

Mediterranean Mixed Migration (3M) Response Programme

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

March 2021

Executive Summary

The Mediterranean Mixed Migration (3M) Response Programme was a three-year Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)-funded programme implemented in Libya, Niger, Mali, Tunisia, and Burkina Faso as a component of the FCDO Safety, Support and Solutions Programme for Refugees and Migrants, Phase II Programme. The 3M was implemented by a consortium of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC that includes the Mixed Migration Centre), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and the Start Network that sought to build on their individual footprints and competitive advantages to support safe and orderly migration along the Central Mediterranean Route by ensuring that migrants, regardless of their legal status, had access to humanitarian assistance. Working within a 'routes-based approach' framework, the programme was designed to respond to the needs of migrants travelling irregularly headed north through a combination of provision of in-kind support, information, capacity building, and policy and advocacy work within a flexible management structure.

In January 2021, DRC contracted Meraki Labs to conduct an external evaluation of the program. The objective of the evaluation is to support the program to **assess to what extent the consortium project has contributed to its overall objective and achieved its results, and to evaluate if the project's approach (design and implementation) was the right strategy**. The evaluators have used the OECD DAC criteria, as well as the project theory of change, as the primary framework for the evaluation. Critically, it has also been **framed to align with 3M's own definition of effectiveness and efficiency - namely by relying on the principles of routes-based approach (RBA) programming and the prioritization of flexibility**. As the project was implemented by several partners across multiple country contexts, the evaluation expands on the traditional evaluation process and also seeks to ensure that both country-level performance and overall consortium performance are considered.

Overall, the evaluation has found that the project effectively delivered protection services to migrants, generated project innovations and increased understanding of migration routes and dynamics. However, institutional factors generated inefficiencies that limited learning and scale up of innovation. The five major strategic findings of the evaluation, along with associated recommendations, are outlined below.

- 1) The 3M program achieved success both at delivering services to migrants and at developing network programming modalities, which resulted in limited but effective cross-border cases and approaches.**

By the end of 2020, the 3M program reached over 201,971 instances of tangible services. The services provided include food, health services, protection services, NFI kits and cash - all priorities for people on the move. One of the most serious challenges associated with the provision of services to migrants is access; migrants often find shelter in areas of a city that are not accessible to programme staff and make deliberate attempts to hide from authorities, due to their irregular status, in the case of Libya. The project successfully overcame access restrictions through a range of network approaches. These investments resulted in some concrete successes, including instances of cross-border case management. These successes were small-scale but provide an indication of the possibilities associated with programming that leverages migrant networks through the use of community focal points and multi-country contexts.

>> Recommendation: Engage Host Communities as players in migration systems - they have both the potential to help and hinder migration response. This is a core component of implementing conflict-sensitive and do-no-harm approaches to programming.

>>Recommendation: Disseminate best practices and facilitate their adoption. Consortium-wide coordination meetings focused on larger strategic issues; while these issues were important, the lack of focus on activities may have resulted in sub-optimal sharing and uptake of best practices and small-scale adaptations.

2) The 3M program generated a range of substantive, effective programmatic innovations - particularly with regard to access to and protection of migrants - but did not optimally scale these innovations or fully utilize public research products.

The 3M program aimed to generate innovative and adapted program modalities. In line with this strategic directive, a range of innovative approaches were piloted across all three countries. Innovation took place at a variety of levels: at the larger scale, activities were set up in new areas due to evidence that migration routes had shifted, and at a smaller level, protection teams built the capacity of migrants to effectively refer themselves to services upon arrival at a new transit point. Niger piloted approaches such as building beneficiary capacity for self-referral and building access to ghettos. Libya made extensive use of community focal points for beneficiary identification and engagement and engaged in iterative programming improvement for alternatives to detention and shelter programming. Mali initiated activities to address a reinvigorated migration route (Timbuktu) and piloted programs to accompany voluntary returns and worked with security forces. However, few, if any innovations, achieved scale across 3M partners or countries. The consortium coordination unit (CCU) was designed to manage administration, and the resources available to support innovation scale up and replication were limited.

>> Recommendation: Disseminate best practices and facilitate their adoption. Although small scale activity-level adaptation did represent a best practice for the project, relatively limited attention was placed on collating these best practices and disseminating them to either other 3M partners or to migration stakeholders. This is a great future opportunity for the consortium to make a difference in the evidence-base surrounding migration-focused programming.

>> Recommendation: Innovation to reach diverse (age, gender, diversity) groups should be explicitly included in the next project through a mainstreamed approach. The programme did make some investments in gender age and disability at both the operational and the research level. At the operational level, access to migrant communities, including influential women within ghettos and transit communities, has opened. At the research level, more research has been conducted on specific risks facing women. As a result, it is possible to take a more targeted and specific approach to AGD considerations in the next project iteration.

3) Adaptive and flexible programming requires structural changes on the part of implementing partners and donors.

Adaptive programming, which adjusts ongoing programming based on new evidence and contextual factors, was a priority for 3M. Despite the stated desire for flexibility, few if any actors demonstrated the organisational prerequisites required for successful adaptation. A range of literature identifies the organisational structures and culture that are required for adaptive management: a predetermined process for derogation of responsibilities, a focus on outcome rather than output levels, and agreement among all relevant stakeholders on the ways in which adaptation will be implemented. In the context of the 3M project, none of the prerequisites for adaptive programming were in place. At the implementing partner level, severe bureaucratic constraints restricted adaptation. At the donor level, several factors

restricted adaptation, including a disconnect between the vision for adaption and the low level of bureaucratic flexibility available institutionally (i.e., budget flexibility and outcome targeting).

>> Recommendation: Assessments of organisational adaptation capacity should take place for organisations to agree to engage in flexible and adaptive programming. This should be followed up by a series of hard (e.g., policies, derogations) and soft measures (e.g., culture).

4) Consortium efficiency was constrained by a mismatch between proposed program modalities and organisational realities.

The proposed structure and scope of the 3M consortium was ambitious. The proposed management structure did not, however, adequately address the nuance of working across country operations, regional offices, and different organizational cultures. At the design stage, organisational structure, prioritise and capacities were not realistically taken into consideration. In practice, neither DRC nor IRC changed implementation structure to fit the geographic structure of this programme. Internal structures were multi-layered and field teams needed to navigate overlapping country, regional and consortium management structures. At an organisational level, both DRC and IRC operations changed structure, including the geographic makeup of regional offices, during project implementation and did not manage to imbed the needs of the consortium structure within them.

This evaluation finds that while several positive achievements have been made, the Steering Committee (SC) did not adequately focus on establishing the processes and governance structure required to implement a programme of such complexity under Objective 3 in the Terms of Reference for the governing body. Several of the **key responsibilities of the SC had unclear or overlapping authority with the CCU**, has likely contributed to hesitancy in decision making and, at worst, delays that affected the agility of the programme.

However, given the level of the mismatch between the program vision and the reality of multi-layered bureaucratic humanitarian structures, management generated the best possible outcomes. The CCU and management staff relied on good interpersonal relations to develop workarounds to structural and organisational issues, and to manage day to day activities. The time required to organise such workarounds, however, resulted in lower availability of resources for program quality and innovation management. It should be noted that no more efficient alternative structure could be identified by the evaluation team. While the 3M organisational structure was not optimal, other structures were, for a variety of reasons, not feasible in the current context and within the requirements of the SSS II programme.¹

>> Recommendation: The Steering Committee should focus on establishing governance rather than being the governance. The Steering Committee should be empowered to have a realistic look at workflows, management chains, and levels of authority and re-organize and delegate authority based on what will best facilitate the work of the consortium. It is recommended that the bulk of this work be undertaken in

¹ While other structures would have theoretically been available to the NGO SSS II partners, it seems unlikely given the context of the SSS II that either of these options would have been possible at the time 3M was designed. The development of 3M was made in a context where: 1) there was no agreed upon definition of a routes-based approach, 2) there was not a lot of evidence surrounding how transnational migration programming should work, and 3) there was a push to have NGO partners work in consortium.

the initial 3-6 months of the programme, with a gradual phase out to project oversight and advising once systems are established.

>>Recommendation: Provide Technical Resource People at the CCU Level. Technical leads, such as a dedicated Protection Expert, would have been a great resource to country programmes who are often over stretched. These positions would need to be very 'hands-on'. Establishing that the CCU also provides a service will prevent the 'extractive' feeling of engagement. In line with previous recommendations, any additional resourcing must be complimented by adequate procedures and delegated authorities in place and country-level buy-in.

>>Recommendation: Consortium members should actively advocate for an inception period of at least one quarter (three months) as a necessary component to ensuring time for planned scale-up and implementation of planned adaptation capacities.

5) The range of actors included in this program offered an opportunity for significant evidence generation and learning, but this opportunity could have been more fully exploited.

The routes-based approach was meant to be anchored in sound information generation. Specifically, the 3M approach emphasized the importance of having a shared assessment of threats, vulnerabilities, and capacity of the people on the move across the route to better understand how risks increase over time and throughout the journey. Furthermore, this information generation was intended to inform an evidence-based and protection-centered approach both in terms of implementation and programme-relevant advocacy. Overall, this evaluation found that there was a high priority placed on data collection and evidence generation. MMC was externally recognized as a reliable program actor by donors, policymakers, and other SSS II partners. All country responses have undertaken specific evidence generating initiatives relevant to their contexts. This evaluation found that country programmes, despite the immense pressure to implement in difficult environments, did actively invest in generating an evidence base relevant to their programme contexts. However, this evaluation has found that the conversion of information to evidence-based programmatic responses was of mixed success. While country teams often undertook research initiatives with the specific purpose of informing and adapting response, applying learning from MMC materials and across the consortium were weak.

>> Recommendation: Ensure that cross country meetings consist of more than just sharing, but also action plans. The 3M consortium arranged for regular meetings between country teams; this included the presence of implementing staff. This was overall a positive development, given that many consortia neither budget for nor plan for such engagement. While these meetings represented a positive start, they were not sufficient. Program staff requested that the meetings have more actionable and concrete outputs, including target steps to be taken, and SMART objectives.

The 3M program provided high quality services to an extremely vulnerable population. The cross-cutting issues of access and protection were particularly strongly recognized as successes. The evaluation finds that the overall 'value' of the project is likely greater than the sum of its parts given the contribution to greater strategic conversations regarding effective responses to irregular migration.