long-term data shows that international migration is not uniform across the world but is shaped by economic, geographic, demographic, environmental and other factors resulting in distinct migration patterns, such as migration "corridors" developed over many years.

According to UN DESA (2021), there were around **281 million international migrants** in the world in 2020. The estimated number of international migrants has steadily increased over the past years, although its share of the total global population has increased more incrementally. There were about 153 million migrants in 1990 (2.9% of global population), while the 281 million migrants of 2020 represent **3.6% of global population**s. Out of this number 169 million are international migrant workers.[76]

The current international migration data we have helped estimate bilateral migration "corridors" globally. The size of a migration corridor from country A to country B is measured as the number of people born in country A who were residing in country B in 2020.[77]

The United States and Mexico have the largest migration corridor with around 11 million people. In second place we have the Syrian Arab Republic to Türkiye corridor with close to 4 million migrants most of which were displaced by the Syrian Arab Republic's decade-long civil war. Conversely, the third largest corridor in the world, is made up of mainly labour migrants that have emigrated to the United Arab Emirates from India. In the midst of the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, the fourth largest corridor in the world has been profoundly affected.

The mentioned migration corridors carry different levels of risks and challenges for the migrant and the authorities regulating them. Migrants' journeys can sometimes be characterized by unsafe and even deadly outcomes, often related to a range of social, political, economic, environmental and policy factors that can profoundly impact the way in which people undertake migration.[78] Over the past six years, the "Central Mediterranean route" has remained the deadliest connecting corridor route in the world.

Why are migration corridors relevant for SMPs?

When designing SMPs between two or more countries, both countries of origin and destination should select as counterpart countries with matching or similar labour shortages, foreign policy ties, strong labour laws, existing migratory pressure, and cultural linkages.

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[74] The majority of the data presented in this section has been gathered by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2021), and reflected by the World Migration Report 2022.
[75] For further information on migration corridors, please see Migration Corridors video by Melissa Siegel.
[76] ILO (2021), *ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers Results and Methodology Third Edition*.
[77] IOM (2021), *World Migration Report 2022*. p. 26.
[78] IOM (2021), *World Migration Report 2022*. p. 30.

Context is key and defines what approach and methodologies should be used. Moreover, attention must be paid to how the specific features of existing corridors between those countries interact with the design elements of SMPs in producing good or bad results, in order to understand when the design elements can be successfully transplanted from one situation to another.

Recommendations

➔ **Carry out an assessment and mapping of the existing regular pathways** under which workers trained under SMPs can legally enter destination countries and access the labour market. **Map the institutional and administrative processes** and their application journey in practice, and identify potential obstacles and barriers to the functioning of the SMP. Collect information on how the recruitment and immigration processes impact the motivation and decisions of migrant workers. As part of a mapping, identify legislative gaps and assess how they could be addressed in the context of the SMP.

Box 30: Questions concerning practical aspects of organizing visas and work permits

- What regular pathways and opportunities exist for the specific envisaged SMP model? If there are legal limitations, are there opportunities to create new mobility schemes in the context of the SMP?
- Do admission systems account for skill levels and applicants' skills at large? How are skills integrated into immigration and labour migration policies?
- Where are visa centres located to which participants can apply?
- Are there possible ways to fast-track or facilitate visa application processes, skills recognition processes and accessing work permits for migrant workers under the SMP?

➔ **Connect mobility and migration as part of SMPs to clear legal migration pathways and procedures as well as to international matching mechanisms.** This ensures that migration and mobility options are accessible from legal, procedural and economic perspectives. SMPs can also usefully establish a link between job-matching platforms and migration management and selection systems. This can assure employers that migrant workers are indeed eligible for immigration.

➔ **Involve key actors operating and taking decisions in institutional and administrative migration processes** within the SMP design and implementation. Find champions within agencies and ministries who can support resolving blockages and finding creative solutions to emerging challenges within relevant institutions (e.g. migration agencies, embassies). This is important, because for businesses and migrants as well as the overall success of SMPs, speed and transparency in processes is key.

➔ **Examine possible institutional, policy or legal reforms of migration and skills recognition systems and optimization of migration procedures** (making them faster and more efficient) in line with SMP objectives. For SMPs to be effective and successful, it is important that broader legal frameworks can support and facilitate the envisaged mobility and labour migration. This can include the establishment of new visa centres to facilitate visa and work permit applications in countries of origin,

adopting technological solutions and e-visas, introducing new labour mobility pathways or reforming access requirements to existing ones, establishing speedy procedures and priority access for work permits, or fast-tracking provisions in the context of the SMP. While safeguarding migrants' rights and protection, a system of registered sponsors can be introduced, by which employers undergo an assessment process to become a recognized sponsor of labour migrants in order to speed up procedures for work permits. The perspective of employers and their needs for recruitment and migration procedures should be taken into account when assessing how systems could be improved.

➔ **Consider avenues for how migrants and business can navigate bureaucratic and administrative migration systems and procedures**. For example, intermediary organizations can decrease the burden on migrant workers and employers in collecting and processing official documents at home and in the destination country and guiding them through administrative processes. While ensuring the "Employer Pays Principle",[79] this can be especially important for SMEs with lower capacities in this area or in contexts where negotiating these processes are time-consuming, costly or prone to corruption.

➔ **Consider flexibilities in permitting longer-term stay** (through visas options and renewals of permits) while observing the interests of different stakeholders. Some SMPs may opt for circular migration schemes and should then include reintegration support and incentives for circularity or return. In other cases, there may be a stronger interest in providing access to longer-term migration, often favoured by employers that invest in skills development and aim to retain talent. Moreover, individual migrant decisions concerning length of stay should be respected. In the design of SMPs, it will need to be considered whether the existing migration policies and systems place the right incentives and include attractive options. Concerns about brain drain when migration tends to be long term could be countered with flexible provisions that allow SMP partner countries to decide on regulating (scaling up or scaling down) admissions of migrant workers for a specific sector or skills of concern. This could be an effective safeguard in case the skills recruited under SMPs become a shortage sector.

➔ **Consider possibilities for remote work as part of SMPs in sectors where this is an option.** Remote work does not work in all sectors and for all employers. Moreover, tax legislation, social security and other legal conditions will need to be observed, as well as working conditions, including contracts. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to changes in the world of work and has increased the acceptance of remote work (see box 31 and section 3 on long-term planning).

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[79] The Employer Pays Principle is globally considered good practice in order to protect migrant workers from recruitment malpractices and describes a model by which the worker does not pay any fees or related costs for their recruitment and deployment. Instead, these costs are covered by the employer. For more information, see IOM (2022). *Guidance note – recruitment fees and related costs*.

In some sectors, remote work may be an option in SMPs, for example in the IT sector or other sectors where permanent physical presence in the destination country is not important to engage in the job activity. For these sectors, the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of remote working options played a key role in motivating employers and employees to seek alternative solutions when mobility was not possible. In the MATCH programme, two employees were matched with their employers in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and due to difficulties in mobility as a result of the pandemic, they were able to start working remotely in Nigeria. However, when setting up SMPs, it is important to consider several challenges that may be associated with remote work. Legal and regulatory issues such as responsibility for issuing contracts, taxation, applicable labour laws, and responsibility for social and welfare payments, need to be clarified from the onset. Other issues related to workplace rules such as workplace environments and working hours, expectations regarding productivity and availability, tracking of time worked by employees, and procedures for protecting confidential information and securing data also need to be addressed in advance.

In the MATCH programme, three options were identified in relation to remote work between employers in the European Union and employees in other countries. These are:
- The company and the candidate cooperate remotely for the majority of the candidate's placement period, with the candidate undergoing short-term training in the European Union;
- The company and the candidate cooperate remotely on a daily basis, with the candidate undergoing several travels on duty to the European Union all along his/her placement period;
- The company and the candidate cooperate remotely during a trial period, with the candidate relocating to the European Union as soon as his/her visa is approved and the travel restrictions are lifted. (MATCH, 2021).

Given that the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to accelerating the switch to remote working options and the preference of employees to work remotely, as well as the flexibility that it offers both employers and employees, this is an option that can be explored in SMPs by providing a track for remote work, especially in sectors where the possibility exists. Other options that may be available, especially in the light of the negative narrative towards labour migration among European Union countries owing to the political challenges, would be to hire talent out to third countries while working for their employers in a different country. However, all the legal and regulatory challenges listed above as regards remote work would equally need to be considered.

Further resources

- United Nations (2022). *Guidance on Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements*.
- IOM (2016). *Migration Governance Framework*.
- IOM (2022). *World Migration Report 2022*.

11. HOW TO ACHIEVE COST REDUCTION AND SHARING

SMPs can bring significant economic benefits for countries of origin and destination, as well as for migrants themselves. Yet their implementation often involves significant costs. Developing the necessary upfront capacity, institutional networks and knowledge takes time and requires financial resources. This is especially the case for regular migration pathways that are not yet established and when countries of origin and destination have little institutional experience in organizing SMPs or similar models.

Choices made during the design, implementation and operational stages determine costs, which can vary depending on the context, the specific corridor, the duration and other characteristics of the skills mobility partnership. The objectives of SMP include training a future workforce for the development benefit of countries of origin as well as destination. Discussions on models of financing and cost-sharing may thus differ from those of simple mobility schemes.

Costs for implementing SMPs include:

- **Fixed administrative costs** (such as salaries and IT/infrastructure for running or expanding existing systems, government agencies/administrators processing visas, education and TVET systems, labour inspectorates, skills anticipation and recognition systems, etc.). Such costs invest in the quality, effectiveness and increased capacity of education and labour market systems that benefit not only those workers who move for employment abroad, but also those who remain in the country of residence to join the local labour market.
- **Variable costs per migrant worker**: Variable costs include those incurred for the preselection and recruitment of candidates (for example, through recruitment agencies or employer associations), the training of prospective migrant workers, passport and visa fees, travel costs, health and security checks, and monitoring and evaluation, as well as project implementation (including the organization of multi-stakeholder processes and the accompaniment of migrant workers throughout the migration cycle), as well as costs for support during integration and return and reintegration processes (for example, with housing and other services).

For SMPs to be sustainable, costs need to be monitored and if possible reduced over time so that they are justifiable from a public policy point of view when public funding is used. Policymakers setting up and implementing SMPs will therefore not only need to be aware of the various costs in order to factor them into SMP design and planning, and balancing the objectives of SMPs within budgetary boundaries. They also need to ensure that in the spirit of a "true partnership", costs are distributed fairly across benefiting stakeholders, which include countries of origin and destination, employers and investors; and that involved actors are prepared to pay these costs for the duration of the SMP and possibly beyond because of the benefits the SMP generates.

SMPs will ideally integrate cost-sharing models that equitably distribute costs among involved actors benefiting from the SMP. SMPs generate public benefits for which a continued public funding can be appropriate, while other costs can be borne by private actors, given that they gain individually in support of their business, federation of industries or their clientele as chambers of commerce. Cost-sharing approaches in which employers are involved seem promising, because they need to bring more targeted results and deliver on promises. When training and skills development take place in countries of origin through their educational systems, SMP models may require the transfer of resources to these countries.

Box 32: Economic cost-benefit rationale for the Digital Explorers pilot scheme

The Digital Explorers pilot project organized skills development and mobility opportunities between Nigeria and Lithuania. The project had high public investment costs, while in the end only relatively few Nigerian IT workers moved to Lithuania. However, a wider economic cost-benefit analysis showed that in high added value sectors such as IT – even if only a few people move – economic benefits can outweigh the costs for different scenarios considered. The analysis showed that the added value of the project for the Lithuanian ICT sector was 1.7 times higher than public costs, and that it would overtake costs immediately after the project's conclusion in 2022.

Publicly financed SMPs will also need to incorporate safeguards so that public sector money does not subsidize the commercial aims of participating private employers (e.g. by training prospective employees of a company giving them a business and cost advantage over others). Involved agencies may also have their own rules about how and to what extent they can co-finance projects with private actors, which will need to be taken into account.

Transparency and accountability of SMPs should be ensured through multi-stakeholder processes, government regulation and accessible agreements (see also Section 4 on multi-stakeholder processes).

As part of cost-sharing models in labour mobility schemes, employers are often asked to pay upfront, financing the skills development of workers, without certainty over whether trained workers will in the end acquire the necessary qualifications and work permits and can fill the vacancies. This creates risks for employers to engage in such schemes. The timing of when they are asked to make payments matters for their interest in sharing costs and engaging in SMPs. Next to financial responsibility, involved stakeholders that assume costs can also provide in-kind contributions (eg. infrastructure, capacity and knowledge). Governments can also waive certain costs (such as costs for visas or work permits).

Existing schemes and agreements that focus on skills and/or mobility have opted for different models of cost-sharing.[80] The agreement between Indonesia and Australia requires companies to bear all training-related costs. Similarly, the German scheme to recruit health workers with partner countries also asks employers to cover all costs linked to recruitment and pre-departure training (language, cultural orientation and technical training), as well as costs of recognition of qualifications and for further language skill training. Structural costs are covered by the German Federal Ministry for Health and the Bertelsmann Foundation. Some schemes are driven by employers' associations, as is the case with recruitment in the shipping sectors (for example, between the Norwegian shipping association and Filipino workers). The Bilateral Labour Mobility Agreement between Jordan and Nepal includes clear wording on how costs are covered.

Financing SMPs

While SMPs can bring great socioeconomic benefits, the design, implementation and operation of SMPs have costs, both financial and in terms of resources. Designing sustainable and successful SMPs also requires that all stakeholders are satisfied with the division of expenses. However, such costs are very complex, can be substantial and vary greatly depending on the nature of the pathway. Moreover, to date, little information exists on the full costs involved in SMPs, how they are covered by government funding, the private sector and other potential stakeholders, and how these costs could be shared in an ethical and sustainable way to enable SMPs to scale.

The cost of implementing an SMP is determined by several choices made by those who design and set up the scheme. There are cheaper and more costly ways to do it and the costs vary depending on the context, the specific corridor, the duration and other characteristics of the SMPs, including the type and duration of training provided.

Every SMP has essential and fixed costs that must be borne regardless of the type of agreement/scheme. Alongside these, there are also voluntary costs, which vary depending on the type of activities being outlined. An in-depth understanding of these costs and the subsequent implementation of a budgeting exercise are therefore crucial to ensure that agreements are effectively implemented and that the objectives of SMPs are balanced with budgetary boundaries. Table 3 presents an overview of SMP costs and actors involved in carrying them.

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[80] These examples may not be SMPs in the strict sense and are used for illustrative purposes only.

Table 3: Overview of SMPs costs and actors involved

Costs involved			Who pays			
			Government (CoD)	Government (CoO)	Employer	Migrant
Essential costs	Project implementation	Bilateral meeting costs and costs associated with the partnership functioning				
		Training and capacity building of staff from relevant ministries, agencies and companies				
		Operational costs (such as equipment and supplies, e.g. rent and telecommunications)				
		Human resources costs (for project management, financial reporting and communications purposes)				
		Other administrative costs				
		Costs of direct support services to migrant workers, such as housing, emergency shelter, legal services, repatriation support, health check				
		Return and reintegration support				
		Stipends and social insurance contributions for migrants				
	Pre-selection of candidates	Recruitment agents, employer associations, border agencies, or international organizations to cover the identification, screening and processing of migrants				
		Implementation of workshops and examinations designed to test the skills of applicants				
		Developing and disseminating information (pre departure training sessions, briefings of social partners and private recruitment agencies, printed materials for migrant workers, etc.)				
		Recognition and/or certification of skills				
	Training	Training institute / facility / provider				
		Stipend/ allowance for migrants during training				
	Travel	Transportation				
		Costs associated with immigration procedures and visa arrangements				
Voluntary costs	Monitoring and evaluation	External evaluator				
		Collect information and feedback from migrants and employers				
		Events, conferences, and workshops to share lessons learned				

Source: Table elaborated based on CGD (2022). *Financing Legal Labor Migration Pathways.*

A number of measures can be considered in order to reduce costs as part of SMPs:

- SMPs can plan for realizing economies of scale over time. This includes developing strategies for how (pilot) SMPs can contribute to building systems, capacity and infrastructure that facilitate future cost reductions. A reduction of per capita costs is most likely to be achieved for example if skills opportunities and legal labour migration pathways can scale up.
- SMPs can also consider cost variations in the location of training, who provides the training and how it is delivered. However, simply moving training to lower- cost countries may not save money for specialized professions for which training needs differ between countries of origin and destination. In these cases, training often requires redesigning curricula and bringing in trainers from the country of destination, which incurs extra costs. Based on existing experience, this does not necessarily contribute to cost savings overall. Yet it can help achieve positive outcomes on skills and education systems in origin countries and thus bring additional benefits. In some cases, employers may find it less costly to invest in the training of workers to take place in the origin country, provided that training can meet the required skill level.
- How many parties are involved in SMPs also matters for costs. A way of reducing costs for parties involved is to set up SMPs at a regional level or through cross-State cooperation, with multiple destinations and origin countries. This option however faces further challenges, as expectations, labour market, skills and training needs as well as skills recognition processes can vary across destinations and origin countries. Moreover, the involvement of more stakeholders may also require stronger investment in multi-stakeholder coordination.

Cost-sharing in the context of SMPs

Although beneficial in the long run, SMPs are investments and involve upfront costs for all involved stakeholders. The challenge is not only to keep these costs manageable, but also to distribute them fairly among all actors involved, while ensuring that objectives are met. The difficulty of "sustainable" financing, and the need to move towards forms of cost-sharing between the public and the private sector actors involved, is a common refrain.

The majority of existing (pilot) skills and mobility initiatives are funded for the most part through governments in the country of destination, and have proved that costs to set-up a scheme as well as costs per capita costs for each migrant worker are generally high, eventually making the initiative unsustainable and unscalable in the long run.

According to the IOM model, for SMPs to be sustainable, they should ideally include cost-sharing models that distribute costs among the stakeholders benefiting from it, including countries of origin and destination, employers and investors.

- **Public sector (both CoD and CoO)**: Since SMPs generate public benefits, including the training of workers for the development benefit of both countries of origin and destination, a system of continuous public funding may be justified. Moreover, governments can also waive certain costs (e.g. costs for visa or work permits). While costs are generally lower in countries of origin making it more economical to carry out skills development activities in those locations, this must not preclude the provision of financial contributions from other benefiting stakeholders. When skills development takes place in the country of origin through the national education system, the SMP may indeed entail the transfer of resources to these countries.

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- **Private sector (employers, investors)**: Some costs may be borne by private actors, considering the benefits they obtain from SMP for their business. Generally, employers will only be willing to share the costs associated with the implementation of an SMP if they consider RoI to be worthwhile. In addition, the timing of payments for employers is important because of their interest in sharing the costs and engaging in SMP, since financing the development of workers' skills in advance, without having the certainty that the trained workers will eventually have the necessary qualifications and work permits to fill the vacancies, represents a risk for the company, even higher in the case of SMEs.[81]

Potential funding solutions to reduce and share SMPs operational costs, and thus allow for sustainability and scalability of the initiative, might include:

- **Tapping into existing structures to reduce costs.** For instance, even though without an explicit mobility component, some TVET providers already cooperate within international networks.
- **Levy system.** Within the context of bilateral labour agreements, previous approaches by governments to promote cost sharing among stakeholders within their country have included levies. Some agreements have utilized countries' existing levy systems to finance skills development, such as the application of a percentage of the total amount of salaries paid by employers to develop and improve the skills of employees. Others have included levies on sector-specific organizations, with the funds managed directly by the multilateral bodies composed of representatives from various employers' organizations, workers' organizations, and other stakeholders.[82]
- **Alternative funding models** such as results-based financing where public offices act as a guarantor, or involving the education sector in cost-sharing schemes with universities.

Recommendations

➜ **Define what outcomes are to be achieved and what the price for the desired outcomes is.** Consider carrying out a wider economic cost-benefit analysis to justify public investment. Compare costs of the planned SMP with other possible investments to support labour mobility and achieve envisaged outcomes (for example, investing in essential elements and improving labour migration laws and systems overall) and decide the best pathways forward.

➜ **Map and understand the complex cost structure of the envisaged SMP (as part of a feasibility study).**
- Map all structural, fixed, as well as variable and optional per capita costs along the specific corridor of the SMP for each of the steps of its implementation.
- Understand what drives costs and what leverages exist for reducing them.
- Throughout the SMP implementation, collect and monitor necessary information on the main cost items mapped.

➜ **Break down cost components** and map relevant public and private sector actors (donors, governments, development banks, equity investors) that could, based on their interests and rules and regulations, take up different cost items and SMP components.

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[81] ECDPM, Policy Recommendations, Guidance and Methodology on effective governance of skills-based mobility and cooperation, December 2022.
[82] ILO (2020), *Guidelines for skills modules in bilateral labour migration agreements.*

➔ **Define what outcomes are to be achieved and what the price for the desired outcomes is**. Consider carrying out a wider economic cost-benefit analysis to justify public investment. Compare costs of the planned SMP with other possible investments to support labour mobility and achieve envisaged outcomes (for example, investing in essential elements and improving labour migration laws and systems overall) and decide the best pathways forward.

➔ **Integrate plans for financial sustainability**. For each SMP that takes the form of publicly subsidized pilot schemes or specific interventions, ensure that from the start a plan for how to reach financial (self)sustainability exists and that mechanisms for cost sharing are being tested and expectations are clearly communicated to stakeholders. In order to transfer financial responsibility employers need to be involved in training and recruitment as be part of the SMP.

➔ **Involve representative bodies of industry sectors** (chambers of commerce) to invest in SMPs and skills development rather than individual businesses. Associations may have stronger capacity to invest in broader SMPs; likewise, they operate over a longer time horizon to invest in skills and talent recruitment benefiting their members as a whole than do individual SMEs.

➔ **Discuss the business case for the involvement of each business, as well as their expected return on investment.** These considerations may differ for each business and include actual costs, timing of costs, profit margins, interest rates, benefits accruing from participation, etc. The interests of business need to be reflected in the design of SMPs and in the cost-sharing mechanisms. Business involvement must make sense from a financial and business perspective. **Reduce financial risks for businesses.** Public actors can also consider how they can help reduce financial risks for employers (for example, through financing mechanisms that mitigate risks, such as Joint Guarantee Funds), and what other benefits (for example, support with finding housing, developing wider networks, etc.) can be factored into SMP planning so that the cost-benefit analysis is positive. Return on investment also links to how migration is organized as part of the SMPs: employers are concerned about whether workers start swiftly (length of training and recruitment) and whether investment in their skills can be retained (either through long-term employment or through recruiting the same individual recurrently, for example, for seasonal work).

➔ **Explicitly include fair financing and cost-sharing models in agreements.** Cost-sharing models underlying the SMP should be transparently included in the agreement underlying the SMP (for example, as part of the MoU, negotiated bilateral or multilateral skills and labour migration agreements, etc.). In any fair model, several benefiting actors should be involved in sharing the costs. Adequate financing models in SMPs that help to fairly share costs from the outset, can include the following:
  • Results-based financing (RBF) for labour mobility aims to incentivize labour mobility systems to achieve desired outcomes with minimum public and philanthropic funding. Payments to service providers (for example, recruitment agencies) are based on predefined impact goals that can be measured and are transparent.
  • A public–private training fund financed jointly by the private sector, country of origin and destination governments, or if relevant regional organizations could be set up to support an SMP. Public–private training funds exist in the context of broader skills development and could also be useful models in the context of SMPs.

- For countries of origin to join, cost-sharing agreements for training and co-financing through local financial institutions or through concessional loans with multilateral banks (with guarantees of the government) can be considered.

→ **Protect migrant workers from costs**. In many migration corridors, migrants are required to pay for migration-related costs and carry upfront financial burdens, for example, through funding visa fees, recruitment agencies, insurance and travel costs. A number of existing skills-mobility interventions aimed to impart some of the costs to migrants themselves in order to lower the costs for public investment. Following the ILO's guidance on migrant worker recruitment, SMPs should ensure that migrants involved do not incur costs that put them into debt or require high personal investment due to fees charged by operators and intermediaries. SMPs can support the redesigning of the migration system overall and incentivize employers to fund part of the recruitment fees, according to the "employer-pays recruitment" principle. Skills development can be another hidden cost for the migrant, for example, if certain upskilling is made compulsory and if it goes beyond what is necessary for the national level standard.

→ **Consider measures to reduce costs as part of SMPs:**
  - **Plan for realizing economies of scale over time**. Develop strategies for how (pilot) SMPs can contribute to building systems, capacity and infrastructure that facilitate future cost reductions. A reduction of per capita costs is most likely to be achieved if skills opportunities and legal labour migration pathways can scale up.
  - **Consider cost variations in the location of training**, **who provides the training and how it is delivered.** Take into account that simply moving training to lower-cost countries may not save money for specialized professions for which training needs differ between countries of origin and destination. In these cases, training often requires redesigning curricula and bringing in trainers from the country of destination, which incurs extra costs. Based on existing experience, this does not necessarily contribute to cost savings overall. Yet it can help achieve positive outcomes on skills and education systems in origin countries and thus bring additional benefits.
  - **Consider involving more parties in the SMP.** Another way of reducing costs for parties involved is to set up SMPs at a regional level or through cross-State cooperation, with multiple destinations and origin countries. This option however faces further challenges, as expectations, labour market, skills and training needs as well as skills recognition processes can vary across destinations and origin countries. Moreover, the involvement of more stakeholders also requires stronger investment in multi-stakeholder coordination.

→ **Find allies in existing public cooperation and investment schemes focusing on skills and learning**. To secure financing for skills development components of SMPs, it could also be worthwhile exploring how SMPs can be integrated or linked to larger human capital, skills and education objectives of international development cooperation and investment budgets.

Further resources

- Dempster, H., I. Gálvez Iniesta, R. Resstack and C. Zimmer (2022). *Financing Legal Labor Migration Pathways From Pilot to Scale.*
- LaMP (2022). Results-Based Financing Models: Improving Sustainability of Migration Systems, MPF Labour Migration Practitioners Network Session 25 October 2022.
- MPI (2022). Reassessing Recruitment Costs in a Changing World of Labour Migration
- European Union MPF financed Digital Explorers Project: Multifaceted impact: Digital explorers' value for money assessment (internal).
- Boston Consulting Group (2023). Migration Matters: A Human Cause with a $20 Trillion Business Case.
- CGD (2022). Financing Legal Labor Migration Pathways.
- ECDPM (2020). Mapping private sector engagement along the migration cycle.
- ILO (2015). Coordination and role of key stakeholders in setting up and implementing policies and procedures to facilitate recruitment, preparation, protection abroad, and return and reintegration.
- ILO (2019). The role of social partners in skills development, recognition and matching for migrant workers.
- ILO (2020). Guidelines for Skills Modules in Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements.
- IOM (2016). Toolkit for Integrating Migration into Private, Sector Development and Trade Interventions.
- IOM (2017). Private Sector Engagement in the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration.
- IOM (2021). Looking At Labour Mobility Initiatives From The Private Sector Perspective: Key Lessons Learned.
- IOM (2022). Private Sector Engagement Strategy for the Protection of Migrant Workers in Supply Chains in Europe - Internal Report.
- IOM (2022). Core Toolkit for Integrating Migration into Development Interventions.
- IOM (2022). Integrating Migration into Governance: A Toolkit.
- IOM (2022). Toolkit For Integrating Migration Into Employment Interventions.
- MPF (2022). Private Sector Initiative Report.
- MPI (2019). Exploring New Legal Migration Pathways: Lessons from Pilot Projects.

Futher readings:

- ILO (2017). General practical guidance on promoting coherence among employment, education/training and labour migration policies.

12. HOW TO ENSURE ETHICAL RECRUITMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF SMPs?

SMPs will need to respond to ethical considerations when training and recruiting migrant workers, given the impact that labour migration and mobility have on both countries of origin and destination, as well as on migrant workers and their families. SMPs can be sensitive and include safeguards, checks and balances to support ethical dimensions, as well as ethical recruitment.

A number of SDG targets link to ethical recruitment, especially concerning recruitment in the health sector as well as the protection of labor rights and are relevant for SMPs to take into account:

- Increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries (target 3.c).
- Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular, women migrants, and those in precarious employment (target 8.8).

One of the challenges when protecting labour rights is the regulation of recruitment agencies. Recruitment agencies act as the link between foreign employers and migrants, but they may not comply with regulations. Government regulatory oversight is thus important to safeguard the protection and welfare of migrants. One barrier to effective regulation of private recruitment agencies is that origin countries may not have integrated such policies and laws into their national migration strategies or ensured that these provisions are enforced. Another challenge occurs when countries of origin have not ratified relevant international conventions.[83]

Further difficulties to fair recruitment can arise when migrants pay large sums of money for their recruitment and they subsequently become indebted prior to migration. Migrant indebtedness decreases participation in SMPs,[84] reduces the development potential,[85] and can lead to exploitative working conditions. This is why when it comes to cost sharing, migrant workers should be protected from certain costs according to the Employer Pays principle (see section 11 on cost-sharing).

IOM has developed the IRIS ethical recruitment resources and toolkit, which aims to support governments, civil society, the private sector and recruiters to establish ethical recruitment in cross-border labour migration. IOM also established the Global Policy Network to promote

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83   See Deepening Labor Migration Governance at a Time of Immobility: Lessons from Ghana and Senegal.
84   See *Exploring new legal migration pathways – Lessons from pilot projects*.
85   See Enhancing the Development Impact of the UK's Immigration Pathways.

ethical recruitment, which brings together policymakers, regulators and practitioners to address shortcomings in regulation and enforcement. The Policy Network builds on the Montreal Recommendations on Recruitment.[86]

Recommendations

➔ **Include provisions on fair and ethical recruitment within SMPs**. Not all labour mobility agreements or existing skills and mobility interventions include provisions of fair and ethical recruitment, but thinking through relevant ethical dimensions is fundamental for SMPs to support sustainable development. This includes elements of minimizing brain drain (e.g. limitations for certain sectors, investing in skills and education systems in countries of origin so the population at large benefits, and facilitating skills transfers and circularity, as well as ensuring decent employment and social protection).

➔ **Consider the impact of migration legislation on migrant worker protection**. Are there for example provisions that allow migrant workers to change jobs and employers, or does their visa bind them to one work contract. Decide on specific safeguards and support needed to ensure protection within the given migration legislation and consider avenues for reform.

➔ **Include safeguards for labour rights and access to support for migrant workers in SMP planning.** There should be clarity about support structures, networks, and legal recourse and remedies, as well as decent complaint mechanisms that migrant workers under SMPs should be able to access. Consular access and services should be able to provide support in countries of destination. Rights and support mechanisms should be communicated to migrants as part of training, onboarding and integration measures.

➔ **Support the capacity of government institutions and social partners to put in place systems in support of ethical recruitment and migrant workers' protection** throughout the migration cycle, including their ability to regulate private and public recruitment agencies.

➔ **Incentivize recruiters to comply with regulations and integrate public health measures**. One way to do this could be to provide rewards to recruitment agencies that comply with regulations. Creating rewards for recruiters could also mitigate costs of recruitment being passed on to migrants. Another option is to pay involved recruitment agencies according to results-based financing, which encourages compliance and envisaged outcomes.[87]

➔ **Integrate ethical recruitment practices into pre-departure and post-arrival orientation programming**. For example, pre-departure orientation should provide guidance to migrants on how to make use of support systems and grievance mechanisms in the country of destination. It should also ensure migrants are informed about the country they will be working in and their new working environment, as well as their rights as migrants workers. IOM's Fair and Ethical Recruitment Due Diligence Toolkit can be a useful resource for employers wishing to strengthen ethical recruitment during orientation in line with human rights responsibilities.[88]

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86   https://iris.iom.int/.
     www.iom.int/news/iom-launches-global-policy-network-promote-ethical-recruitment.
     https://publications.iom.int/books/montreal-recommendations-recruitment-road-map-towards-better-regulation.
87   Deepening Labor Migration Governance at a Time of Immobility: Lessons from Ghana and Senegal.
88   www.iom.int/fair-and-ethical-recruitment-due-diligence-toolkit.

Further resources

IOM:

- IRIS Ethical Recruitment Tools and Resources and *IRIS Handbook for governments on ethical recruitment*.
- *Fair and ethical recruitment Due diligence toolkit*.

WHO

- WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel.

ILO:

- General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and definition of recruitment fees and related costs.
- *Promoting fair and ethical recruitment in a digital world*.

13. CONCLUSION

This guidance document has provided an overview of some of the key challenges and recommendations for setting up SMPs based on the relevant literature. The challenges and recommendations have been organized according to the eight elements as set out in the IOM's SMP framework model. The following summarizes some of the key challenges and recommendations for each element for effective SMPs.

Long-term planning allows labour migration to address structural labour needs, rather than only short-term ones. Taking into account long-term trends such as skills shortages, changes in the nature of work, demographic changes, and changes in employment opportunities due to climatic factors can help to future-proof SMPs. Effective long-term planning requires clarity on the specific objectives that the SMP is hoping to achieve. These objectives need to be evidence-based, flexible and take into account the perspectives of a range of actors.

Indeed, for SMPs to be successful, a multi-stakeholder approach that balances the different interests of all relevant stakeholders and policy domains is important. Engaging all stakeholders in the design and implementation is a key task, and this can help to build trust between actors. Trust-building between stakeholders can also be achieved through transparency of objectives for the scheme.

Good data is also needed, to ensure for example that SMPs are accurately targeted towards labour market needs. One of the main challenges is the absence of adequate Labour Market Information Systems in some countries, and moreover, systems which have integrated labour migration information into them. To address this, labour migration must be mainstreamed into labour market information systems and data collection.

Another challenge is ensuring SMPs contribute to local development and job creation in countries of origin. One key way to achieve this is to embed SMPs within other local development policy initiatives or investments. By integrating SMPs into broader development initiatives, SMPs can have more wide-ranging impacts for local development.

There are many challenges associated with creating effective frameworks for skills classification and recognition, which is needed by both employers and employees during the hiring process. Recommendations for how to achieve this include: understanding the national skills qualification frameworks, working with employers to assess what kind of qualifications they would trust, and creating ways to assess prior informal training. One example of an innovative approach to addressing the question of skills recognition is the Skills passports.

SMPs aim to build structural capacities in the areas of education, skills development and training in the country of origin. To achieve this, skills development and training should be set up in the context of SMPs so that broader development benefits and improvement in systems are generated for countries of origin.

To be successful, SMPs must be responsive to migrants' aspirations, plans and personal circumstances at each step of the migration process. It is important therefore in the design phase of SMPs, people of all genders' aspirations are carefully studied.

SMPs operate within legal migration frameworks, and must therefore integrate these legal considerations into their planning. One way to do this is to carry out a mapping of the legal pathways relevant to participants in the scheme. Making use of organizations with relevant expertise to provide support to migrants and businesses to navigate administrative processes.

One final challenge with setting up SMPs is the need to reduce costs, particularly so they are not entirely borne by migrants themselves which can result in migrants indebtedness to employers. Indeed, one of our key recommendations is to protect migrants from high costs. Another recommendation for cost-reduction is to map the complex cost structure, possibility as part of a feasibility study.

Further resources and existing guidance and training material

International organizations

Author	Year	Title
EMN	2021	EMN Inform on Skills Mobility Partnerships: Exploring innovative approaches to labour migration
Global Forum on Migration and Development	2020	The Governance of Labour Migration in the Context of Changing Employment Landscapes
	2020	Skilling Migrants for Employment - GFMD 2020 Thematic Note Theme 2
	2020	Lessons learned from COVID-19, Prevention, Response and Recovery (GFMD working paper)
	2020	Skilling Migrants for Employment Collection of practices and tools (Annex 1)
IOE	2018	IOE Position Paper on labour migration
	2020	Future Skills Assessment Report
	2021	*Addressing Skills Development to Improve Access to Foreign Skills*
	2021	The key role of Labour Migration in the post-Covid recovery
	2022	Migration policies in view of changing employment landscape A call from African employers' organizations to policymakers for stronger dialogue
ILO	2011	*Circular Migration: A Triple Win or a Dead End*
	2015	*Bilateral Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding on Migration of Low Skilled Workers: A Review*
	2017	*Study on Bilateral Labour and Social Security Agreements in North Africa*
	2017	General practical guidance on promoting coherence among employment, education/training and labour migration policies
	2017	*Addressing governance challenges in a changing labour migration landscape – Report IV*
	2017	How to facilitate the recognition of skills of migrant workers - Guide for Employment Services Providers and Facilitators Notes
	2017	Migrant access to social protection under Bilateral Labour Agreements: A review of 120 countries and nine bilateral arrangements
	2018	Skills for Employment Policy brief – Skills for Migration and Employment
	2020	*Guide on Making TVET and Skills Development Inclusive for all*
	2020	*Guidelines for skills modules in bilateral labour migration agreements*
	2020	Seasonal Migrant Workers' Schemes: Rethinking fundamental principles and mechanisms in light of COVID-19

Author	Year	Title
ILO	2020	*How to facilitate the recognition of skills of migrant workers: Guide for employment services providers*
	2021	*Training manual on the ILO Guidelines for skills modules in bilateral labour migration agreements*
	2021	*Employers' Organizations Guide on Fostering Labour Migration Governance in Africa*
IOM	2019	SCPF paper on Skills-based migration and partnerships
	2019	*Exploring the Links Between Enhancing Regular Pathways and Discouraging Irregular Migration A discussion paper to inform future policy deliberations*
	2020	*Guidelines for labour recruiters on ethical recruitment, decent work and access to remedy for migrant domestic workers*
	2020	*An exploratory study on labour recruitment and migrant worker protection mechanisms in West Africa – The case of Cote D'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal*
	2020	Info sheet on Skills Mobility Partnerships
	2021	Labour Mobility and Skills in Response, Recovery and Post Covid-19 Pandemic
	2021	Looking at labour mobility initiatives from the private sector perspective: Key lessons learned - Report of the Dedicated Workshops (MATCH)
	2022	The State of Play of Skills Mobility Partnerships between Africa and Europe
	2022	*Establishing Ethical Recruitment Practices in the Hospitality Industry*
GIZ	2019	*Capacity building strategy on labour migration governance in Africa*
	2020	*Youth Exchange for Skills Development A new tool for the Africa-EU Partnership*
OECD	2018	What would make Global Skills Partnerships work in practice?
	2020	*Innovative Approaches for the Management of Labour Migration in Asia*
	2020	How to make Labour Migration Management Future-Ready
UNESCO	2015	Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).
	2016	*Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (2016–2021)*
United Nations Network on Migration	2022	*Guidance on bilateral labour migration agreements*
Practitioners' Network for European Development Cooperation	2020	Development and Labour Mobility – Session 4 Report

Think tanks

Author	Year	Title
Bertelsmann Stiftung	2021	*Transnational Skills and Mobility Partnerships (TSMP) Contextual factors, conceptual design and application*
	2021	Transnational Skills Partnerships between Ghana and North Rhine-Westphalia – An exploratory study
CEPS	2019	*An EU-Africa partnership scheme for human capital formation and skill mobility*
	2020	*Paving the Way for Future Labour Migration – A Belgian-Tunisian Skills Mobility Partnership*
Center for Global Development (CGD)	2018	Alleviating Global Poverty: Labor Mobility, Direct Assistance and Economic Growth – Working Paper 479
	2019	Maximizing the Shared Benefits of Legal Migration Pathways: Lessons from Germany's Skills Partnerships
	2020	*Labor Mobility Partnerships: Expanding Opportunity with a Globally Mobile Workforce*
	2021	Australia Needs More Pacific Mid-Skill Migration: Here's How to Facilitate it
	2021	Skills Mobility Partnerships Could Contribute €2.8 Billion Per Year to European GDP
	2021	Nigeria's Tech Sector Could Benefit from More Managed Migration
	2021	*A Global Skill Partnership in Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) between Nigeria and Europe*
	2022	*Financing Legal Labor Migration Pathways: From Pilot to Scale*
	2022	*Enhancing the Development Impact of the UK's Immigration Pathways*
	n.d.	GSPs in Action and migration pathway database
CGD and World Bank	2021	Managed labor migration can help unlock Nigeria's unrealised economic potential (*ThisDay* article)
	2021	*Expanding Legal Migration Pathways from Nigeria to Europe: From Brain Drain to Brain Gain*
The Centre for Africa-Europe relations (ECDPM)	2020	Mapping private sector engagement along the migration cycle: Summary report
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)	2020	Global Skills Partnerships on Migration
International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)	2020	Lessons learnt from ICMPD Global Initiatives for the EU Migration and Asylum Pact
	2020	Labour Mobility Lessons Learned Policy Brief – Lessons learned from 18 months of implementation of European Union pilot projects on legal migration
	2021	Working Paper on Modalities and Challenges of Public–Private Collaboration on Talent Partnerships in Morocco
	2021	Labour Mobility Scheme Guide

Author	Year	Title
International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)	2021	Tapping into global talent – putting the EU Talent Partnerships in motion
	2021	From Pilot Projects to Talent Partnerships: Exploring the future of legal migration to the EU
	2022	*Private Sector Initiative Report*
Labor Mobility Partnerships (LaMP)	2020	A Good Industry and an Industry for Good: Why We Need a Quality Mobility Industry to Scale Labor Mobility
	2021	Skills Mix: Foreign-Born Workers Bring More Than University Degrees to High-Income Countries
Migration Policy Institute (MPI)	2019	Reimagining Skilled Migration Partnerships to Support Development
	2019	*Exploring New Legal Migration Pathways – Lessons from Pilot Projects*
	2021	How Can Europe Deliver on the Potential of Talent Partnerships?
	2021	Deepening Labor Migration Governance at a Time of Immobility: Lessons from Ghana and Senegal
	2021	COVID-19 and the Demand for Labor and Skills in Europe: Early Evidence and Implications for Migration Policy
Migration Partnership Facility	2021	*Implementation of the Talent Partnerships – What potential role for the diaspora*

Academic articles

Author	Year	Title
Maastricht University	2018	Independent Evaluation of the Mobility Partnerships between the European Union and Cape Verde, Georgia and Moldova
	2021	Literature review labour migration
Natasja Reslow	2018	Making and Implementing Multi-Actor EU External Migration Policy: the Mobility Partnerships. This is Chapter 11 of *European Union External Migration Policies in an Era of Global Mobilities: Intersecting Policy Universes* (Brill, Leiden)
Katja Lindner and Till Kathmann	2014	*Mobility partnerships and circular migration: Managing seasonal migration to Spain*
UC Louvain	2020	The PALIM project in the Belgian and European migration context

Webinars, conferences

Author	Year	Title
Migration Partnership Facility	2022	Leveraging Talent Partnerships for Increased EU–Africa Investments
EMN Belgium	2022	Conference on Skills Mobility Partnerships – Day 1 and Day 2

Internal documents

Author	Year	Title
IOM	n.d.	Mapping Skills Mobility Partnerships (external)
	n.d.	Mapping and analysis of skills-related projects carried out by IOM
	n.d.	Case studies of successful skills mobility partnerships from Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt (Draft Paper for the Africa Knows! Conference)
	n.d.	Expanding Labour Mobility Channels – Global Compact Thematic Paper
ILO, IOM	2021	Labour Migration responses to the Covid-19 crisis in European and North African Countries: Strategic and Operational Trends, Lessons and Sharing of Experience – THAMM Regional Conference
N/A	n.d.	Intra-African Talent Mobility Partnership Program (TMP) West Africa – MoU

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