

Migration MPTF Annual Report

PROJECT INFORMATION	
Joint Programme Title:	Leveraging the positive impact of migration on Moldova's development through improved policy evidence and better engaged diaspora.
Country(ies)/Region (or indicate if a global initiative):	Republic of Moldova
Project Identification Number:	
Convening Agent (Lead PUNO):	International Organization for Migration (IOM), Mission to the Republic of Moldova
PUNO(s) (PUNOs):	IOM, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO
Key Partners: <i>(include Implementing Partner)</i>	State Chancellery, Bureau for Diaspora Relations, Statistics Office
Project Period (Start – End Dates):	13 September 2023 – 11 September 2026
Reporting Period:	13 September 2023 – 31 December 2023
Total Approved Migration MPTF Budget: <i>(breakdown by PUNO)</i>	<i>IOM: USD 800,000</i> <i>UNDP: USD 610,000</i> <i>UNICEF: USD 250,000</i> <i>WHO: USD 340,000</i> <i>Total: USD 2,000,000</i>
Total Funds Received To Date: <i>(breakdown by PUNO)</i>	<i>IOM: USD 560,000</i> <i>UNDP: USD 427,000</i> <i>UNICEF: USD 175,000</i> <i>WHO: USD 238,000</i>
Report Submission Date:	31 March 2024
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Executive Summary

During the reporting period, efforts were focused on strengthening relevant partnerships, raising awareness, and gathering support for the Programme in the Republic of Moldova. Participatory structures, including the Steering Committee, and the Technical Working Group, were established to engage key stakeholders.

The inception period served to define the terms of the operational partnership between PUNOs, the beneficiary and the stakeholders through the joint development of the detailed Programme work plan, and the Terms of Reference of the Steering Committee. Additionally, PUNOs developed detailed budgets for the activities to be implemented in the first year of the Programme. The development of concept notes and detailed Terms of Reference for the activities to be implemented in the first semester of 2024 was initiated.

Representatives of the partner institutions as the main beneficiaries were met and engaged in planning the activities. They provided an updated vision and requirements for the technical support to be provided under the Programme and endorsed the Programme design, implementation strategy, and planned outcomes and outputs.

An official launch of the Programme took place on International Migrants Day celebrated yearly on 18 December 2023. The donor and Programme visibility was ensured by proper communication and by deploying visibility materials to all the participants.

Annual (or End-of Project) Progress

1. Summary and Context

Following the decision of the European Council on 14 December 2023 to open accession negotiations with the Republic of Moldova, and the country's new EU-candidate status, the launching of the Joint Programme on 18 December 2023, comes timely to support the EU integration path with its implementation strategy, data and capacity building components, sustainable and innovative approaches aligned to this process, and engagement of diaspora's skills and competences.

While the country is advancing towards EU accession, there are significant challenges that need to be addressed in a coordinated manner. The present Programme aims to support in addressing some of the challenges through employing international expertise and know-how which were developed by Moldovan diaspora and can be valorized for advancing the reforms in key sectors.

Therefore the Programme stakeholders were consulted during the reporting period to reconfirm the shared understanding and ownership of the Joint Programme and the support to be provided to advance sustainable cooperation and mutual engagement of the central and local authorities, diaspora groups, migrant communities, expert community, academic sector, and youth.

The diaspora's collective experience and skills will be valorized, offering a wealth of potential to drive positive change, particularly in critical areas such as labour mobility, social protection, healthcare, education energy efficiency, climate change adaptation, digitalization, investment attraction, public finance, justice, and the rule of law, among many others. The Government's and PUNOs shared vision is that a revamped migration governance framework shall be an integrative part of the EU integration process, and it needs to be informed

by unbiased and gender sensitive data and analysis which considers migrants and diaspora needs, vulnerabilities, as a well as the migrants' and diaspora competences and know-how in the development of the key strategic sectors.

As migration has already caused a major shortage of professionals in sectors which are essential to human capital formation (health, education), or those which are necessary to operationalize investments and sustainable economic growth. The professional sectors are affected by two related phenomena: i) brain-drain and de-skilling professionals through emigration; ii) professionals leaving the system, for jobs in the country or abroad; both are caused by un-attractive salary packages, poor social infrastructure, and perceived governance issues.

Therefore, a mechanism for temporary return to the Republic of Moldova of highly qualified practitioners in priority areas will be piloted at the national and local levels, under the present Programme.

Currently, there are limited opportunities for qualified diaspora to engage through return, investment in home country and there are few initiatives to systematically engage diaspora and valorize its human capital and unique expertise and know-how for socio-economic development, particularly concerning the Republic of Moldova's EU accession. Returning migrants, children, adolescents, and the older persons left behind by migrating family members are facing vulnerability, reduced entrepreneurship propensity and low financial culture/literacy impacting initiatives for empowerment.

The present Programme works to address these significant challenges by strengthening the capacities of relevant public authorities for ensuring effective migration policy design and management. It will draw recommendations for policy response following the profile analysis of various categories of migrants, diaspora communities and their engagement potential as well as the impacts that migration and remittances have on the structure of the communities left behind, including children.

The Programme employs innovative mechanisms to strengthen diaspora engagement, including the establishment of participatory platforms for outreach, consultation and capitalization of diaspora's skills, knowledge, and expertise for development initiatives. In addition, it will attract diaspora investments to the Republic of Moldova and develop trade and business partnerships in sectors such as tourism.

The collective efforts mobilized through the present Programme will contribute with policy recommendations and will establish as well sustainable, long-term institutional capabilities, introduce innovative tools, processes, and products while transferring advanced analytical and operational skills.

2. Results

Reporting on the implementation of the activities and results as per the Results Framework will be carried out in the **subsequent report(s)**.

The reporting period served as an **inception** phase, used for joint detailed planning, re-confirming and strengthening partnerships, ensuring awareness of and buy-in of the Programme amongst the main stakeholders in the Republic of Moldova, setting up of participatory Programme structures, including the Steering Committee comprised of the Programme stakeholders and the Technical Working Group, bringing together the representatives of the PUNOs involved at operational level in the implementation of the Programme.

The technical working group at PUNOs level convened in three regular meetings on 9, 30 October and 20 November 2023. The PUNOs developed detailed internal budgets for the activities to be implemented in the first year of Programme implementation, feeding into the Programme's joint work plan and started developing concepts notes and detailed Terms of Reference.

Additionally, a range of meetings with the key stakeholders were organized by the PUNOs to re-confirm the relevance of the initially planned activities and jointly plan the detailed terms. Therefore, a total of four meetings with the State Secretary of the State Chancellery, responsible for coordinating the diaspora engagement function in the Government took place on 9, 30 October and 7, and 30 November 2023; two meetings with the Head and the team of the Diaspora Relations Bureau (BRD) on 30 October and 30 November; two meetings with the State Secretary and team of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) on 1 and 12 December; one meeting with the Minister of Education and Research and his team; and one meeting with the team of the Ministry of the Health, on 7 December 2023.

During these meetings, the relevant focal points amongst the stakeholder institutions were identified and engaged in planning the activities. The beneficiary agencies provided an updated vision and requirements for the technical support to be provided under the Programme and confirmed the relevance of the programme design, implementation strategy, and planned outcomes and outputs.

The meetings with the stakeholders and further coordination between the PUNOs allowed for the joint development of the detailed joint work plan of the Programme (*kindly refer to Annex 1 for the Multi-Annual Work Plan*), and the Regulation of the Steering Committee (*kindly refer to Annex 2*). Both documents were drafted and coordinated with the stakeholders prior to the first meeting of the Steering Committee. The stakeholders formally validated both documents during the Steering Committee meeting organized on 18 December 2023, while suggesting a range of changes, agreed and endorsed by the members (*kindly refer to Annex 3-4 for the agenda and the minutes of the first meeting of the Steering Committee*). Additionally, during the meeting it was agreed to have IOM act on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator, as co-chair of the Steering Committee together with the State Secretary of the State Chancellery.

The Donor and Programme visibility was ensured by proper communication on the initiation and launch of the Programme and developing and deploying visibility materials. The developed visibility materials include as follows: i) summary info note on the Programme (*kindly refer to Annex 5*); ii) Programme's logo, banner, pens, notebooks, folders (*kindly refer to Annex 6 for the design of the visibility materials*).

With the overarching objective to leverage the positive impact of migration on the Republic of Moldova's socio-economic development and minimize the negative effects of migration, the UNDP, in coordination with IOM, has taken swift action to effectively accomplish its goals set for the inception period (***kindly refer to Activity 2.1.1***).

Therefore, UNDP has successfully conceptualized a core thematic support team, who will offer assistance to the State Chancellery and Bureau for Diaspora Relations for the establishment of a sustainable dialogue with diaspora aiming to foster its engagement in the public governance.

Furthermore, the inception phase saw significant strides in collaborating with the Government of Moldova (GoM) to conceptualize and design a robust Diaspora Engagement Platform (DEP), a pioneering initiative under the esteemed oversight of the State Chancellery. Led by the Secretary of State and operating in close

coordination with the dedicated Diaspora Relations Bureau, the DEP will embody a robust framework for inclusive dialogue and comprehensive problem-solving.

The primary objective of the DEP is to establish a cohesive and strategic framework that empowers the Moldovan diaspora to actively contribute to the socio-economic progress and cultural enrichment of the Republic of Moldova. By fostering a strong sense of belonging and partnership, our goal is to leverage the diverse skill sets, experiences, and perspectives of our diaspora, fostering their active involvement in policy-making processes, and enabling effective collaboration for the collective advancement of our nation.

The draft concept of the platform was developed, outlining its objectives, structure, and operational mechanisms and it is ready to be consulted with diaspora members and other relevant stakeholders.

With regards to providing assistance to the Government of Moldova (GoM) in developing a program for short-term engagement/temporary return in Moldova of highly qualified practitioners (*kindly refer to Activities 2.3.1 and 2.3.3*) in various priority areas for development, at the national and local levels (including social and economic development, health, education, culture, digital transformation, urban planning, engineering, etc.), efforts were made in terms of conceptualizing the activity and hiring technical expertise to be provided to the Programme, State Chancellery and Bureau for Diaspora Relations. Support will be provided in establishment of a sustainable and continuous dialogue with diaspora, by developing and supporting the implementation of a cohesive and strategic framework and dedicated programs that ensure the participation of Moldovan diaspora to actively contribute to the socio-economic development of the Republic of Moldova and their active involvement in policy-making processes.

Overall, the implementation of the Programme is on track and all the deliverables are expected to be achieved as planned by the end of the Programme.

3. Partnerships

The present Programme builds upon PUNOs multi-year experience of cooperation with the national agencies, academia, civil society, diaspora associations, which constitutes a solid base for making sure that the Programme activities will be implemented in a smooth manner. The excellent cooperation continued and was further advanced with the following institutions: i) State Chancellery of the Government of the Republic of Moldova; ii) Diaspora Relations Bureau of the State Chancellery; iii) Ministry of Labour and Social Protection; iv) Ministry of Education and Research; v) Ministry of Health.

During the reporting period, the Programme activities enjoyed the full support of the main national stakeholders, the state authorities being engaged in all aspects of the action and its coordination to ensure full national ownership of the results.

The key stakeholders maintained a continuous commitment to the Programme's objectives, including sharing information, harmonizing their coordination procedures, and working together. An example to this end is the consensus solution on the agenda of the launch and Steering Committee, as well as the joint development of the work plan of the Programme jointly produced by the four PUNOs, in a participatory way with input and endorsement of the key stakeholders' agencies. The stakeholder agencies made a sufficient number of relevant staff available to Programme activities, so that the skills and knowledge obtained will be properly applied and transferred to colleagues, beyond the Programme's closure.

A series of meetings were held in November-December 2023 with all the Programme partner institutions, to

plan the implementation of the Programme, discuss membership in the Steering Committee and assign contact points serving as Programme teams for the Programme. The partner agencies confirmed the strong interest in the Programme, the planned deliverables, and in furthering the collaboration with the PUNOs.

During the reporting period, synergies were created through establishing close coordination with other projects and entities, including the following: i) the IOM IDF project “Diaspora for Climate Change Action” (D4C), working to valorize the Moldovan diaspora’s input for climate change adaptation action; ii) the IOM IDF project “Save More in Migration: Supporting migrant workers from Georgia and the Republic of Moldova to enhance savings, remittances, and sustainable benefits of labour migration”, which works, using insights from behavioral economics to enhance financial literacy of Moldovan migrants and incentivize them to use their savings towards developing sustainable livelihood activities, including entrepreneurship; iii) the UNDP, SDC-funded project “Resilient and inclusive markets in Moldova”, which aims to contribute to the promotion of integrated approaches to inclusive and sustainable local economic development and employment creation, targeting both local population, as well as returning migrants and refugees, as well as the Swiss-UNDP project “Strengthen social cohesion through inclusive participation and empowered citizens” that aims to establish, through multi-dimensional partnerships and interventions, a model of efficient cooperation and strengthened social cohesion through empowered diaspora members, returning migrants and other citizens and responsive local governance.

Key new partnerships were established, notably with a Moldovan Diaspora association from the United Kingdom, “Diaspora Connect”, which is operating an electronic platform for diaspora engagement. The respective platform will serve as a basis for the establishment of a national, sustainable platform for diaspora dialogue and engagement in public governance under activity 2.1.1.

In December 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova held discussions to advance on the Programme implementation in the Republic of Moldova. The aim of these meetings was to increase diaspora engagement through national public development programs and policies. The goal is to promote sustainable development by improving the evidence and ensuring efficient and effective engagement.

Additionally, a meeting was organized with the “*Nicolae Testemițanu*” State University of Medicine and Pharmacy to discuss the short-term employment/temporary return of highly qualified practitioners to the Republic of Moldova’s priority development field. The mechanism aims to be sustainable and proposes testing and operationalizing this method at national and local levels. The Programme has established a close dialogue and coordination with the *DiaMed*, an initiative by Nicolae Testemitanu University in the area of engagement of Moldovan medical diaspora in medical research and transfer of competences. The *DiaMed* is an excellent example of how collaboration can promote the development of the medical and scientific community in Moldova, and its experience will be scaled up under the present Programme.

No implementation agreements (financial or other) with local government and/or related entities, nor with non-governmental stakeholders were entered into during the reporting period.

4. Cross-Cutting Issues

The Programme worked to adopt and use *gender-responsive and child-sensitive approaches*. In the Programme’s call for experts as well as in other vacancies published by the Programme or with any other

professional profile needed, women experts are encouraged to apply. The Programme ensures a gender-sensitive approach to selecting participants in Programme structures, consultation meetings, launch and other events. In practical terms, that meant e.g. the inclusion of women in technical working groups and Programme teams of all four PUNOs agencies and the Steering Committee (11 out of 17 participating members are women). All the research and data collection under the Programme will collect disaggregated data and promote equitable representation to the maximum extent possible.

The development of research tools will ensure that the collected data is disaggregated, including but not limited to gender, age, disability status, incorporate gender and health variables, assess the specific vulnerabilities of Moldovan children left behind by migrant parents. In particular, the planned research will assess the migrant children physical and mental health in the Republic of Moldova, the psycho-emotional challenges and difficulties with education and community in the country, increased child delinquency, decreased school performance/attendance among others, assess how migration effects children's education, social interaction, and social integration, differentiated by age group, gender. The research will pay attention to teenagers as a separate group with specific psychological issues related to children's puberty, perils of drug/alcohol addiction, conflict with law among others.

All the tasks undertaken under this assignment involving children will adhere to the UNICEF's Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis. Data protection, privacy, confidentiality and archiving requirements of UNICEF will be followed. The contractors will document all ethical issues and mitigation strategies in the Study Protocol and must have completed UNICEF or other equivalent ethics training prior to commencement of work. Steps will be taken to consistently capture the opinions of the vulnerable and marginalized groups. Informed consent will be granted prior to every focus group (FG) or interview from the participants. Possibility of incentives or other cash-like reimbursement for FG participants should be discussed with consideration of no-harm and equity principle.

In line with UNICEF's Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis, the Study Protocol, the data collection instruments, and safeguarding approaches will undergo an independent ethical review, that will be facilitated through UNICEF globally established long-term agreement with an Ethical Review Board (ERB). If any ethical issues are highlighted by the ERB, the Study Team shall make subsequent changes to avoid any ethical issues. The partner *DiaMed* initiative embeds human rights principles throughout its activities. This initiative fosters inclusivity and diversity within its membership by ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities. Moreover, DiaMed promotes research addressing healthcare disparities and challenges prevalent in underserved populations, thus aligning with the principles of social justice and human dignity. DiaMed recognizes the importance of gender equity in advancing medical research and practice. To achieve this, the initiative actively promotes the participation and leadership of women in scientific endeavors, thereby challenging traditional gender roles within the field.

5. Constraints, Adjustments, Lessons and Good Practices

These aspects will be reported in the subsequent reporting periods, given the inception character of the activities undertaken during the present reporting period.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The present Programme is a pivotal One-UN action focused on amplifying the impact of migration on the Republic of Moldova's development.

The Programme managed to ensure preparations for a swift start of activities, which will contribute towards reaching the planned outputs, under the subsequent reporting periods. Overall, the implementation of the Programme is on track and all the expected deliverables are expected to be achieved as planned by the end of the Programme.

During the reporting period, the Programme strengthened the existing partnerships and established new ones, in particular with the diaspora community. Efficient strategic and operational level coordination was established amongst the PUNOs and the stakeholders, resulting in jointly developed planning documents outlining synergies and synchronisation of activities.

The PUNOs established in coordination with the stakeholders the Programme Governance structure and the operational level technical working group.

The Programme briefed senior-level officials on the Programme and consulted them on the implementation approaches and strategy. The number of meetings and participants demonstrated the relevance of the issue and the interest of the stakeholders to contribute to the Programme.

In the next reporting period, the PUNOs will provide ongoing support in implementing a cohesive and strategic framework, along with dedicated programs to ensure the active participation of the Moldovan diaspora in socio-economic development and policy-making processes.

The Terms of Reference for the execution of the sociological study in the Republic of Moldova and the diaspora mapping will be produced and coordinated with the stakeholders. Relevant expertise will be commissioned for the conduction of the respective studies.

The concept of the Diaspora Engagement Platform will be put up for consultations with diaspora members and relevant stakeholders. This feedback will be crucial in refining and finalizing the platform's objectives, structure, and operational mechanisms. Based on the developed and validated concept, PUNOs will work to contract the relevant IT expertise for operationalising the platform.

The PUNOs will continue to support the Government of the Republic of Moldova in developing programs for short-term engagement/temporary return of highly qualified practitioners in priority areas for development, as well as for return of Moldovan graduates of foreign universities. Technical expertise will be commissioned to support the State Chancellery and Bureau for Diaspora Relations in establishing sustainable dialogue with the diaspora.

Efforts will be intensified to further engage diaspora business leaders as development promoters and business envoys. This will involve fostering stronger collaboration between diaspora entrepreneurs and local businesses, facilitating partnerships, and identifying investment opportunities to drive economic growth and development.

ANNEX

Annex 1. Multi-Annual Joint Work Plan

Annex 2. Regulation of the Steering Committee

Annex 3. Agenda of the launch event and the Steering Committee

Annex 4. Minutes of the first meeting of the Steering Committee

Annex 5. Summary info note on the Programme

Annex 6. Design of the visibility materials