
EXPLORING NEW LEGAL MIGRATION PATHWAYS: LESSONS FROM PILOT PROJECTS

By Kate Hooper

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Executive Summary

In September 2017, the European Commission announced plans to embark on a series of migration pilot projects with several countries of origin or transit in Africa.¹ The EU plan is just the latest chapter in a long—and mixed—history of bilateral partnerships to offer temporary training or work placements in destination countries.

These types of pilot programs appeal to policymakers for several reasons. First, they offer a way to test demand for labor migration between two countries in sectors ranging from agriculture to hospitality to nursing. Legal migration projects also offer an opportunity to bolster the development benefits of temporary migration by encouraging skills development and helping migrants put their skills to use upon return—a theme picked up by the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration. The EU proposal also highlights the role these programs might play in curbing irregular migration, both in terms of providing a legal alternative for prospective migrants and by incentivizing deeper cooperation on migration management and returns with partner countries.

But despite their potential, migration pilot programs have produced mixed results. Many have proved difficult to implement, extend, or scale up, beset by challenges such as high operational costs, limited employer or migrant buy-in, and insufficient political support.

*Despite their potential, migration pilot programs
have produced mixed results.*

Designing a project with a good chance of clearing these hurdles requires policymakers to think carefully about several design questions, including:

- **Whom to partner with.** Selecting a partner country that is willing and able to manage migration and their labor markets is a precondition for success, as is securing the buy-in of employers.
- **Which sectors to target.** Policymakers will need to identify in-demand sectors in destination countries that correspond to a surplus of workers in partner countries, and to ensure that recruitment is conducted in a responsible way.
- **How to balance investments in training with managing costs.** Investing in language and vocational training not only helps participants meet the demands of the destination-country workplace, but it also provides them with concrete opportunities to build valuable skills that can benefit their careers in the long run. But the costs of providing tailored training can quickly mount up, making it imperative to find a way to distribute these costs equitably and sustainably between the governmental and nongovernmental actors involved.
- **What access should be offered to longer-term migration opportunities.** While pilot programs offer temporary placements, there is often demand among migrants and employers for options to extend the employment relationship. Yet if migrants do not return and put their new skills to use, the development benefits for countries of origin are less clear.

Another key consideration is how to ensure that legal migration programs result in tangible development benefits, especially in cases where migrants do not return home. This requires thinking carefully about

¹ This report, originally published in early February 2019, has been revised to more accurately characterize the relationships between the European Commission and third countries.

how the skills developed during a program might be put to good use once it ends, including helping local employers understand the value of overseas training and experience, helping returning migrants find work, and even helping them explore business development opportunities.

Governments have funded an array of migration pilot projects over the years, but very few have ultimately been incorporated into their broader immigration policy or labor-policy planning. If these programs are to live up to the high expectations that surround them, policymakers must be prepared to set concrete objectives for them and weigh these design considerations to develop a clear path forward for scaling up programs that succeed.

I. Introduction

In September 2017, the European Commission announced plans to launch an ambitious set of pilot projects on legal migration in partnership with several African countries.² Curbing irregular migration was at the heart of this proposal, its underlying logic being that expanding legal migration opportunities for nationals of key sending or transit countries would reduce incentives for irregular movement. This strategic thinking was also reflected in the proposal's choice of partner countries, which include some in North Africa with longstanding cooperation on migration management (Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia); several that are cooperating on returns (Ethiopia, Guinea, Niger, and The Gambia); and other priority sending countries (Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal).³

The European Commission's plan builds on a long—and mixed—history of migration partnerships between destination and origin countries. Countries have experimented with an array of pilot projects—temporary schemes that offer training or work placements in destination countries—to encourage labor migration in a diverse set of high-demand sectors. Over the years, these projects have covered everything from seasonal jobs in agriculture to longer-term opportunities in nursing. While the present EU proposal focuses on countries of origin and transit in Africa, other migration pilot projects have run in geographic contexts ranging from Latin America to Africa to Southeast Asia. Many of these programs build on close historical (including colonial), cultural, or economic ties.

Over the years, these projects have covered everything from seasonal jobs in agriculture to longer-term opportunities in nursing.

The draw of these migration pilot projects is twofold. First, they offer a way to test the viability of new labor-migration pathways between partner countries that may currently have a low volume of legal migration by connecting employer demand in destination countries with a supply of workers in origin countries. For example, a program might recruit qualified individuals from countries with high

2 European Commission, “Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions on the Delivery of the European Agenda on Migration” (COM [2017] 558 final, Brussels, September 27, 2017), https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20170927_communication_on_the_delivery_of_the_eam_en.pdf.

3 Morocco and Tunisia are signatories to EU Mobility Partnerships, while Nigeria is a signatory to the Common Agenda for Migration and Mobility. See European Commission, “Pilot Projects Legal Migration” (concept note, European Commission, Brussels, 2018), www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/user_upload/DOC6_Concept_Note.pdf; European Commission, “Global Approach to Migration and Mobility,” updated February 22, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/global-approach-to-migration_en.



unemployment levels to work in destination-country sectors that are struggling to hire people, such as seasonal agriculture or horticulture. Second, they offer an approach to recruiting migrant labor that focuses more squarely on the potential development benefits of mobility for origin countries and migrants by encouraging skills development and exploring ways for migrants to put their skills to use upon their return. The final text of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, which was endorsed by more than 160 countries in December 2018, emphasizes the role that this type of bilateral partnership or program can play in encouraging the development and circulation of skills.⁴

But in practice, many of these pilot projects have delivered disappointing results. Factors such as high operational costs make them difficult to implement, let alone extend or scale up, while questions remain about the extent of the development benefits for countries of origin, especially if migrants do not return home or cannot put their new skills to use when they do. And more broadly, questions remain about how these projects fit into a broader legal migration strategy: Can more of these programs be scaled up into permanent pathways? Or do they serve mainly as gestures of goodwill, intended to signal deeper cooperation on migration and development issues with key partners? As the European Union and the countries party to the Global Compact explore the potential for legal migration programs anew, this policy brief offers a look at how previous pilot projects have fared. In doing so, it draws lessons on how policymakers can create sustainable, scalable programs that encourage mobility while investing in development benefits.

II. The Mixed Record of Migration Pilot Projects

Over the years, policymakers have explored options for encouraging mobility in a way that can benefit destination countries, migrants, and countries of origin alike. This approach has come in and out of vogue. In the mid-2000s, for example, several European countries embarked on pilot projects as part of their efforts to encourage “circular migration”—labor migration on a strictly temporary basis, motivated by the idea that returning migrants would put their skills to good use after return, benefitting origin countries and communities. But many of these projects were discontinued as the economic crisis that began in 2008 unfolded, leading to a spike in unemployment and deep spending cuts, and ultimately to a change in political priorities.

Recently, interest in legal-migration schemes has piqued once more, exemplified both by their inclusion in the Global Compact and by the launch of a new set of pilot projects in Europe.⁵ While still at the development stage, the Commission’s proposed pilot projects set very broad parameters in terms of sectors, skill levels, and approach. For example, Member States may choose to focus a project on providing temporary work experience to migrants in destination countries, or on building capacity to manage economic migration in partner countries, with the Commission providing assistance in terms of coordination with partner countries and funding. This flexibility reflects both the wide array of potential partner countries—only some of which currently have the capacity and experience to embark on a pilot

4 Objective 18 of the Global Compact calls for signatories to “engage in bilateral partnerships and programmes in cooperation with relevant stakeholders that promote skills development, mobility, and circulation, such as student exchange programmes, scholarships, professional exchange programmes, and trainee or apprenticeships that include options for beneficiaries, after successful completion of these programmes, to seek employment and engage in entrepreneurship.” This is set out as one of the actions that will help achieve the commitment to “promote demand-driven skills development to optimise the employability of migrants in formal labour markets in countries of destination and in countries of origin upon return, as well as to ensure decent work in labour migration.” See United Nations, “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration: Final Draft,” July 11, 2018, https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180711_final_draft_0.pdf.

5 Ibid.

labor-migration scheme—and the fact that some partnerships are likely to scale up existing endeavors instead of creating new projects from scratch.⁶

While the benefits of migration for individual migrants and destination countries are well established, the effects can be more mixed for countries of origin. Research documents the myriad potential benefits of migration for sending countries, ranging from the receipt of remittances (which can far outweigh overseas development assistance) to the value of training and experience earned abroad, and the potential for knowledge transfers.⁷ But whether these benefits to origin countries materialize is highly dependent on workers being able to put their skills to use both in destination countries and if and when they return home.

Against this backdrop, pilot projects hold appeal as a way to test or expand legal migration pathways while fostering development. Most offer training or work experience (e.g., through work placements or exchange programs), usually on a temporary basis, with the costs covered by destination-country governments or nongovernment actors, such as employers. In some cases, participants who meet certain requirements, such as getting certified to practice or securing a job offer, can qualify to stay on a longer-term basis. These projects tend to recruit people who are already qualified to work in their profession, then provide an additional layer of country-specific language or vocational training to equip migrants to work abroad.

By focusing on recruiting in sectors that are mutually beneficial to both countries, pilot projects offer an opportunity for ethical recruitment practices and responsible migration management. This may be the case when, for example, nurses are recruited from a country with a large unemployed nursing workforce to practice in another country where they are in demand. In turn, by building skills development into the program and exploring how to encourage the circulation of skills, these projects offer a way to maximize development benefits both for countries of origin and migrants themselves.

But despite their potential, the results of pilot projects to date have been decidedly mixed. While a handful of projects have been extended or scaled up, many have failed to make it past the pilot stage.⁸ Evaluations of these projects vary widely in terms of quality and detail, making it hard to compare their outcomes (see Box 1). In turn, there is little evidence to date on whether these projects help to reduce irregular migration—a top stated objective of the EU scheme. One sticking point is the challenge of creating a program that aligns with the skills profile of migrants moving irregularly. While destination countries such as Germany experience labor shortages primarily in high-skilled occupations, many of the would-be migrants a mobility scheme may seek to reroute are low- or middle-skilled.⁹ Another challenge is expanding legal migration opportunities to a point where they have a noticeable impact on the supply of prospective migrants, given both the challenging political climate around migration in Europe and many countries elsewhere, and the weak record of scaling up pilot projects to date.

6 Author interview with European Commission Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs official, Brussels, September 27, 2018.

7 Kate Hooper and Madeleine Sumption, *Reaching a “Fair Deal” on Talent: Emigration, Circulation, and Human Capital in Countries of Origin* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2016), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/reaching-fair-deal-talent-emigration-circulation-and-human-capital-countries-origin.

8 An example of a migration pilot project that has been extended and scaled up is Germany’s Triple Win project, which has recruited more than 2,000 nurses from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Philippines, and Serbia to work in Germany. See German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), “When Everyone’s a Winner: International Nurses for Germany,” updated April 2018, www.giz.de/en/workingwithgiz/11666.html.

9 For example, while Germany is experiencing shortages primarily of skilled workers, many of the migrants coming from the Western Balkans—a key source of irregular migration up until 2015—seek unskilled or semiskilled work. See Jessica Bither and Astrid Ziebarth, *Creating Legal Pathways to Reduce Irregular Migration? What We Can Learn from Germany’s “Western Balkan Regulation”* (Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2018), www.gmfus.org/publications/creating-legal-pathways-reduce-irregular-migration-what-we-can-learn-germanys-western.



Box 1. The Challenges of Evaluating Pilot Programs

Given the high costs of migration pilot projects, insights into how well they were implemented and what could be improved are crucial if policymakers are to understand how to get the best value for money. Yet relatively few of these projects track outcomes over time. The lack of detailed evaluations makes it difficult to understand why so many have failed either to make it past the pilot stage or to be scaled up. For example, not all projects produce concrete data on employment outcomes, and few track how participants fare over time once they return home—thus precluding examination of whether they end up using the skills they develop and whether they decide to migrate once more.

Limited resources for monitoring and evaluation are part of the challenge. But it is also a question of clearly articulating what the objectives of these projects are at the outset and how to measure progress toward them. One example of good practice in this regard is New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer program, which produced a longitudinal study that examined the development benefits for participating households and their local communities in Tonga and Vanuatu. By tracing outcomes such as household income, spending decisions, and wellbeing before departure and up to two years after participation, this analysis offers a more robust picture of the impact of the scheme.

Note: For more details on the New Zealand longitudinal study, see David John McKenzie and John Gibson, "The Development Impact of a Best Practice Seasonal Worker Policy" (World Bank Policy Research Working Paper no. 5488, November 2010), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1718246.

With these caveats in mind, it is nonetheless possible to glean some lessons both from the pilot projects that have been relatively successful and those that did not achieve their intended mobility and development objectives.¹⁰ Major challenges include:

- **Limited employer buy-in.** A lack of demand from destination-country employers is a common reason for discontinuing pilot projects. This can reflect poor initial planning (governments misjudging employer interest in recruiting foreign workers in a particular field) or flawed project design (high costs of participating or bureaucratic hurdles that make the effort required of employers outweigh the benefits). For example, a 2008 pilot project that sought to recruit seasonal agricultural workers from Ukraine to work in Portugal struggled to find Portuguese recruiters interested in participating, partly due to the unfolding economic crisis but also to the complexity of program procedures as compared to more informal recruitment practices.¹¹ Another common flaw is the limited recourse to longer-term migration opportunities, should employers want to retain the workers in which they have invested. For a project to be sustainable in the long term, employers need to see the added value of recruiting migrant workers through it instead of seeking out domestic or foreign workers through other avenues.
- **Limited political support.** Maintaining political buy-in is crucial to the success of pilot projects. With most projects relying on destination-country governments to fund many of the initial operational costs, such as training and placement, any loss of political support can be fatal. For example, the Netherlands' Blue Birds project—which aimed to place 160 migrants from Indonesia and South Africa in temporary jobs in agribusiness, the food industry, logistics, manufacturing, and shipping—quickly unraveled when a less supportive government came to

10 For a discussion of these lessons and how they may inform efforts to encourage bilateral cooperation on legal migration in the context of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, see Kate Hooper, *Reimagining Skilled Migration Partnerships to Support Development* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2018), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/reimagining-skilled-migration-partnerships-development.

11 Anna Charpin and Luca Aiolfi, *Evaluation of the Concrete Results Obtained through Projects Financed under AENEAS and Thematic Programme for Migration and Asylum* (Brussels: EU DCI-MIGR Programme, 2011), 36–37, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.599.331&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

power. Newly elected officials cited concerns about the optics of supporting a labor-migration project given their pledges to tackle domestic unemployment, resulting in the project's early termination in 2011.¹² More recently, the rollout of the EU pilot projects has been delayed amid challenges securing Member State support, with the launch of the first projects pushed from May 2018 to early 2019.¹³

- **High operational costs.** Many projects struggle with mounting costs, particularly for training. Projects targeting low-skilled workers tend to provide training that outlines what employment rights the migrants have, and some also offer very basic host-country language training.¹⁴ But participants recruited for middle- or high-skilled roles in nursing or other sectors usually require much more intensive training to provide them with the language skills and to bridge any gaps in training necessary to perform their duties in the destination country. Few projects publish their full operational costs, but for those targeting middle- or high-skilled workers, the combination of training, travel, and accommodation costs as well as wages can amount to tens of thousands of dollars per participant—a price-point that can be difficult to justify to employers, for example, unless this investment produces long-term employees.¹⁵
- **Limited migrant buy-in.** Finally, gaining and retaining migrant support for pilot projects is critical. Decent work conditions, higher wages, reasonable costs, and chances to develop new skills are all part of this calculus for migrants. For example, a project between Germany and Tunisia to recruit 150 nurses ended prematurely in 2013 after participants balked at their expected financial contributions to their training and at their working conditions, which they felt paid too little and underused their skills.¹⁶ Setting realistic expectations early on about participants' responsibilities, working conditions, and avenues for skills development and longer-term migration is thus vital.

Questions of whether a pilot project has been successful also rely on understanding where it fits within the governments' broader legal migration strategy. The European Union, for example, has linked its pilot projects explicitly to its broader migration policy objectives, highlighting how deeper cooperation on legal migration with partner countries can help meet labor needs in destination countries, reduce incentives for irregular migration, and provide an impetus for further collaboration on migration management.¹⁷ Pilot

12 Melissa Siegel and Vivianne van der Vorst, *Evaluation of the "Blue Birds" Circular Migration Pilot in the Netherlands* (Maastricht, Netherlands: Maastricht University, 2012), www.merit.unu.edu/publications/uploads/1344262652.pdf.

13 The first projects due to be launched in early 2019 are between Belgium and Morocco, and Lithuania and Nigeria. See European Commission, "State of the Union 2018: Enhancing Safe and Legal Pathways to Europe" (fact sheet, European Commission, Brussels, September 12, 2018), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/soteu2018-factsheet-legal-pathways_en_0.pdf.

14 There are some exceptions, for example in established seasonal worker programs. New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) program offers computer and basic literacy and numeracy training. See Clear Horizon Consulting, *Strengthening Pacific Partnership and Vakameasina Evaluation: Final Report* (Wellington: New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade Aid Programme, 2016), www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/SPP-Vak-Evaluation-Final-Report2016.pdf.

15 For example, the cost for employers to participate in the Triple Win pilot project was 4,000 euros in 2016, excluding the additional costs incurred by travel to Germany, recognition of qualifications, and wages for workers. In Japan, the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) requires employers to cover the cost of six months of language and skills training for Filipino nurses (about 600,000 yen or USD 5,600 per person). The Japanese government now also funds another six months of predeparture language training for JPEPA participants, provided by the Philippines' Technical Education Skills Development Authority. See GIZ, "Projekt Triple Win: Gewinnung von Pflegekräften aus dem Ausland—unser nachhaltiger Ansatz" (fact sheet, GIZ, Eschborn, Germany, July 2016), www.triple-win-pflegekraefte.de/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ZAV_A5_Triple_Win_Pflegekraefte_Juli_2016_web.pdf; Ohno Sun, "Southeast Asian Nurses and Caregiving Workers Transcending the National Boundaries: An Overview of Indonesian and Filipino Workers in Japan and Abroad," *Southeast Asian Studies* 49, no. 4 (2012): 541–69.

16 One of the issues was that while Germany intended to recruit recent school graduates and provide them with a three-year apprenticeship to train them as nurses, Tunisia insisted on recruiting nurses who were already qualified (so as to provide them with more job security upon return). See Ivan Martin, *Migrant Support Measures from an Employment and Skills Perspective (MISMES): Tunisia* (Turin, Italy: European Training Foundation, 2015), 14–17, www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/m/2938DD5003574A3EC1257E9A002BF071_MISMES%20Tunisia.pdf.

17 European Commission, "State of the Union 2018."



projects offer visibility and signify concrete action on expanding legal migration pathways to partners. But in practice, while governments have funded plenty of discrete projects, very few are ultimately incorporated into immigration policy writ large or labor-policy planning. In part, this may reflect their mixed results, with projects often proving impractical or too costly to extend or scale up. But it also points to the challenge of translating small-scale projects with set funding (usually targeting at most a couple hundred people) into large-scale interventions that can move the needle on migration cooperation.

III. Building Pilot Projects that Facilitate Mobility

By matching workers with overseas employers (whether on a short-term or potentially longer-term basis), migration pilot projects test demand for migration in certain sectors, often with an avenue to scale the program up if demand is high. Designing a project that can successfully facilitate mobility requires thinking carefully about whom to partner with, which sectors to target, how to balance investments in training with the need to keep costs manageable, and what long-term migration opportunities to offer.

A. Whom to Partner with

Usually, destination countries pick partners with which they share close political, social, or economic ties, and which already cooperate with them on migration-related issues. This was the case, for example, with Spain's partnerships with Colombia and Morocco, countries with which it had colonial ties. Furthermore, Spain shares a common language with Colombia, and its geographic proximity to Morocco has already resulted in extensive cooperation on migration management, including on the return of Moroccan migrants deemed not to have a right to stay in Spain. Politics can also play an important role, as in the case of Germany's pilot projects offering training and work placements for engineers and nurses from Tunisia, which formed part of its efforts to support democracy-building and economic development in the wake of the Arab Spring.¹⁸ Capacity is also a consideration. To date, the European Commission's migration pilot projects appear to focus mainly on Morocco and, to a lesser extent, Tunisia. While this partly reflects their close bilateral ties and strategic role in curbing irregular migration to Europe, it also demonstrates the fact that they already have the institutions in place to participate effectively in such pilot projects.¹⁹ While development considerations do factor into these decision, they can often be subsumed by the politics surrounding migration, and especially by destination-country prioritization of migration management and returns.

Successful projects hinge on selecting partners that have both the capacity and political willingness to manage migration and labor markets. Broadly speaking, the responsibilities of origin countries in a migration pilot project include selecting and vetting participants, and potentially delivering any predeparture training or postreturn support. For projects targeting low-skilled migration, this generally involves selecting and vetting people to work in sectors such as seasonal agriculture or horticulture, or hospitality. In some cases, origin-country government agencies may fulfill the function of screening participants: for example, the Moroccan National Employment Agency recruited and processed migrants for its seasonal agriculture project with Spain.²⁰ But in other cases where the government lacks capacity, nongovernmental organizations (such as the International Organization for Migration) or recruitment agencies may step in to play this role in lieu of a public employment agency. In projects targeting middle- or high-skilled migration, there is yet another consideration: whether partner countries' standards of

18 GIZ, "Tunisia," accessed December 19, 2018, www.giz.de/en/worldwide/326.html.

19 Author interview with European Commission Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs official.

20 Charpin and Aiolfi, *Evaluation of the Concrete Results Obtained through Projects Financed under AENEAS and Thematic Programme for Migration and Asylum*.



education and training are comparable to those of the destination country. This helps determine whether employers will be willing to hire migrants even on a temporary basis, and it is especially significant when recruiting people to work in regulated professions, such as health care, where they will need to meet licensing requirements to practice.

How to Work with Private-Sector Actors

Mobility pilot projects often rely on nongovernment actors for both design (e.g., getting employer input on which sectors to prioritize and how to make programs appealing) and implementation, whether in terms of convincing employers to hire migrants on a short-term basis or working with education and training institutions to equip migrants with necessary skills. And any effort to scale up a project will hinge on whether more employers are willing to participate and share in the costs of training prospective employees.

It is vital for governments to monitor private-sector actors' activities closely, so as to prevent potential exploitation or abuse.

In some cases, nongovernment actors may be involved in running the program itself. This ranges from helping to select and vet participants (as described above) to helping design or even manage the program. For example, Germany's nursing employers' association (Arbeitgeberverband Pflege) and the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände) partnered with the country's Federal Employment Agency and the Chinese Labor Ministry in 2013 to launch a pilot project to recruit 150 Chinese nurses to Germany.²¹ And in Finland, private recruitment agencies and health-care providers have run a program to recruit Filipino nurses to work in nursing homes; the recruitment agencies manage the program (including recognition of nursing qualifications) and the government provides funding for training but otherwise playing a hands-off role, save admitting immigrants to the country and enforcing labor standards.

Governments are often not the best placed to understand employer needs, and bringing in private-sector actors to recruit and train workers can be a more efficient approach to tailoring migration programs to the labor market. But it is vital for governments to monitor private-sector actors' activities closely, so as to prevent potential exploitation or abuse. Japan's Technical Intern Training Program is a cautionary tale in this regard. Japan overhauled the program in 2016–17 following criticism that it essentially served as an exploitative guest worker program. While the government coordinates the program, private-sector agencies administer it, with recruitment agencies hiring interns in origin countries such as China and Vietnam and working with business associations to arrange placements lasting between one and three years. But some recruitment agencies were accused of charging participants up to USD 10,000 each and punishing those who left their jobs, with allegations of forced labor occurring in the program.²² In response, the Japanese government created a new oversight body that can conduct investigations of abuse and additional regulation of participating businesses and business associations.

21 Andrea Renatus, "Pilotprojekt mit Pflegefachkräften aus China nun trägerübergreifend," updated May 28, 2013, <https://arbeitsgeberverband-pflege.de/das-haben-wir-zu-sagen/pilotprojekt-mit-pflegefachkraeften-aus-china-nun-traegeruebergreifend/>.

22 Institute for Human Rights and Business, *Learning Experience? Japan's Technical Intern Training Programme and the Challenge of Protecting the Rights of Migrant Workers* (London: Institute for Human Rights and Business, 2017), www.ihrb.org/uploads/reports/Learning_Experience_Japans_TITP_and_the_Rights_of_Migrant_Workers.pdf.



B. Which Sectors to Target

Another important design question is which sectors to focus on—a decision that entails balancing the labor-market priorities of destination and origin countries. For destination countries, priority sectors usually translate to those experiencing labor or skills shortages, either in fast-growing skilled fields (such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, or STEM) or in low- and middle-skilled sectors that may struggle to recruit from the domestic workforce due to low pay or poor working conditions. Origin countries, on the other hand, may prioritize sectors that have a surplus of workers, with a temporary migration scheme serving as an outlet for unemployed workers, or nascent or fast-growing sectors, with the scheme offering an opportunity for workers to develop in-demand skills abroad that can then be applied domestically. While it is easy to focus on the needs of destination countries, given both the importance of engaging destination-country employers and the simple fact that destination countries tend to fund these programs, it is important to also consider the flipside of the equation: project designers should seek to avoid sectors in which origin countries are experiencing labor shortages or “brain drain,” and instead think about which sectors could contribute to economic growth.

To date, most pilot projects have focused on low-skilled work in the agriculture and tourism industries. This reflects both the skill levels and educational backgrounds prevalent in many countries of origin as well as where demand for labor is high in destination countries. Seasonal agricultural work, such as fruit or vegetable picking, is a common target for migration projects, as employers in destination countries can struggle to recruit local workers for these jobs.²³ Spain, for example, ran a pilot project to recruit seasonal workers from vulnerable communities in Colombia to harvest fruit in Catalonia, offering participants tailored support to develop business plans to implement upon their return, before the economic crisis brought these efforts to a close.²⁴ Another pilot project in the Spanish province of Huelva was used to build capacity for recruiting seasonal workers from Morocco and improving return rates of participating workers; though demand dropped significantly following the onset of the economic crisis, the project was broadly regarded as successful.²⁵

While not the norm, some countries have established pilot projects that focus on middle- or high-skilled migration. Germany, for example, has run programs offering training and work experience to engineers from Tunisia and nurses and caregivers from a variety of countries (including Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Georgia, the Philippines, Serbia, Tunisia, and Vietnam). Health care is a popular choice for such

23 Employers surveyed in the United Kingdom, for example, commonly cited the long hours, rural location, challenging work conditions, and low pay, combined with the availability of other, more secure low-skilled work in the service industry, as barriers to recruitment. See Migration Advisory Committee, *Migrant Seasonal Workers: The Impact on the Horticulture and Food Processing Sectors of Closing the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme and the Sectors Based Scheme* (London: UK Home Office, 2013), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/257242/migrant-seasonal-workers.pdf.

24 International Organization for Migration (IOM) Colombia partnered with Pagesos Union (the Farmers Union of Catalonia) and the Fundación Agricultores Solidarios between 2006 and 2008 to place 1,200 migrants from vulnerable communities in Colombia (e.g., low-income, indigenous, or female-led households) with 600 Spanish employers to harvest fruit. Most of the 625,000-euro budget came from the European Commission's AENEAS program (500,000 euros). Some of the participants in the project used their savings to implement their business plan in Colombia. Falling demand for foreign labor amid the economic crisis meant that the project was not taken forward, but it is nonetheless regarded as a promising example of how to bolster development benefits for seasonal workers. See Charpin and Aiolfi, *Evaluation of the Concrete Results Obtained through Projects Financed under AENEAS and Thematic Programme for Migration and Asylum*; IOM Colombia, Unió de Pagesos, European Union, and Pagesos Solidaris, *Temporary and Circular Labour Migration: Experiences, Challenges, and Opportunities* (Geneva: IOM, 2009), <https://repository.oim.org.co/bitstream/handle/20.500.11788/241/COL-OIM%200321%20N2-2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

25 The Huelva project prioritized recruiting female workers with families in Morocco, and return rates subsequently improved dramatically from about 65 percent to 97 percent. This practice has continued in Spain's recruitment of seasonal workers, but an unintended consequence is that it has created a workforce that is especially vulnerable to abuse. A 2018 BuzzFeed report set out how many female seasonal workers are illiterate and speak little Spanish, and documented numerous incidents of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse suffered by workers. See Charpin and Aiolfi, *Evaluation of the Concrete Results Obtained through Projects Financed under AENEAS and Thematic Programme for Migration and Asylum*, 35–36; Pascale Mueller and Stefania Prandi, “Zahlreiche Erntehelferinnen werden in Spanien missbraucht – und die EU zahlte Millionen-Subventionen,” BuzzFeed News, July 27, 2018, www.buzzfeed.com/de/pascalemueller/eu-gelder-huelva-cartaya-erdbeeren-missbrauch.



projects, reflecting both rising demand in destination countries and high unemployment rates for nurses in countries such as the Philippines.²⁶ As demand for skilled workers in destination countries grows, pilot projects recruiting middle- or high-skilled workers may appeal more to policymakers.

C. How to Balance Investments in Training with Managing Costs

The choice of sector and skills level carries significant implications for the costs of a program. Investing in sufficient language and vocational training to ensure that participants can meet destination-country requirements is critical to the effectiveness of a pilot project. Migrants seeking to work in regulated professions may need to sit licensing examinations to work independently or perform certain duties, and this can take months (or even years) of training and preparation. For example, migrants recruited to work as nurses in other countries typically take on a more junior role (e.g., as nursing assistants) while they acquire the host-country language proficiency and fill any gaps in training to sit licensing examinations.²⁷ Investing in training to help participants put their skills to full use and develop new skills is crucial to ensuring that migrants are not underemployed.²⁸

But the costs of delivering tailored vocational and language training quickly mount up, and risk making a program unviable. Different projects have explored ways to reduce these costs, such as delivering a portion of training in origin countries. This is the case for Filipino nurses recruited to work in Japan, for example, who receive part of their language training in the Philippines, capitalizing on both the quality of training delivered by the Philippines' Technical Education Skills Development Authority and the cost savings compared to delivering the same training in Japan.²⁹ This cost differential underpins the logic for the "global skills partnership" model set out in the 2018 Global Compact (see Box 2). Yet even when training is delivered in countries of origin, program costs may remain high, especially when providers need to tailor curricula extensively or bring in specialist trainers from destination countries.³⁰

Finding a way to distribute these costs equitably and sustainably is therefore a top priority, especially if policymakers intend to extend or scale up these programs. The high upfront costs of travel, accommodation, and predeparture training are usually covered by the destination-country government or other actor(s) responsible for administering the project (such as a recruitment agency). Migrants may be asked to assume a small share of these costs (such as airfare³¹ or some training expenses), but it is important to provide access

26 In May 2016, the Philippines Nurses Association estimated more than 200,000 registered nurses were unable to find work in their profession. See *The Manila Times*, "200,000 Registered Nurses Are Jobless," *The Manila Times*, May 15, 2016, www.manilatimes.net/200000-registered-nurses-are-jobless/262211/.

27 See, for example, a project managed by Opteam, a health-care provider in Finland, which recruited registered nurses from the Philippines to work as nursing assistants while they prepared for licensing examinations, and the JPEPA program, in which Filipino nurses work as nursing aides while they undertake up to a year of Japanese language training and tailored vocational training to sit the Japanese-language licensing examination.

28 Underemployment can not only deter migrants from participating, but it can result in a significant loss of earnings in the long run. See Jeanne Batalova, Michael Fix, and James D. Bachmeier, *Untapped Talent: The Costs of Brain Waste among Highly Skilled Immigrants in the United States* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2016), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/untapped-talent-costs-brain-waste-among-highly-skilled-immigrants-united-states.

29 Nozomi Yagi, Tim K. Mackey, Bryan A. Liang, and Lorna Gerlt, "Policy Review: Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA)—Analysis of a Failed Nurse Migration Policy," *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 51, no. 2 (2014): 243–50.

30 In the case of the Australia-Pacific Technical College, providing training with Australian qualifications necessitated bringing in their own teachers and curricula, and the costs ended up not being much cheaper than flying students out to Australia and delivering the training there. See Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "What Would Make Global Skills Partnerships Work in Practice?" (Migration Policy Debates brief no. 15, OECD Publishing, Paris, May 2018), www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debate-15.pdf.

31 For example, Australia and New Zealand's seasonal worker programs require participants to cover all or part of their airfare, although programs in other countries (such as Spain's Collective Management system) shift these costs onto employers.



to reasonable financing, especially when recruiting from a low-income country.³² Destination-country employers end up covering many of the expenses incurred by projects, including the wages paid to participants and even some of the upfront investments such as recruitment or training. But employers can be deterred by the high costs of a program, especially if they can only employ the workers they are investing in on a short-term basis, or if the costs are not competitive compared to other recruitment pathways.³³ Some of the more tailored support that pilot projects provide participants, especially middle- and high-skilled migrants, may be simply too resource intensive to implement on a larger scale.

Employers can be deterred by the high costs of a program, especially if they can only employ the workers they are investing in on a short-term basis.

Moving towards a cost-sharing model is important so that projects can withstand reductions in government funding (e.g., if political priorities shift), or if policymakers intend to scale up programs significantly. But figuring out what the appropriate distribution of costs should be is often a case of trial and error. Policymakers should look for opportunities to realize economies of scale as they explore the feasibility of turning pilot projects into more permanent and larger-scale programs. One option is to create standardized processes for placement and training, such as a database to manage placements.³⁴ More broadly, there may be avenues for destination countries to collaborate on labor-migration schemes in certain sectors, for example in the European context. The European Commission's efforts to coordinate pilot projects that involve consortia of interested Member States and cover some of the costs of brokering these partnerships is a promising model.

D. What Longer-Term Migration Opportunities to Offer

Another important design question is how long the training or work placement should last—and whether participants should have access to longer-term migration opportunities at the end of the program. The duration of most placements offered by pilot programs ranges from a few months to a couple of years, after which participants return home. Low-skilled workers typically have limited options to stay on a longer-term basis (whether through renewing their status or accessing permanent residence), bar through other humanitarian or family immigration channels. Middle- or high-skilled workers may be able to extend their stay or even access permanent residence, but this may hinge on their passing licensing examinations (as is often the case in nursing programs, for example) or meeting the requirements of regular employer-sponsored immigration, which tend to focus on high-skilled shortage occupations.³⁵

32 For example, a project to recruit health-care workers from Tunisia to Germany planned for each participant to be responsible for about 19,000 euros (or 15 percent) of the training and apprenticeship costs. But participants struggled to get loans to cover their expenses, which meant that employers ended up shouldering these costs instead. See Martin, *Migrant Support Measures from an Employment and Skills Perspective (MISMES)*.

33 Japanese hospitals started pulling out of the JPEPA program because of the high costs of training relative to the prospects of securing a long-term employee, as most of the nurses ultimately failed the Japanese-language licensing examination and had to return to the Philippines after three years. See Yagi, Mackey, Liang, and Gerlt, "Policy Review: Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA)."

34 Anna Goos, *Manual on Circular Migration Scheme* (Eschborn, Germany: GIZ, 2016), http://migration.commission.ge/files/pcms_en_final.pdf.

35 Annex 8 of the JPEPA allows for the temporary placement of Filipino nurses in Japan (and technically, vice versa). Under this arrangement, Japan matches 200 nurses and 300 caregivers with Japanese hospitals each year, allowing them to work in junior nursing roles (e.g., as nursing aides) for up to three years before sitting examinations that would license them to perform professional nursing duties. If they pass the exams, which are administered in Japanese, they are then eligible for renewable residence visas, but if they fail, they must return to the Philippines. See Yagi, Mackey, Liang, and Gerlt, "Policy Review: Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA)."



The limited evaluations of pilot projects that exist reveal some demand by migrants and employers for opportunities to extend the employment relationship.³⁶ There may also be interest on the part of some destination and origin countries in doing so. The Philippines, for example, has encouraged the emigration of its middle-skilled workers in sectors such as nursing, reflecting both the high rates of un-/underemployment and the important contribution of remittances to the national economy.³⁷ At the same time, destination-country policymakers need to take care not to recruit too many skilled workers from sending countries, lest they create or exacerbate skills shortages.³⁸

IV. Maximizing the Development Benefits of Labor Mobility

A review of migration pilot projects suggests that beyond the prospect of higher earnings, the development benefits of these programs can vary considerably.³⁹ Some projects offer concrete skills development opportunities, such as providing recent graduates with valuable work experience and on-the-job training; others enable qualified professionals to specialize further (for example, training a nurse to work with older patients via a placement in a nursing home). But the development benefits of other projects are less obvious, especially when experienced professionals work in more junior roles with little chance of eventually applying their full skillset, or when migrants in low-skilled positions have few opportunities to build skills.⁴⁰

One basic issue is that many of the development benefits of these projects hinge on migrants returning to their countries of origin and putting their new skills to good use once they do. But if migrants do not return, or if they cannot find jobs that use their new skillsets, this limits the benefits that countries of origin see—and may create cycles of repeat migration.

With these challenges in mind, the alternative “global skills partnership” approach put forward by the Global Compact for Migration promotes investing in the training of both prospective migrants and their peers as a way to both facilitate migration and create development benefits through multiple channels.⁴¹ Yet this approach remains largely untested, with one of the only examples to date—the Australia-Pacific Technical College—struggling to encourage people to move overseas and facing high costs (see Box 2).

36 See, for example, Goos, *Manual on Circular Migration Scheme*.

37 See Fely Marilyn E. Lorenzo, Jaime Galvez-Tan, Kriselle Icamina, and Lara Javier, “Nurse Migration from a Source Country Perspective: Philippine Country Case Study,” *Health Services Research* 42, no. 3 (2007); Roland M. Dimaya, Mary K. McEwan, Leslie A. Curry, and Elizabeth H. Bradley, “Managing Health Worker Migration: A Qualitative Study of the Philippine Response to Nurse Brain Drain,” *Human Resources for Health* 10, no. 47 (2012).

38 For example, concerns have been raised about the number of doctors and nurses leaving Bosnia to work overseas in countries such as Germany. See, for example, Danijela Kozina and Katarina Panic, “Germany Drains Bosnia of Doctors and Nurses,” *Balkan Insight*, December 23, 2016, www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/germany-drains-bosnia-of-doctors-and-nurses-12-21-2016.

39 For a fuller discussion of the development benefits of these programs, and the potential of the global skills partnership model as an alternative, see Hooper, *Reimagining Skilled Migration Partnerships*.

40 For example, a program recruiting Filipino nurses to work in Finland hired registered nurses to work as practical nurses (a more junior role requiring fewer qualifications). See Päivi Vartiainen, Pirkko Pitkänen, Maruja M.B. Asis, Pirjo Raunio, and Marja Koskela, “From the Philippines to Finland: Nurses’ Expectations and Finnish Realities,” *Journal of Population and Social Studies* 24, no. 1 (2016): 33.

41 For a discussion of the global skills partnership model, see Hooper, *Reimagining Skilled Migration Partnerships*.



Box 2. The “Global Skills Partnership” Model and the Australia-Pacific Technical College

The model for skills partnerships advanced by the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration proposes offering training in origin countries to budding professionals before they become fully qualified. Some will go on to migrate abroad, while others will opt to stay and apply their skills domestically. The idea is that for the cost of training one person in a destination country, governments (or employers) could afford to train several in a country of origin. Crucially, while origin countries stand to benefit from the skills and resources of their migrant workers—as with other migration partnerships—even if these migrants opt not to return, the countries will have gained some skilled workers at little or no cost.

Though it predates the compact, the Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) is guided by exactly these principles: it aims to build skills in the Pacific Islands while encouraging graduates to migrate to Australia. Founded in 2007, the APTC delivers Australian-standard vocational training in fields such as construction, engineering, and hospitality through several universities and colleges in the Pacific Islands.

But while graduates and employers rate the quality of training highly, the APTC has struggled to achieve its second goal, of encouraging mobility. As of December 2016, only 2 percent of graduates had moved overseas (primarily to Australia or New Zealand). Many were unable to meet the education, work experience, or employer sponsorship requirements of Australia’s skilled migration system, and some described finding the immigration process too difficult to navigate. In addition, the APTC did not update its course offerings in line with Australia’s changing immigration priorities, which increasingly favor skilled workers. The APTC has announced plans to offer a “home track” for people who wish to remain in the Pacific Islands, including help finding work, and an “away track” to support people planning to emigrate. But without overhauling its courses to reflect the shortage occupations prized by the Australian immigration system, many graduates will still find it difficult to migrate to the country.

Another issue has been cost. Providing Australian-standard qualifications (including bringing in teachers and tailored curricula) has proved very expensive. All in, one 2014 evaluation suggested it may even have been cheaper to relocate participants and provide the equivalent training (and cover their costs of living) in Australia instead. Currently, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) offers scholarships that cover some or all program costs for many APTC students. And with few destination-country employers hiring graduates, and the price tag prohibitively high for origin-country employers and migrants themselves, this has left few options for cost sharing with nongovernmental partners. Policymakers who wish to explore this model will need to think carefully about how to provide training that will be relevant to both origin- and destination-country employers—and that will meet the priorities set by destination-country immigration systems—while ensuring that costs are sustainable.

Note: A 2015 study estimated that a three-year professional nursing program would cost between USD 80,000 and USD 00,000 in Germany, but less than USD 14,000 in Tunisia or Morocco; see Michael A. Clemens, “Global Skills Partnerships: A Proposal for Technical Training in a Mobile World,” *IZA Journal of Labor Policy* 4, no. 2 (2015): 10, <https://izajolp.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40173-014-0028-z>.

Sources: Kate Hooper, *Reimagining Skilled Migration Partnerships to Support Development* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2018), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/reimagining-skilled-migration-partnerships-development; APTC and Australian Aid, *APTC Annual Report and Plan 2016–2017* (Suva, Fiji: APTC Regional Head Office, 2017), www.aptc.edu.au/docs/default-source/reports/annual-reports/aptc_annual_report_2016-2017.pdf; Richard Johanson, Richard Curtain, Peter Moock, and Virginia Simmons, *Independent Review of the Australia-Pacific Technical College: Full Report* (Canberra: Education Resource Facility, 2014), 17–18, <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/aptc-independent-review.pdf>; Amanda Alampi et al., *Creating Valuable Skills: A New Framework for Migration as Development* (New York: New York University, Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, 2013), 29–39, <https://wagner.nyu.edu/files/faculty/publications/Creating-Valuable-Skills-A-New-Framework-for-Migration-as-Development-Policy-May-2013-SecureJune23.pdf>; DFAT, “Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC)—Stage 3” (investment concept note, DFAT, Barton, Australia, n.d.).

A related issue is whether the skills being developed during a project can be usefully applied in countries of origin. Much of the training in current and past programs has been designed to equip people to work in destination-country labor markets. Yet the language skills or licenses needed to practice a regulated profession in a destination country, for example, may be of limited use to migrants upon return to their origin country. This raises questions about the extent to which some of this training is really geared towards developing transferable skills that will benefit participants in the long run.

There is thus a need to think carefully about how the skills migrants develop during a pilot project can be usefully applied to an origin-country context. Helping local employers understand the relevance of destination-country training or experience, including how this matches up against domestic standards, is one component. Alongside the job-specific experience that participants gain, policymakers can also highlight the soft skills migrant workers develop (such as problem-solving skills, time management, and communication skills) that are valuable to a wide range of employers.⁴² Another, less tested option is to connect returning migrants with destination-country companies looking to establish or expand their presence in the origin country. Migrants' destination-country training and experience could hold a powerful appeal for these employers. For example, at the conclusion of the pilot project in which recent engineering graduates from Tunisia completed work placements in Germany, most participants were employed either by the companies with which they had apprenticed and stayed in Germany, or found jobs with German companies in Tunisia.⁴³

Many projects offer some reintegration counselling. This usually comes in the form of predeparture information sessions as migrants prepare to return to their origin countries, offering help on how to find work there. Some go a step further. Germany's 2013–16 pilot project with Georgia, which recruited nurses and hospitality workers for 12-month work placements, offered information sessions and pre- and postdeparture individual counselling on applying for jobs in Georgia, a workshop on business development opportunities there, and job fairs with Georgian diaspora organizations.⁴⁴ Some projects, particularly those targeting low-skilled migrants, have also explored options to provide more detailed business development support. For example, a 2006–08 Spain-Colombia project offered three-part training (two parts in Spain, one part in Colombia) to help participants develop a business plan. Policymakers could also draw inspiration from New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer program, which is funding pilot horticulture projects in the Pacific Islands that build on the new skills of returning seasonal workers.⁴⁵ Pilot programs could also connect participants to other programs that offer business development services to returning migrants.⁴⁶

42 Research on New Zealand's RSE program points to both the job-related skills developed by participants, such as crop cultivation and irrigation, and their soft skills, such as English proficiency, time management, financial literacy, and work ethic. See Charlotte Bedford, *Picking Winners? New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Policy and Its Impacts on Employers, Pacific Workers and Their Island-Based Communities* (PhD dissertation, University of Adelaide, March 2013), 213, <https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/handle/2440/82552>.

43 GIZ, "Ensuring the Availability of Qualified Professionals," accessed December 19, 2018, www.giz.de/expertise/html/12158.html.

44 Goos, *Manual on Circular Migration Scheme*.

45 This more ambitious approach is of course only really feasible in small-scale, fairly underdeveloped sectors. Outside of formal government interventions, employers may also opt to invest in countries of origin. For example, some employers in New Zealand's RSE program have invested in the communities from which they recruit workers, with examples ranging from new water pumps to joint ventures to grow coffee or vegetables. See Clear Horizon Consulting, *Strengthening Pacific Partnership and Vakameasina Evaluation*; Richard Bedford, Charlotte Bedford, Janet Wall, and Margaret Young, "Managed Temporary Labour Migration of Pacific Islanders to Australia and New Zealand in the Early Twenty-First Century," *Australian Geographer* 48 (2017): 12.

46 For example, France ran a pilot program between 2010 and 2015 targeting North Africans with a French graduate degree in science and technology. The program offered up to 35,000 euros in start-up capital and mentoring to set up businesses in their countries of origin. See LiNEXIO, *Extending PACEIM to Mobilise Mediterranean Diaspora Entrepreneurs in Europe* (Luxembourg: European Investment Bank, 2015), www.eib.org/attachments/country/femip_study_extending_paceim_en.pdf.



V. Conclusion

Migration pilot projects hold a lot of potential, but in practice they have often produced mixed results. It has proved difficult to align the interests of destination and origin countries, strike a balance between mobility and development considerations, and find viable options for sharing costs that do not deter governments, employers, or migrants from participating. To develop projects that have the potential to make a true impact on migration patterns and labor markets, and thus to be extended or scaled up, policymakers should consider the following:

- **Developing a cost-sharing model.** Destination-country governments need to move towards a model in which they share costs with other parties if these projects are to withstand changing political priorities or be scaled up. A common practice is to gradually shift some of the training and recruitment costs towards employers. But employers will only be willing to invest large sums in these workers if they are able to retain them on an extended basis, pointing to the importance of incorporating selective access to longer-term migration opportunities into the design of these programs. In turn, employers are unlikely to undertake the investments needed to scale up successful projects (e.g., in recruitment processes or other capacity-building); funding for this is more likely to be sourced from government agencies or other donors.
- **Investing in migrants' success.** Programs are only sustainable if both migrants and employers see good results from their participation. Especially for middle- or high-skilled occupations, intensive language training is critical.⁴⁷ So too is tailored vocational training to help bridge skills gaps and efficient credential recognition processes to enable migrants to assume their full responsibilities as soon as possible.
- **Setting realistic expectations.** It is crucial to set realistic expectations for migrants and employers participating in these programs. For migrants, this includes setting out what their day-to-day responsibilities will be, including whether they will need to work in a more junior role, and the opportunities they will have to develop their skills and progress, as well as their options for staying on a longer-term basis. Painting a clear picture of what their working conditions will be and how to seek remedy in cases where employer-employee relations break down is vital to reduce the risk of exploitation. For employers, it is important to establish both the skills and capabilities of their migrant employees (and where they may need additional training) and the options to hire them on a longer-term basis.
- **Supporting migrants on their return.** Reintegration counselling should be a top priority to help connect returnees with job opportunities and minimize skills waste. Best practices include working with the diaspora to connect people with employment leads, providing business development support for aspiring entrepreneurs, and linking people with destination-country employers interested in establishing or expanding their operations in the origin country—something that can also be a powerful incentive for involving employers in the first place. In the medium to long term, policymakers can also explore opportunities to invest in the employment services offered by origin-country authorities and the priority sectors targeted by pilot programs.

Crucially, policymakers should also carefully consider how these small-scale projects fit into their broader migration and development strategies. This includes setting clear project goals and establishing what sort of impact they expect these programs to have. Finally, thinking through how these projects can be scaled up is critical if they are to live up to public and political expectations that they will foster deeper cooperation on legal migration, fill labor-market needs, and encourage skills development in countries of origin.

⁴⁷ Goos, *Manual on Circular Migration Scheme*.

Appendix

Table A-1. Select Examples of Migration Pilot Projects

Program	Participating Countries/Agencies	Sector	Timeframe	Description
Blue Birds	Netherlands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or MFA; HIT Foundation); South Africa; and Indonesia	Shipping, manufacturing, food industry, agribusiness, logistics, IT	2010–11	Selected semi-skilled workers for positions in industries experiencing shortages in the Netherlands, for up to two years. The program intended to recruit 160 migrant workers but ended prematurely in 2011 after the MFA withdrew funding.
Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA)	Japan (Japan International Corporation of Welfare Services, or JICWELS) and the Philippines (Philippines Overseas Employment Administration, or POEA)	Nursing	2006-present	Placing qualified nurses and caregivers from the Philippines in Japanese hospitals and care institutions. Participants undergo Japanese language training and prepare to sit a nursing or caregiving licensing exam to stay on a longer-term basis (beyond three years for nurses, four years for caregivers).
Pilot Circular Migration Scheme (PCMS)	Germany (German Agency for International Cooperation, or GIZ, Center for International Migration and Development) and Georgia (Public Service Development Agency; Georgian Small and Medium Enterprises Association)	Nursing, hospitality	2013–16	Placed 27 Georgian migrants in 12-month work placements in Germany and provided German language and vocational training.
Promoting Legal Mobility among Highly Qualified Tunisian Experts	Germany (GIZ) and Tunisia (ANETI)	Engineering	2013	Placed 100 Tunisian engineers with companies in Germany for a six-month internship and provided German language training. At the end of the internship, 65 graduates received employment offers in Germany, while some others were offered positions with German companies in Tunisia.
Temporary and Circular Migration (TCLM)	Spain (Pagesos Union); International Organization for Migration; Colombia (localities, civil society)	Agriculture	2007–08	Placed 1,200 Colombian migrants with 600 farmers to work on the fruit harvest in Catalonia, Spain.
Triple Win	Germany (GIZ; Federal Employment Agency's International Placement Service, or ZAV); Bosnia and Herzegovina (Labor and Employment Agency); Philippines (POEA); Serbia (NSZ); and Tunisia (ANETI)	Nursing	2013-present	Placing qualified nurses and caregivers from partner countries with German companies. To date, the project has placed more than 2,000 nurses (primarily from the Philippines) in positions in Germany.

Sources: GIZ, "Projekt Triple Win – Gewinnung von Pflegekräften aus dem Ausland – unser nachhaltiger Ansatz" (fact sheet, GIZ, Eschborn, Germany, July 2016), www.triple-win-pflegekraefte.de/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ZAV_A5_Triple_Win_Pflegekraefte_Juli_2016_web.pdf; POEA and JICWELS, "Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Deployment and Acceptance of Filipino Candidates for 'Kangoshi', Filipino Candidates for 'Kaigofukushishi', Filipino 'Kangoshi', and Filipino 'Kaigofukushishi,'" January 12, 2009, www.poea.gov.ph/jpepa/mou_jpepa.pdf; Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and HIT Foundation, *Pilot Circular Migration - Towards Sensible Labour Migration Policies: Lessons Learned and Recommendations* (Amsterdam: Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011), http://hitfoundation.eu/docs/1111110_Pilot%20Circular%20Migration_Lessons_and_recommendations.pdf; European Commission, "Circular Migration and Mobility Partnerships between the European Union and Third Countries" (MEMO/07/197, Brussels, May 16, 2007), http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-07-197_en.htm#top-page; GIZ, "Ensuring the Availability of Qualified Professionals," accessed December 19, 2018, www.giz.de/expertise/html/12158.html; Anna Goos, *Manual on Circular Migration Scheme* (Eschborn, Germany: GIZ, 2016), http://migration.commission.ge/files/pcms_en_final.pdf.



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