



AGENCY FOR  
PEACEBUILDING

# FINAL REPORT

**Final evaluation of the  
“Associazioni Migranti per il Co-  
Sviluppo” (A.MI.CO.) Programme**

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# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>List of acronyms .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Background to the Programme.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Limitations and mitigations strategies .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Evaluation findings .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Relevance .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Effectiveness .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Efficiency .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Impact .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Sustainability.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Conclusions and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>23</b>

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For additional information about the project or the evaluation, inquiries should be addressed to Daniele Panzeri, IOM Italy.

## List of acronyms

AICS	Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo
A.MI.CO.	Associazioni Migranti per il Co-sviluppo
AP	Agency for Peacebuilding
CoNNGI	Coordinamento Nuove Generazioni Italiane
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
EU	European Union
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISPI	Istituto per gli studi di political internzionale
IVC	Italian Voluntary Contribution
OCAT	Organizational capacity assessment tool
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

# Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from the final evaluation of the “Associazioni Migranti per il Co-sviluppo” (*Migrants’ Associations for Co-development*, or A.MI.CO.) Programme. The evaluation took place between May and July 2021, and it consisted of a review of project documents, interviews with 20 informants, an online questionnaire with 63 respondents and two focus group discussions with programme partners. Those reading this report should expect to find insights into not just the Programme’s many successes and achievements, but also some of the challenges it faced. In this regard, the main goal of this report is to provide guidance that can be relevant for those working to increase the participation of migrant and diaspora communities in international development efforts.

## ***Background to the Programme***

The A.MI.CO. Programme has been implemented since 2011 by the Coordination Office for the Mediterranean of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), thanks to the financial support of the Government of Italy. The Programme aims to support migrants’ associations in acquiring and consolidating capacities to design and implement development initiatives.

The A.MI.CO. Programme features the following components:

*A.MI.CO. Training* provides capacity-building workshops to increase the knowledge and skills of representatives of migrants’ associations in developing project proposals, fundraising, creating partnerships and communicating. This is the original component of the Programme and it started in 2011.

*A.MI.CO. Award* was introduced in 2017 as a new component with the aim of providing target associations with the opportunity to design and implement co-development interventions. This funding scheme is exclusively accessible to associations that have participated in the A.MI.CO. Training component and offers a maximum amount of €10.000 along with regular support from IOM staff.

*A.MI.CO. Grant* started in 2019 in order to further build the capacities of associations as co-development actors. AMICO grants of €30.000 are accessible to associations that have previously received and successfully managed an A.MI.CO. Award. Grants entail the respect of stricter requirements in terms of reporting and monitoring.

*A.MI.CO. Plus* started in 2021 to support migrants’ associations that have been identified as ‘champions’ in relation to migration issues. Through this component, organizations are supported with mentoring and coaching. The A.MI.CO. Plus initiative works at improving the organizational capacity of selected associations with migrant or multicultural background.

*A.MI.CO. Changemakers* is a pilot initiative launched in 2019-2020 to strengthen the leadership, management and intercultural communication skills of young individuals through a two-months internship and various organizational development activities.

*A.MI.CO. Emergency* was launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Six associations presented projects with a budget between €5.000 and €10.000 and a duration of between 2 and 4 months to provide support to groups affected by the health crisis.

## ***Methodology***

The purpose of the evaluation was to measure the extent to which the Programme has met its objectives (including the challenges that it faced), and to identify any lessons learned that could be used by IOM and its partners to inform their work in the future. AP used the evaluation framework of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), focusing on the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

The evaluation relied on both primary and secondary data sources. Overall, the evaluation team reviewed around 130 documents, mainly internal to the Programme, but also external ones. It interviewed 20 key informants (IOM staff members, beneficiaries, awardees, grantees and key stakeholders) and conducted two focus groups discussions (with awardees and grantees). Lastly, it launched an online questionnaire aimed at beneficiaries of the Programme's training component, to which 63 people responded. Qualitative and quantitative data collected were analysed relationally in order to assess whether and how they contradicted or reinforced one another. Where possible, collected data was triangulated by crosschecking different sources in order to obtain a diversity of perspectives and minimize potential bias.

AP was able to implement the planned methodology and evaluation activities almost without deviation, but some challenges were encountered. The main one has been the constraint to implement interviews and focus groups online, because of the pandemic. The online focus groups were in particular harder to implement, and the virtual environment could not reflect the dynamics of a meeting in presence. However, the data collected and analysed for this evaluation activity was still important and useful.

### ***Findings***

The evaluation found the A.MI.CO. Programme to be relevant, effective, efficient, impactful and sustainable. Findings were positive overall, yet under specific criteria some challenges were also identified. These negatively affected implementation and, if addressed, could improve the Programme in the future. Here, findings are presented criterion by criterion.

*Relevance.* The Programme is relevant because it responds to needs that are directly felt by diaspora and migrants' associations. Indeed the needs addressed are those that, according to everyone interviewed, limit associations' ability to launch development projects and engage in the development cooperation sector more broadly. The evaluation has further found that IOM Italy is able to understand and respond to these needs effectively, but often in a reactive and informal way, whereas more standardized assessment tools could help to better understand the challenges and design long-term strategies to overcome them.

*Effectiveness.* The Programme achieved many positive results, starting from the strengthening of associations' skills and competences for designing and implementing development projects. Importantly, the Programme also helped associations to network and collaborate with each other, as well as with larger and more consolidated non-governmental organizations. This Programme has demonstrated a high capacity to adapt to contextual changes, yet the COVID-19 pandemic remains a challenge that negatively affected the implementation of activities under nearly all components. In the face of this crisis IOM Italy has demonstrated a high level of flexibility, with the setting up of A.MI.CO. Emergency, but on other components the effects of the pandemic were still deeply felt.

*Efficiency.* Participating associations lauded the support provided by IOM Italy and have found the tools put at their disposal to be both effective and relevant. This said, the management of the Programme has been time and resource-intensive, and there is evidence that an administrative burden exists—perhaps more for IOM Italy than for participating associations, which have by and large seen the administrative requirements as positive even when they acknowledged that they were indeed challenging to manage.

*Impact.* The Programme's impact was understood as its ability to contribute to associations' capacity to conduct development and humanitarian actions, and indeed ample evidence of this contribution was found. Overall, the Programme's impact has mostly been recorded at the individual and institutional level: it has affected, in other words, the skills and competencies of participants to training events, and of their associations. Contributions to changing associations' roles in the wider development cooperation system are more difficult to assess, however.

*Sustainability.* The Programme has produced several sustainable results. In particular, there is evidence that skills and competencies acquired by individual participants and associations are being used to this day. Positively, associations are also connecting and networking on their own, without IOM Italy's support. There are indications that the Programme could be replicated and scaled: the A.MI.CO. Programme Implementation Toolkit can in particular help to share the model with other realities, including other IOM Missions.

### ***Recommendations***

On the basis of the findings from the evaluation, and with the aim of making the Progamme more effective and impactful in the future, the following recommendations are offered, under three core functional areas.

#### *I) Programme implementation:*

- Maintain the Training-Award-Grant pathway. This is a clearly winning strategy, and should be maintained. Other components (A.MI.CO. Plus and Changemakers) are also effective, but they could be reviewed to be more synergized with the Programme's main components.
- Develop a training of trainers course that can serve to train particularly strong associations to run A.MI.CO. training events, but in autonomy.
- Create linkages to European Union (EU) funding programmes that can be accessed by target associations. To increase impact at the systemic level, consider adding resources and training opportunities on how to access funds from the EU.
- Strengthen dialogue with and between migrants' and diaspora associations. This could be done by: (i) privileging activities allowing long-term and consistent support, rather than short-term intensive programmes; (ii) Prioritizing networking opportunities between Programme beneficiaries and partners, to facilitate synergies and knowledge-sharing, also across components; (iii) Increasing coordination with the *Summit delle Diaspore*; and (iv) Sharing relevant results from selection processes (under relevant Components, like A.MI.CO. Award and Grant).

#### *II) Administrative and financial management:*

- Maintain current management systems in relation to Training, Award and Grantee components. These were found to be relevant, effective and, importantly, appropriate.
- Review delivery modalities for the Emergency component. It would be good to re-launch this component in the future, but only in a way that minimizes the administrative burden on both associations and IOM Italy.

#### *III) Monitoring, evaluation and learning:*

- Develop and use more formal needs assessments tools. This could be done both at a system level, to map needs across associations, and also at the level of individual associations, using a specific organisational capacity assessment tool (OCAT).
- Develop an explicit theory of change to clarify the relationships between the different outcomes and components of the Programme and help guide learning efforts in the future.
- Produce a stand-alone annual report for the Programme. Based on the theory of change, develop a yearly report that focuses exclusively on the Programme's progress, separately from other initiatives funded under Italy's Voluntary Contribution, and that responds to any indicators identified in the theory of change.

# Introduction

This report presents the evaluation findings for the “Associazioni Migranti per il Co-sviluppo” (*Migrants’ Associations for Co-development*, or A.MI.CO.) Programme, which is being implemented by the Coordination Office for the Mediterranean of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is located in Rome, Italy.

The goal of the evaluation was to provide an external and independent assessment of the Programme as a whole, which entailed a review of all its different components. The evaluation is meant to assist IOM in understanding where the Programme has been effective, where it could be improved, and, overall, how its impact could be increased. Specifically, the evaluation focused on the implementation of the A.MI.CO. Programme between 2017 and 2021, and its specific objectives are summarized as follows:

- To assess the relevance of the Programme considering its design and structure;
- To provide a structured retrospective assessment of IOM’s internal procedures, from an efficiency and effectiveness perspective;
- To identify the main factors limiting or enhancing the success of the Programme, with a particular focus on impact and sustainability; and
- To provide lessons learned and recommendations for the further development of such initiatives.

The evaluation took place between May and July 2021. AP was able to implement the planned methodology, almost without deviation. The research consisted of a review of project documents, as shared by IOM, interviews with various informants (staff, partners, beneficiaries and stakeholders) and two focus group discussions.

Overall, the focus of the assignment has been on *learning*—that is, on understanding why and how positive changes have occurred. For this reason, those reading this report should expect to find insights into not just the Programme’s many successes and achievements, but also some of the challenges it faced. In this regard, the main goal of this report is to provide guidance that can be relevant for the IOM staff responsible for the implementation of the A.MI.CO. Programme just as much as for other professionals working to increase the participation of migrant and diaspora communities in international development efforts—inside and outside of IOM.

The report is structured in six sections. After this introduction, the next section gives an overview of the evaluation methodology. This is followed by the evaluation’s findings, which are presented by criteria (relevance, efficacy, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability). The report ends with a conclusion that also includes several key recommendations for future programming.

# Background to the Programme

The A.MI.CO. Programme has been implemented since 2011 thanks to the financial support of the Government of Italy, through its Voluntary Contribution to IOM. The Programme aims to support migrants' associations in acquiring and consolidating capacities to design and implement development initiatives through an integrated approach that combines training together with funding opportunities and technical assistance. As such, the Programme is in line with Italian Law 125/ 2014, which regulates Italy's international development cooperation efforts.

The A.MI.CO. Programme features the following separate components:

**A.MI.CO. Training** provides capacity-building workshops to increase the knowledge and skills of representatives of migrants' associations in developing project proposals, fundraising, creating partnerships and communicating. This is the original component of the Programme and it started in 2011, evolving year after year. In 2017, for example, the training took place in Catania, Naples and Bari, and involved representatives from over 60 associations. In 2018, the training was implemented as a residential event in Rome, with 18 associations participating. In 2019, 38 association representatives participated in training sessions organized in Latina, Padua and Parma. In 2020, the training took place online due to anti-COVID-19 restrictions and it involved 60 association representatives. Topics of the training evolve every year, broadly covering collaborations and working in network, communication, project development, monitoring, reporting, budgeting, evaluation and coaching.

**A.MI.CO. Award** was introduced in 2017 as a new component of the Programme with the aim of providing migrants' and diaspora associations with the opportunity to design and implement co-development interventions. This funding scheme is exclusively accessible to associations that have participated in A.MI.CO. Training, and offers a maximum amount of €10.000 along with regular support from IOM Italy's staff. In particular, remote support calls, monitoring visits to project sites or associations' premises in Italy, and tailored technical assistance are provided to selected associations in order to strengthen their project management capacities and support them in delivering the intended interventions' results. Four calls for proposals have hitherto been launched leading to the funding of 22 co-development projects, each implemented over a period of between 6 and 9 months, both in Italy and in several third countries (the selection process for the 2020 edition of the A.MI.CO. Award is ongoing).

**A.MI.CO. Grant** is yet another addition, launched in 2019 in order to further build the capacities of associations as co-development actors. AMICO grants of €30.000 are accessible to associations that have previously received and successfully managed an A.MI.CO. Award (e.g. awardees of the 2017 or 2018 editions). With a higher budget with respect to the Award, Grants entail the respect of stricter requirements in terms of reporting and monitoring, thereby preparing recipient associations to abide by the rules of major development aid donors. Thus far, only the 2019 edition of the A.MI.CO. Grant has been held and three grants were awarded. Furthermore, on the basis of capacity assessments of the three selected associations, a number of *ad hoc* training sessions were delivered to support their organizational development.

**A.MI.CO. Plus** supports migrants' associations that have been identified as 'champions' in relation to migration issues. Through this component, organizations are supported with mentoring and coaching. The A.MI.CO. Plus initiative works, in fact, at improving the organizational capacity of selected associations with migrant or multicultural background. Support consists of developing specific action plans and technical, financial and coaching assistance. The first edition of this component was launched in March 2021 and will end in July. Coordinamento Nuove Generazioni Italiane (CONNGI), an umbrella association representing the new generations of Italians, was identified as the main recipient. A tailored

organizational development process was then agreed and launched, which included the review and development of core organizational documents, including around communication, advocacy, monitoring, human resources and administrative procedures, long-term strategy, project development and implementation.

**A.MI.CO. Changemakers** is a pilot initiative launched over 2019 and 2020. While inscribed within the Programme, this is a component of the project “Bridging together Youth, Diaspora and Local Authorities for an integrated approach to promote employment and address irregular migration in The Gambia, Guinea Conakry and Guinea Bissau”, which has been funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (*Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo*, or AICS). The initiative aimed at strengthening the leadership, management and intercultural communication skills of six young Gambian changemakers through a two-months internship and various organizational development activities, so as to allow them to set up and better manage their respective associations. Changemakers was therefore conceived of as an initiative supporting the establishment and formal registration of new associations that can subsequently have access to, and benefit from the other components of the A.MI.CO. Programme.

**A.MI.CO. Emergency** is the Programme’s last and most recent component, launched to respond to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of six associations, all of which had participated in A.MI.CO. Awards, presented projects with a budget between €5.000 and €10.000 and a duration of between two and four months. Generazione Ponte implemented a project supporting Italian communities with food and health information, and students in Somalia through scholarships. Life&Life provided support to communities both in Italy and Bangladesh on health, technological services and education. SIAM sent aid to communities in Burkina Faso and implemented a campaign on health information in Italy. Sonrisas Andinas provided aid to vulnerable communities in Italy and technical devices and psychological support to children in Peru. Sunugal provided health and information support to the population in Senegal and to migrant communities in Milan. UIG disseminated health information and facemasks to communities both in Italy and Guinea.

## Methodology

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to measure the extent to which the Programme has met its objectives, including the challenges that it faced, and to identify any lessons learned that could be used by IOM and its partners to inform their work in the future. AP used the evaluation framework of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), focusing on the following five criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

The chosen evaluation approach was participative and mostly based on qualitative research methods. Participatory refers to how AP interacted with various stakeholders to ensure that the evaluation addressed their priorities and concerns. Specifically, the evaluation benefited from cooperation with IOM Italy’s staff to validate the lines of inquiry (see below), ensuring that these reflected the questions that they were interested in having answers to. The input of staff was also sought to identify key informants to interview and in validating the evaluation’s findings. Based on qualitative research methods meant that the evaluation used qualitative data to draw its findings. This was the most suitable option given the nature of the Programme, which aimed to influence multi-causal processes in a complex environment.

The evaluation was guided by agreed lines of inquiry, which are presented in the table below.

Criterion	Line of inquiry
<b>Relevance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the main needs of the Programme’s target groups?</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How were these needs identified and to what extent did the Programme focus on them?</li> <li>• To what extent is the Programme seen (by key stakeholders) as relevant and necessary?</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the Programme's main results to date?</li> <li>• What is the Programme's theory of change (i.e. the assumed links between activities and desired changes)?</li> <li>• What are the challenges encountered, and how were they overcome?</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent were the Programme's management and learning systems useful and appropriate (to meet goals)?</li> <li>• Does IOM have the necessary tools and systems to effectively collaborate with target associations?</li> <li>• To what extent are resources allocated efficiently (to meet goals)?</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent did the Programme improve migrant associations' capacity to conduct development and humanitarian actions? What difference, if any, is there in what beneficiaries vs. partners have been able to achieve?</li> <li>• What is the contribution made by the Programme to the achievement of identified outcomes?</li> <li>• Has the Programme led to unintended results?</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are participants going to continue using skills and knowledge acquired through the Programme?</li> <li>• To what extent has the Programme engendered organizational changes in partners and beneficiaries?</li> <li>• To what extent did the Programme create new partnerships?</li> <li>• To what extent is the Programme scalable?</li> </ul>

The evaluation relied on both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources included staff members, partners, awardees and grantees, training participants and selected stakeholders (as identified jointly with IOM Italy). Secondary sources included project reports, documents, memos and other material produced by IOM staff and partners, as well as relevant external sources.

In terms of activities, these included a document review, interviews and focus group discussions, and an online questionnaire:

- **Desk review.** The evaluation team conducted a thorough document review, through which an initial set of findings was produced. Most documents were made available by IOM Italy. A further research of external documents allowed completing the necessary information and data, especially with reference to beneficiaries and partners' projects. The evaluation used around 130 internal documents between those provided by IOM and those collected directly.
- **Interviews and focus groups.** A total of 20 interviews were conducted, including with Programme staff, beneficiaries and partners of the Programme's various components and also several key stakeholders. Two focus group discussions were also conducted, involving a total of eight individuals representing associations that had received either an award or a grant under the A.MI.CO. Programme.
- **Online questionnaire.** This was developed to target participating migrants' associations, to gather their appreciation of the Programme and any changes that resulted from taking part to the activities under A.MI.CO. The questionnaire was completed by 63 informants, all participants to Programme trainings between 2017

and 2020. The questionnaire contained open and multiple-choice questions, to provide both qualitative and quantitative data.

In terms of data analysis, qualitative and quantitative data collected were analysed relationally in order to assess whether and how they contradicted or reinforced one another. Where possible, collected data was triangulated by crosschecking different sources in order to obtain a diversity of perspectives and minimize bias. Based on the findings, conclusions were identified and a set of recommendations developed to inform future programming. The evaluation also looked at the Programme's theory of change and relevant strategies.

## Limitations and mitigations strategies

Concerning the evaluation challenges, as mentioned already, AP was able to implement the planned methodology and evaluation activities almost without deviation. The main challenge has been the constraint to implement online activities only. On the one hand, this did not affect the document review: all relevant material was made accessible to AP, also thanks to IOM Italy's collaboration. Online interviews were also effective, as they allowed adapting the calendar to the busy schedules of interviewees. On the other hand, the online focus groups were harder to organize, and the virtual environment could not reflect the dynamics of a meeting in presence. However, the data collected in this activity was still useful.

## Evaluation findings

### Relevance

To assess relevance the evaluation focused on the needs of beneficiary and partner organizations—that is, diaspora and migrants' associations based in Italy. To answer key questions (on these association's needs, how they were assessed and whether they saw the programme as relevant) the evaluation conducted a brief analysis of the overall context in which migrants' associations operate, and a review of their stated needs and priorities. Information about the Programme was then compared against this analysis.

Overall, the data and information collected during the evaluation shows that the A.MI.CO Programme has been very relevant, which justifies how it has been positioned and developed: not as a traditional donor fund, in other words, but as an incubator that can help selected associations in becoming more active players in international development cooperation, in Italy and abroad. This is discussed in greater depth below.

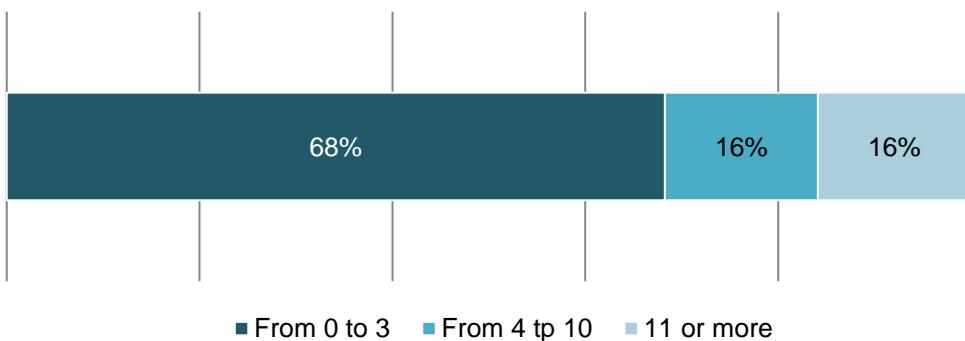
First of all, the A.MI.CO. Programme is aligned with the Italian legal and policy frameworks concerning international development cooperation. Indeed, Italian Law 125/ 2014 recognises the contribution of migrants' and diaspora associations to development processes in partner countries (under Article 2) and explicitly lists them among the civil society and non-profit organisations that are supported to participate in development cooperation initiatives funded by Italy (in Article 26). Furthermore, with reference to the periods 2016-2018 and 2019-2021, the three-year Programming and Policy Planning Document that sets out the priorities of the Italian development cooperation specifically calls for the increased involvement of diasporas in different areas of intervention, which further adds to the Programme's relevance.

Moving from the legal context to the Programme, as emerged from a variety of reports produced within the Programme and also from the *Summit delle Diaspore*, migrants and diaspora associations are generally very interested, and sometimes also already engaged, in transnational development activities. Furthermore, in the case of fragile and conflict-prone contexts, diaspora associations are also active in providing humanitarian relief in their countries of origin. However, they generally lack the capacities to apply for and manage financial resources made available by private and public donors. This was not just confirmed through the documents and the reports, but also in the context of the interviews and focus

group discussions, where these needs were cited time and again. For example, during a focus group, a representative of an association commented, “We wanted to help both our community in Italy and our home country. We joined the Programme to obtain the necessary knowledge and skills”.

This need often stems from the volunteering nature of these organisations, which rely on the work of people who have other occupations and expertise and little experience in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid. This feature is captured in the following graph, which looks at data from the online questionnaires, and shows how most associations that join the Programme are small and rely largely on volunteers.

**Chart 1: Number of paid staff employed by associations**



In this context, the Programme responds directly to target associations' needs by providing them with the project management capacities required to access development aid funding opportunities offered by donors. The underlying assumption of the Programme is that, while these associations have strong assets to contribute to development cooperation efforts, they lack the knowledge and skills necessary to act as professional actors, namely to obtain, manage and account for (predominantly public) resources financing development endeavours. As indicated above, all the information collected for the evaluation confirms that this is a valid assumption, certainly in Italy, and that working on these knowledge and skills gaps is what many associations need to enhance their role.

Indeed, this analysis hold true when looking at most of the Programme's specific components, and from the perspectives of beneficiaries and grantees. Nearly all representatives of migrants' and diaspora associations reached during the evaluation agreed that the Programme responded to their necessities. For example, over 95% of the respondents to the online questionnaire found that the training was relevant to their needs, both as an individual and as a representative of an association. Interviewed participants to the Award and Grant components also found that the Programme responded to their needs. They interpreted the evolution from Training to Award and Grant as a way to further enhance their capacity through practical experience. As affirmed by an association representative, “we could occasionally win some grants, but we did not have a proper training on key elements of the work of an association. With A.MI.CO. Award, we filled these gaps. We now present projects being aware of what we are doing”.

In this respect, it is very important that associations are granted the opportunity to work on a co-development project with the support of IOM Italy, first as Award beneficiaries, then as Grant partners. This also corresponds to the current engagements of the majority of the associations that took part in trainings since, according to the online questionnaire, 64% of them conduct interventions both in Italy and abroad.

Furthermore, the Programme demonstrated an outstanding flexibility in adapting to the needs of target associations. The Programme developed its initial form (A.MI.CO. Training)

into different branches (Award, Grant, Plus, Changemakers and Emergency) to respond to evolving necessities of target associations and of the context. The Programme was able to adapt to the needs of associations and of the context (with Emergency in particular) thanks to its structural flexibility. Through a consistent and intense dialogue with the associations, IOM Italy was, in fact, effective at closely monitoring their evolving needs and undertake new initiatives to respond to these needs.

The high relevance of the Programme, however, does not stem from a pre-existing intervention logic, nor was it achieved through a formal process of needs assessment or a consultation with target groups. This is not to say that an assessment did not take place: the evaluation confirms, in fact, that the constant dialogue with associations engaged in the Programme, as discussed just above, and a political economy research commissioned to the Italian think-tank ISPI have both served as effective assessment tools.

Yet, the way the Programme has been set up is not yet associated with a number of formally defined outcomes, outputs and activities, as these would normally be captured in a programmatic logical framework (or a theory of change). This is the consequence of the nature of the instrument financing the Programme, which leaves the implementing agency free to undertake actions identified as relevant within broadly defined results. On the one side, such an approach has made it possible to respond to new needs, integrate new components and deliver additional activities over the years. On the other side, the lack of a formal framework means that there has not been to date a clearly defined baseline for understanding the needs of migrants' and diaspora associations over time, nor of their general operating context, and this makes it difficult to assess the Programme's overall progress. Formalizing some parts of the Programme could therefore provide useful information even while the activities are in progress. Indeed, this appears the direction IOM Italy has already embarked on, as it has started the process of developing a programmatic theory of change.

## Effectiveness

Under effectiveness, the evaluation assessed the Programme's main achievements and also the main challenges, in a participatory manner, meaning that these were mapped and analysed in relation to the value given to them by the different informants interviewed for the evaluation.

Overall, the evaluation identified that positive results have been delivered under all the components of the A.MI.CO. Programme. The Programme is indeed effective, in particular in achieving its objective of strengthening migrants' and diaspora associations' capacity to engage as co-development actors and contribute to transnational development efforts.

The specific findings are discussed hereunder, presented by programmatic component starting with A.MI.CO. Training. This was the first to be designed as part of the Programme, and therefore the one with the longest history; it also remains, to date, its central pillar and the one to which most intended results related to capacity are linked.

**A.MI.CO. Training** has indeed played a central role, representing, even in presence of all other components, a critical linchpin for the Programme's overall effectiveness. All data collected for the evaluation shows that the training component has been successful in increasing participants' knowledge on the project cycle management and co-development issues. Tests aiming at evaluating whether lectures and practical workshops have improved participants' knowledge were conducted for the 2020 online edition, while in previous years questionnaires evaluating the appreciation of topics, trainers and logistics were administered to trainees. Although limited to one edition, documents reveal that participants have mostly maintained or improved their knowledge of project management. In the online questionnaire conducted for the evaluation, the answers of respondents (all of whom were Training participants) confirmed this finding, as an overwhelming majority believed that their

competencies and skills increased as a result of the training. As an interviewed beneficiary reported: “One of the members of our association had no previous knowledge of project management nor of co-development, but, after the training, she joined a group of other members who regularly work on project proposal development”.

As regards the distribution of results across different groups, project documentation does not always allow to ascertain whether training groups were gender balanced. The invitations to trainings are sent to organisations, in fact, and IOM Italy does not, in general, seem to interfere in the choice of participants. Rather, diversity was promoted by ensuring that trainings targeted different types of diaspora associations (multicultural ones as well as those gathering people from a specific country or continent) and took place in Northern and Southern Italy alike.

An element that was specific to Training and also found to have a multiplier effect on results was the distribution of the manual “Project Development for Migrants’ Associations” including the six modules delivered during A.MI.CO. Trainings, which has been made available in Italian, English and French, and both online and in paper copies. Indeed, not only has this manual been circulated within target associations and their partners, it has also been distributed during events organised by the *Summit delle Diaspore*, thereby reaching a much bigger audience than the A.MI.CO. Training could.

With reference to **A.MI.CO. Award and Grant**, interviewees have consistently pointed to these funding schemes as key elements enabling associations to play an actual role in the development arena. Some have identified these components and the associated assistance provided by IOM Italy as the veritable added value of the entire Programme, since they provide associations with the opportunity to prove themselves and be responsible for the implementation of a project under IOM’s guidance.

Among the achievements attained following the implementation of Award-funded projects, associations have mentioned improved capacities in financial reporting, communicating results, managing relations and sharing responsibilities with partners. It is also worth mentioning that, also owing to the A.MI.CO. Programme, an awarded association, Generazione Ponte, has met the requirements to be included in the official Civil Society Organisations (CSO) registry of the Italian Development Cooperation Agency (*Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo*, or AICS) and plans to submit its candidacy in the coming months. An association representative noted that the A.MI.CO. Award, together with other funding, has in particular allowed the association to reach the minimum budget of development cooperation initiatives carried out in the last three years that AICS requires for registration. Being on the CSO registry is a requirement to obtain funding for development projects from AICS, which issues several calls for proposals (some thematic, some country-specific) every year. This is an even more remarkable outcome since only one diaspora association is inscribed in the CSO registry, and only since December 2020.

Grant-funded projects are still ongoing or have recently ended, but associations reported to have increased their ability to outreach to new partners and, thanks to the tailored organisational development support received from IOM Italy, to have revised their strategic plans and refined their long-term objectives. Nearly all awardees and grantees, in interviews and focus groups alike, confirmed that they saw the A.MI.CO. Grant as an opportunity to scale up and professionalise their action, considering the higher budget and stricter requirements with respect to the Award-funded projects. To this effect, they considered organisational development activities as particularly useful, even when these resulted challenging to them.

**A.MI.CO. Plus** is still ongoing, but some outputs have already been produced following tailored organisational development activities: drafts of code of conduct, child protection and safeguarding policies, recruitment and procurement procedures. These activities have so far led to the reinforcement of CoNNGI in terms of internal structure, since tasks have been assigned to specific members organised in four different working groups. The effect of these

changes and tools on CoNNGI's ability to engage and mobilise its member associations in co-development undertakings remains however to be seen considering that development cooperation has been inscribed among its areas of intervention quite recently (in 2019, when the association's *Manifesto* was revised and two new chapters on "communication and media" and "international cooperation" were added).

**A.MI.CO. Changemakers** managed to increase the self-confidence and self-awareness of young Gambian participants about their roles within organizations and provided an important support to the formal registration in Italy of associations of Gambian migrants. At the end of the initiative, three out of the six associations participating to this component were formally registered, and two had made substantial progress in the registration process (drafting their charter and collecting the funds needed to pay for the registration fee). However, Changemakers is illustrative of the difficulties encountered by informal or recently established diaspora associations, particularly around the internal structure and the actual engagement of members who are often newly arrived in Italy. Therefore, a greater commitment is required in order to make associations under Changemakers ready to take part in the A.MI.CO. Training and the other Programme components.

Looking at the **A.MI.CO. Programme as a whole**, there are indications that its effectiveness was higher in some locations more than others. In particular, the Programme has represented a particularly valuable opportunity for associations located in territories where local authorities are unable or reluctant to engage with and support migrants' and diaspora associations. In these contexts, the Programme has contributed to enhancing the credibility and reputation of these associations among local actors, including institutional ones, facilitating contacts that have sometimes resulted in the establishment of new partnerships.

This Programme has also demonstrated its capacity to adapt to contextual changes with the setting up of **A.MI.CO. Emergency** at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, at a moment when pandemic-related restrictions put significant constraints to the implementation of projects funded through A.MI.CO. Award (under the 2019 edition) and Grant, the launch of a call for proposals specifically addressing the emergency gave associations the opportunity to respond to the needs of local communities, and also to design and implement initiatives in extraordinarily difficult times. In this respect, therefore, the Programme has succeeded in turning limitations to previously planned development actions into a new opportunity for diaspora associations to reinforce their role as development and humanitarian actors.

Yet, the pandemic remains one of the main challenges encountered in the implementation of the Programme, affecting its effectiveness. The COVID-19 crisis has had, in fact, a huge impact on the implementation of associations' projects, especially outside of Italy. Some activities were modified, other cancelled and the overall ability of associations to respond to the situation varied significantly according to country-specific conditions and regulations. Against this backdrop, A.MI.CO. Emergency represented, again, a timely initiative: it provided associations with the resources and operational framework to respond to the needs of communities in Italy and in countries of origin that had been particularly hit by the pandemic.

The COVID-19 emergency affected trainings and organizational development activities as well, although to a minor extent. As a consequence of restrictions on travelling and gatherings, most of these activities were moved online, on evenings and weekends. If on one side this facilitated the attendance of participants who have full-time jobs outside of their associations or cannot easily reach the training location, on the other it was considered as hindering the active participation and networking among trainees.

Indeed, another challenge that diaspora associations identified was the scheduling of training and organisational development activities – in particular under A.MI.CO. Training, Grant and Plus components – in a short timeframe. This was often difficult for representatives of migrant associations to manage, since the majority of them are unpaid

volunteers. And as associations' representatives and members have other full-time jobs, and families as well, many indicated having a hard time investing the time required. This challenge was not necessarily related to the pandemic, but more general.

## Efficiency

Under efficiency, the evaluation reviewed the Programme's existing learning and management mechanisms and collected perceptions of various informant groups (staff, partners, beneficiaries) to gain an objective sense of whether and how these mechanisms, as well as administrative and financial procedures more broadly, were seen as appropriate.

Overall, the evaluation found the overall level of efficiency to be good. Participants, beneficiaries and grantees have in particularly a very positive view of the Programme's mechanisms and procedures, and are extremely appreciative of the support provided by IOM Italy. However, information also shows that the degree of efficiency can vary depending on the component of the Programme.

In general, the Programme's management and learning systems have been judged to be strong in terms of administrative steering, yet they also present some shortcomings with respect to IOM Italy's ability to report and monitor progresses and challenges.

IOM Italy steers the Programme's management with roles and responsibilities clearly assigned to its team members. The operational structure has also proved to be able to identify and respond to associations' needs as well as to adjust to the modified implementation context, such as during the pandemic. The dialogue with migrants' associations was facilitated by reflection and learning workshops organised for the 2018 and 2019 Award editions as moments of peer-to-peer exchange and assessment of project implementation experiences.

However, the Programme lacks a formalized monitoring and learning system that can allow IOM Italy's management team to identify achievements, constraints and delays as well as synergies between components and risks of duplication. Reports were drafted for some specific components or activities (such as A.MI.CO. Plus and Changemakers, and the aforementioned 2019 Learning and Reflection Workshops) and a final report is prepared for all of IOM's initiatives funded by Italy's Voluntary Contribution at the end of each funding cycle, but there has not been to date a single document that systematically informs and reflects on the A.MI.CO. Programme in its entirety and separately from other initiatives also under the responsibility of IOM Italy. Such a document may serve as an internal tool used by the management team to capitalise on results and challenges. And indeed, IOM staff interviewed for the evaluation has confirmed that to fill this gap an external consultant has been recruited to develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system including monitoring tools that will be specific to the Programme.

In relation to IOM's external collaboration with target associations, the tools and systems set up by IOM have instead proved to be extremely effective, though time and human resources-consuming.

Findings from interviews and the document review highlighted that the support and technical assistance provided by IOM Italy's staff all along the implementation of associations' interventions (under the Award and Grant components in particular) were very accurate and valuable. The close oversight on the performance of associations as implementing partners has undoubtedly constituted a challenge for little experienced organisations; yet, they have ultimately seen this process as instructive and helpful. Even associations that struggled to comply with deadlines and requests considered IOM Italy's technical assistance as useful and necessary to strengthen their accountability, and possibly improve their access to other donors' funding.

Furthermore, all interviewed awardees and grantees have deemed the financial amounts allocated for awards and grants sufficient to implement the projects even though associations underlined that needs of communities, especially in countries of origin, are profound and complex and more support is necessary. Project budgets also appear appropriate to the capacities of recipients in terms of financial management and reporting: many of them have, in fact, limited or no experience in administering budgets of similar scale and for many of them charity dinners remain the main means to raise funds for their activities. This explains also why almost all participating associations that co-funded their respective projects made an in-kind rather than in-cash contributions.

Overall, this meticulous assistance was highly time-consuming for IOM Italy's staff, but it fully corresponds to the needs identified by the Programme. A review of project interim and final reports compiled by associations reveal that coaching and feedback provided by IOM Italy were crucial in ensuring the respect of conditions related to financial and narrative reporting that development aid donors usually require, even when these were particularly demanding, as was the case under the Emergency component in particular.

This positive assessment is linked in no small part to the way in which human resources were allocated efficiently with responsibilities related to programme management and technical assistance laying with IOM Italy's staff, and the involvement of professionals and thematic experts for specific, *ad hoc* activities, mostly regarding capacity and organizational development. This granted the Programme the flexibility to undertake new actions where needed, while IOM Italy retained the steering of the Programme as regards decisions over implementation options and compliance with the organisation's internal procedures. This distribution of tasks appears therefore as appropriate, but also confirms that the work of IOM staff remains pivotal in the achievement of intended results, which may continue to put a strain on its time and human resources.

A clear finding from the evaluation is, as such, that the current level of efficiency (but also effectiveness) is tenable only to the extent that IOM Italy can support associations as it has done so far. Where more effort might be required, however, this may put a strain, either on the associations or on IOM Italy, which in turn might have negative effects.

This clearly emerged during the implementation of projects funded under A.MI.CO. Emergency. In this case, besides narrative and financial reporting, associations were required to abide by a series of obligations prescribed by IOM's internal procedures for the distribution of food parcels and other items (such as smartphones, tablets and sanitary kits). The respect of these obligations was particularly burdensome for implementing associations with very limited experience and management capacity and resulted in an increased need for technical assistance from IOM Italy's staff. The burden was indeed so much that IOM Italy did not choose to launch other rounds of funding under Emergency.

Even in this case, however, the experience of associations, at least those interviewed for the evaluation, was generally positive. This suggests that IOM Italy decided to manage the burden from the additional procedures internally, perhaps judging the associations unable to do so. Indeed, the use of these internal procedures, albeit standard to IOM, appear to be inappropriate for small scale and low budget interventions such as those carried out by diaspora associations within the Emergency component. More broadly, it also points to a trend that might undermine sustainability to the extent that IOM Italy's support might be too intense and thus prove impossible to uphold in the long-term or in face of an expansion of the Programme (intended as an increase in grantees or awardees, or an addition of components).

## Impact

Under impact, the evaluation sought to assess the extent to which the Programme improved migrant associations' capacity to conduct development and humanitarian actions, as well as

whether any differences existed, in this respect, between beneficiaries on one side and awardees and grantees on the other. In the absence of a clear definition of impact, this was chosen as the long-term result of most significance together with IOM Italy. At the same time, the evaluation also tried to identify and assess the Programme's logic, or theory of change, albeit more work on this front is warranted.

Overall, the Programme has contributed to increasing migrants' and diaspora associations' capacities. Importantly, this is truer for A.MI.CO. Awardees and Grantees, but it is also true for Training beneficiaries. Impact in relation to other components has been more difficult to assess because of their recent creation. The analysis of the Programme's logic also suggests other impact-level changes pursued by the Programme, including at the systemic level—that is, in how Italy's development cooperation system works. This offers interesting insights.

The interviews, focus groups discussions and review of project documents indicate that participating associations have increased their capacity to design and implement development actions as a result of their participation to the Programme. Diaspora associations acquired, in particular, two specific skills that outline the capacity-building impact of the Programme.

First, through the co-development approach (which was new to most target associations) the Programme increased associations' awareness of the role that they can play in development and enhanced their ambition to implement activities both in their country of origin and in Italy. As an interviewee affirmed, "we are happy to realize that we are here not only as immigrants, but as actors of development within our community, and also within our host community".

When association representatives were interviewed, they indeed indicated that their associations had the opportunity to diversify their activities because of the Programme; that they engaged in new projects on different sectors; and that they were able to engage and create benefits not just for the communities in the countries of interventions, but also within their own diaspora community in Italy, as participation to the Programme often improved the visibility and awareness of the association's work among diaspora members. Interviewees said that their associations grew therefore not only in terms of activities, but also members, and this helped both the association itself and the diaspora community. The growth in membership could not be independently verified during the evaluation, but represents a point of convergence in terms of the qualitative data collected. As affirmed during a focus group discussion, "the support we received had an impact on our entire community, for the awareness we gained, for the involvement of new members. The participation to our association's work improved, as new members joined us".

Secondly, interviewees from beneficiaries and partner associations perceived that the technical, financial and administrative tools made available to them and the support—under A.MI.CO. Training and Award in particular—gave them a breakthrough especially in terms of financial management and accounting. These are permanent achievements that will influence the long-term engagement of target associations in co-development, and even diaspora communities as a whole, as qualified personnel can contribute to different associations during their career.

In terms of measuring impact, understood here as the Programme's contribution to the key outcome, it is also important to note how the multi-component structure of the Programme was found to be really effective in supporting an association to achieve solid growth. This supports the idea that contribution should not be attributed to any given component, but rather to how these are combined together to create effective pathways, whereby direct outcomes at the individual level, through the Programme's training component, produce changes within individuals, which are then transferred to associations. In interviews, several anecdotes were shared that confirmed the idea that trainings created opportunities for individuals first, who then were able to use them to enrich their associations, sometimes

even creating new ones. Similarly, a total of 96% of the 63 respondents to the online questionnaire affirmed that A.MI.CO. Training gave them important tools to work on projects and to engage with donors.

Another positive long-term result is the construction of networks, contacts and new relations between associations. This is notable, although it is unclear whether, in the Programme's current logic, networking is seen as part of capacity building or an unintended positive effect. Interviewed beneficiaries and partners have, for example, noted how informal WhatsApp chats created for a training are to this day being used for tracking funding opportunities. An interviewee declared: "the beauty of the Programme is that it allows linking up to big associations. It enables to partner with important CSOs that I would have never thought about. It is a bridge towards wider networks". Networking opportunities are considered to be of utmost importance by beneficiaries and partner associations and have the potential to improve their capacity and their impact.

Importantly, the interviews and focus groups held with awardee and grantee associations, taken together with relevant project documentation under these two components of the Programme, show a perception of solid improvement in the quality of work, which comes from graduating from one component to another. This was perceived both by association representatives and IOM Italy's staff, and described primarily through anecdotes. Taken together, however, these suggest a growth trend whereby an association can learn new skills and competencies, and become comfortable with using them, before moving on to the following component. Yet, this process of growth and development is not consistently measured, in part because monitoring and evaluation activities tend to be specific to each component (rather than looking at the Programme as a whole), in part because there are no formal baselines relating to an association's competencies or needs.

To better understand the Programme's contribution to impact, it is therefore useful to analyse its achievements using elements that are borrowed from theory-based evaluation approaches, such as Contribution Analysis<sup>1</sup>. As such approaches are normally used to assess impact, this analysis has been included under this section.

In doing so, it is worth noting that the A.MI.CO. Programme does not yet have a theory of change, although one is currently in development. This said, the Programme does have a clear logic, which is reflected in its goal and objectives and in how it has been implemented, as described in the previous sections. And it is this logic that can be usefully assessed by looking at the programme's domains of change and at its main causal mechanisms.

The domains of change are the levels at which intended changes are being promoted, and in the case of the Programme these can be defined as three: individual, institutional and systemic.

The **individual level** refers to changes to people's knowledge and competences, including on topics such as project management and development cooperation, which is a type of change mostly associated with the Programme's training component. The **institutional level** refers to changes within participating associations, which the programme intends to make more capable and independent. Lastly, the **systemic level** includes changes to how the development cooperation sector in Italy works, and in particular in the role that migrants' and diaspora associations play in it, which the Programme wants to increase.

Interestingly, the findings described in this and previous sections provide evidence that validates positive results under each of the aforementioned domains: the examples of increased skills and competencies resulting from training events are evidence of individual-

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<sup>1</sup> Contribution Analysis (CA) is a theory-based approach for assessing causal questions and inferring causality in real-life programme evaluations. Having identified a specific observable result, CA requires the development of a narrative (based on a project's theory of change), which is assessed against all available evidence in an attempt to reduce uncertainty about the contribution of an intervention to that result.

level change; target associations' increased ability to manage projects more confidently and efficiently falls neatly in the institutional domain; the creation of new partnerships and networks, and more concretely still, the case of the association that now meets all the criteria to access the AICS' CSO registry, these represent evidence of positive results at the systemic level. This confirms that the Programme has indeed worked on all three levels. At the same time, and referring back in particular to the analysis of findings under effectiveness, the emphasis seems so far to have been on the first and second levels.

The most significant results recorded by the evaluation are, in fact, at the individual and institutional levels. And they are linked in particular to the Training, Award and Grant components. This said, the Programme does seek impact at the systemic level also, in particular in the way it was designed to support the implementation of Italian Law 125/ 2014. The logic, in this regard, appears to be that, as A.MI.CO. strengthens migrants' and diaspora associations, their role in Italy's development cooperation sector will increase, contributing to the system's overall efforts. To better understand whether this is indeed valid, an analysis of causal mechanism is thus useful.

Causal mechanisms are combinations of agents, actions and results, which are assumed to be necessary to move towards an agreed goal. Several such mechanisms can be defined in the A.MI.CO. Programme, including:

- IOM Italy strengthens the capacities of migrants and diaspora associations through training;
- IOM Italy supports the expansion and consolidation of target associations, financially and technically;
- Associations internalize new competencies and become autonomous in their management practices;
- Associations reach out to other associations and entities; and
- Associations secure additional funding to continue implementing development initiatives.

These mechanisms are related to the three domains of change previously described: the first one falls under the individual domain; the second and third under the institutional domain; the fourth and fifth under the systemic domain.

What is more interesting, however, is seeing how this analysis brings to the fore several assumptions behind the Programme's logic, specifically around the growth process of associations. While IOM Italy intervenes primarily with training, technical support and financial support, the practices of associations are, in fact, influenced also by other external forces and factors, which might either contribute to the achievement of results, or hinder it. These include, for example, the availability of associations' members, and whether they can access other funding opportunities. These are not factors on which the Programme works, but they are important to consider when assessing the progress that the Programme is making towards impact, especially at the systemic level.

And assessing the causal mechanisms is a useful way to assess this overall progress. In this regard, the first two mechanisms can be validated on account of the evidence discussed in the effectiveness section: IOM Italy's focus on training and financial and technical support effectively changes associations, and makes them stronger. Evidence is also there to validate the third mechanism, as several associations now claim to be more autonomous to operate in the development sector as a result of their participation to the Programme. This said, other associations do not, and it would be interesting to see what these differences might be caused by.

For the last two mechanisms, some evidence to validate them exists, but this is also limited. As mentioned earlier, for example, only one organization has grown to meet the requirements to access the CSO registry of AICS. Similarly, while there is evidence of associations being able to access new funding following their participation to the

Programme, this seems to apply to only some of them. More generally, the sense is that most associations join the Programme as voluntary organizations, and they remain so after they graduate from it.

The reason why evidence of systemic change has not yet been found might be linked to time: as changes at this level are generally assumed to be long-term changes, it takes years for investments to come to fruition. Yet, they might also be linked to several external factors that the Programme has yet not fully considered. For example, nearly all participating associations are active at municipal and regional levels, and in the Italian context funding for development cooperation at these levels is usually very limited; and access to this funding is restricted to associations based in the region. At this level, the Programme appears as such to be making an assumption: that the main obstacle associations face in launching projects is their capacity. What the evidence suggests, however, is different: associations might in other words be pushed in a position to manage more projects, but insofar as they continue to refer mainly to municipal and regional institutions for funding, their growth remains stumped. Moving forward, this assumption will need to be tested, something that could also be done through a more formal assessment of associations' needs, as indeed has already been suggested in the relevance section.

In this context, strategies become very important and it is notable to see that the Programme has already in some ways evolved to overcome some external challenges. A very positive strategy in this respect is the one that links A.MI.CO. Training, Award and Grant. Taken together, these in effect represent a coherent pathway that responds not only to the needs of associations as they enter the Programme, but also to those that arise as they grow and graduate from one component to the next. It is perhaps by thinking in pathways, and by reinforcing pathways, that the Programme can truly unlock its potential for systemic change.

## Sustainability

The evaluation sought to assess sustainability in terms of how skills and competencies have been used following associations' participation in the Programme, of whether the Programme engendered organisational changes in partners and beneficiaries, and how it supported the creation of new partnerships. The analysis was done in a participatory manner, meaning that positive and negative factors were mapped and analysed in relation to the value given to them by the different informants engaged in the evaluation.

Overall, perceptions of various Programme beneficiaries and partners show an objective sense of the durability of achieved results. In particular, target associations consistently affirm that they still use the skills acquired during the Programme. Importantly, this finding applies not only to those individuals whose associations benefitted from the Award and Grant components, but also those who took part in the Training component only. This said, several factors have been identified that hinder sustainability, and will be discussed later.

Overall, the evaluation has found that the acquisition of specific skills and achievements by participants and beneficiaries is permanent. These skills include the capacity of acquiring new members, as the Programme improved the visibility of associations, and consequently their capability to acquire new volunteers. The Programme also increased associations' awareness of the role they can play for the diaspora, for the host country and for their country of origin. In so doing, associations started working on various projects that have obtained a growing interest within their own community.

A second permanent achievement is represented by the technical, financial and administrative tools. Target associations reached a higher level of formalisation of their activities and gained the capacity to abide by most administrative requirements in engaging with donors. In this regard, the Award and Grant components were crucial in providing practical support in implementing projects, following the theoretical training.

And a third achievement is given by networks, contacts and partnerships obtained as a result of the Programme. From the agreements with partners in the country of origin to the networking with other migrants' and diaspora associations in Italy, target associations extended their contacts and improved their capacity to relate with donors, institutions and other civil society organizations. During a focus group, a representative of an association commented that, before the Programme, she could not expect to collaborate with what she called "high-level partners"—that is, with more consolidated and larger associations—but that now, following her participation in the Programme, her association is doing this on an everyday basis.

The online questionnaire confirmed that participating associations consider the training received as fully sustainable. A total of 81% of the 63 respondents affirmed that the training produced durable benefits and that they acquired skills that they are still using. Only 5% of respondents believe that they are no longer using what they learned at the training. Furthermore, 70% of them report that the training facilitated the creation of new networks and partnerships.

During a focus group, participants agreed that the Programme's benefits exceed the capacity building of the participants under the various components of A.MI.CO. As one participant in a focus group noted, "[IOM Italy] do not give fish, but guides associations on how to fish".

Concerning the scalability of the Programme, an association reported that the project they implemented in a village in their country of origin, concerning environmentally sustainable energy sources, produced a huge effect on the local community. According to the same representative, the mayor of the village is ready to replicate the initiative in other villages. In so doing, this will likely produce consequences on a cultural, economic and social level. Other representatives interviewed during the evaluation echoed this point.

A further point that could facilitate the scalability of the Programme was the production and diffusion of deliverables. Specifically, the A.MI.CO. Programme Implementation Toolkit, and relative annexes, explains how to implement the Training and Award components of the Programme. The Project Development Learning Package for Migrant Associations, (produced and disseminated in Italian, English and French) is composed of a Project Development Manual and of several video lessons. It collects theoretical knowledge and practical tools for the design and implementation of co-development projects.

Through these tools, IOM Italy was able to share the know-how acquired in these years of experience working on the capacity building of migrants' and diaspora associations, and the material could be used in other contexts still. The A.MI.CO. Programme Implementation Toolkit, in particular, could be used by other IOM Missions to replicate the activities of the Programme, Training and Award first of all. Indeed, the capacity building needs of migrants' and diaspora associations in Italy are similar to those of associations in other countries, provided that an adaptation to the specific features of the context is necessary to replicate the training.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

To conclude, the evaluation confirms that the A.MI.CO. Programme is relevant, effective, efficient, impactful and sustainable.

It is relevant because it responds to needs that are directly felt by migrants' and diaspora associations, and that everyone agrees are those that limit their ability to launch development projects and engage in the development cooperation sector more broadly. The evaluation has further found that IOM Italy is able to understand and respond to these needs effectively, but often in a reactive and informal way, whereas more standardized assessment

tools could help to better understand the challenges and help design long-term strategies to overcome them.

The Programme is effective because it has achieved many positive results, starting from the strengthening of associations' skills and competences for designing and implementing development projects. Importantly, the Programme also helped associations to network and collaborate with each other, as well as with larger and more consolidated non-governmental organizations. The Programme has demonstrated a high capacity to adapt to contextual changes, yet the COVID-19 pandemic remains a challenge that negatively affected the implementation of activities under nearly all components. In this case also IOM Italy demonstrated its flexibility, with the setting up of the A.MI.CO. Emergency, but on other components the effects of the pandemic were still deeply felt.

The Programme is efficient. Participating associations lauded the support provided by IOM Italy and have found the tools put at their disposal to be both effective and relevant. This said, the management of the Programme is time and resource-intensive, and there is evidence that an administrative burden exists, which has created challenges—perhaps more for IOM Italy than for associations, which have by and large seen these aspects as positive, even when acknowledging that they were indeed challenging.

The Programme's impact was understood as its ability to contribute to associations' capacity to conduct development and humanitarian actions, and indeed ample evidence of this contribution was found. Overall, the Programme's contribution to change has been recorded at the individual and institutional level—it has affected, in other words, the skills and competencies of participants to training events and also of their associations. Contributions to changing associations' roles in the wider development cooperation system are more difficult to assess, however.

Lastly, the Programme has produced several sustainable results. In particular, there is evidence that skills and competencies acquired by individual participants and associations are being used to this day. Positively, associations are also connecting and networking on their own, without IOM Italy's support. There are indications that the Programme could be replicated and scaled: the A.MI.CO. Programme Implementation Toolkit can in particular help to share the model with other realities, including other IOM Missions.

With this in mind the following recommendations are offered to further improve and expand the impact of the Programme. These are listed under three core functional areas.

*Programme implementation:*

- Continue delivering the Programme, adjusting it to ensure more sustainability and impact. The Programme is relevant and effective, and is also unique. The following specific recommendations are also offered:
  - Maintain the Training-Award-Grant pathway. This is clearly a winning strategy, and should be maintained. Other components (Plus and Changemakers) are also effective, but they could be reviewed in function of this main pathway. For example, Changemakers, which focuses on promoting the creation of new migrants' and diaspora associations, could be delivered as a component propaedeutic to Training.
  - Develop a training of trainers that can serve to train particularly strong associations to run A.MI.CO. Training events in autonomy. This could be done through a new component or perhaps as an integration into an existing one (like Plus), and would have the benefit of allowing a scale-up of training efforts without however increasing the management burden to IOM Italy.
  - Create linkages to European Union (EU) funding programmes that can be accessed by target associations. To increase impact at the systemic level, consider adding resources and training opportunities on how to access funds

from the EU. Small associations would need support (and training) to register and access these opportunities, but it would be one way to make sure that target associations can grow in spite of limited access to funding in Italy.

- Strengthen the dialogue with and between migrants' and diaspora associations. This has been a particularly positive result of the Programme and should therefore be reinforced. The following specific recommendations are also offered:
  - Privilege activities allowing a long-term and consistent support, over short-term intensive programmes.
  - Prioritize networking opportunities between Programme beneficiaries and partners, to facilitate synergies and knowledge sharing, also across components. IOM Italy should continue hosting reflection workshops, and perhaps even think about expanding the number of such events. It could also consider creating a tool to promote collaborations, such as an online platform where associations can share information and connect regularly, and where IOM Italy can post relevant information.
  - Increase coordination with the *Summit delle Diaspore*. The *Summit* was mentioned as a key platform for engaging migrants' and diaspora associations, but the Programme has so far not created many linkages to it. Yet, contributing to this platform could reinforce the relationship between associations and also help to harmonize some training activities.
  - Share relevant results from selection processes (under relevant Components, such as Award and Grant). For each component of the Programme, share the selection results (such as evaluation grids) with each participating association, including those unsuccessful in order to increase transparency and provide feedback.

#### *Administrative and financial management:*

- Maintain current management systems in relation to Training, Award and Grantee components. These were found to be relevant, effective and, importantly, appropriate.
- Review delivery modalities for the Emergency component. It would be good to re-launch this component in the future—it was found indeed to be particularly relevant and effective. Yet, it has to be done in a way that minimizes the administrative burden on both associations and IOM Italy. Perhaps IOM could find a different modality to contract associations under this component; or it could find an intermediary entity to act as lead.

#### *Monitoring, evaluation and learning:*

- Develop and use more formal needs assessments tools. To better track long-term change, IOM Italy should develop and adopt more formalized needs assessment tools. This could be done both at the systemic level, to map needs across associations and in relation to the development cooperation sector as a whole, and at the level of individual associations, whereby a specific organisational capacity assessment tool (OCAT) could be developed, which would allow monitoring of an association's growth also across different components.
- Develop an explicit theory of change that can clarify the relationships between the different outcomes and components of the Programme and help to guide learning activities in the future. This effort is already ongoing, and it would be helpful to ensure that it leads to a clear definition of impact and of the Programme's pathway (or pathways) to impact. The theory of change should also

explicitly identify the expected outcomes of the Programme, set targets and appropriate indicators of progress.

- Produce a Programme annual report. Based on the theory of change, develop and yearly report that focuses exclusively on the Programme's progress, separately from other initiatives funded under Italy's Voluntary Contribution to IOM, and that responds to any indicators identified in the theory of change.