Better Migration Management (BMM) in Somalia

Context and objectives

Somalia is a country of origin, transit, and destination for mixed migration flows. Every year, tens of thousands of migrants and refugees make the hazardous journey from south-central Somalia, Ethiopia and Yemen through the north-eastern region of Somalia and across the Gulf of Aden for economic and safety-related reasons. The country has the fourth largest population of internally displaced persons in the world, estimated at over 2.6 million individuals (UNHCR, 2019). Most of them have been forced to flee their homes due to floods, conflict or drought. Over the six-month period from April to October 2019, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) registered an average of 30,000 migrants entering Somalia per month. The majority are Ethiopians, Yemenis, and Eritreans. Irregular migration is widespread and a serious challenge, often resulting in migrants being exploited en route.

In response, the Somalian Government has established bodies such as the Technical Task Force on Human Trafficking and Smuggling, the Technical Task Force on Return and Readmission and the High-Level Task Force on Migration Management to address irregular migration.

In 2016, the European Union and Germany established the Better Migration Management (BMM) programme to improve migration management in the Horn of Africa. BMM aims to curb the trafficking and smuggling of migrants within and from the region and to strengthen migrants’ rights to protection. Activities have been implemented in four interlinked areas: policy harmonisation and regional cooperation, capacity building, protection, and awareness-raising.

Results of phase 1 (2016-2019)

- **860** government and civil society representatives engaged in workshops, training, or other events. **23** government institutions and **4** civil society actors supported

- **19** capacity building measures for **437** government and civil society representatives implemented

- **4,655** vulnerable migrants assisted, of which **2,684** women and **1,952** children

Achievements

Regarding inter-institutional coordination on migration, BMM assisted the Technical Taskforce on Human Trafficking and Smuggling to coordinate appropriate migration measures with relevant institutions. In Somaliland, the project reactivated the Mixed Migration Task Force (MMTF), which coordinates all actors involved in managing migration. It facilitated information and data sharing across these institutions. BMM advised the MMTF on finalising and translating the Trafficking in Persons Act. The project also facilitated workshops to discuss enactment of the protocols of the United Nations Convention

The project also promoted regional and bilateral collaboration, notably by supporting cooperation between the coastguards of Somaliland and Djibouti. These signed a joint Memorandum of Understanding on the organisation of effective collaboration to address migrant smuggling and human trafficking at sea and to implement appropriate protection measures for victims.

BMM has strengthened the capacities of government officials and representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs) through training courses, study trips, and thematic workshops to increase safe and legal migration. For instance, 55 police officers were trained in the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking and smuggling cases. The project supported the launch of the Garowe International Airport in Puntland and enhanced the capacities of the involved authorities in terms of data management, reception of passengers, and queue management. BMM also improved integrated border management (IBM) capacities in full compliance with relevant principles of international law. This included the establishment of a Migration Information and Data Analysis System to simplify entry procedures, analyse migration trends, detect crime, and improve migrant support more effectively. Border officials were provided with training in the new systems, document examination and fraud detection, and – together with other first responders from police, immigration, customs, and CSOs – in the identification and assistance of vulnerable and trafficked migrants. Further training included the application of a guideline including processes and contacts for the referral of vulnerable migrants and refugees. The guideline specifies the respective responsibilities of governmental and non-governmental organisations for registering people and providing support. BMM supported the development of the guideline by the MMTF. Moreover, the project built the capacity of members of the Somaliland National Human Rights Commission for protecting the human rights of migrants.

BMM has also expanded services and protection for migrants. It provided the Migrants Response Centres in Somaliland and Puntland with equipment and training in the delivery of services such as basic health care and psychosocial care for vulnerable migrants. The project provided two equipped vehicles to the centres, which operate as mobile health patrols to assist migrants along the migration routes outside of urban centres. Furthermore, BMM mapped some 146 governmental and non-governmental protection and assistance services for victims of trafficking and vulnerable migrants in Somaliland. The information has been made available as a referral resource for first responders.

Outreach events on International Migrants Day and World Day Against Trafficking in Persons targeted young Somalis with information on safe migration and alternative livelihoods.

Alternatives to irregular migration

‘I had the opportunity to migrate and study in the United Kingdom through a Chevening Scholarship. This experience has greatly impacted my life and my career. Exposure to the democratic system of the UK has made me an active promoter of democracy in my home country. I’m now the Chief of Staff of Somaliland’s main opposition party,’ said Bashe Ahmed during the International Migrants Day 2017 event organised by BMM in Hargeisa. At the event, organisations and foreign countries presented information and promotional material on job and study opportunities abroad.

Bashe Ahmed and the other participants expressed the importance of events targeting young people and focusing on opportunities in Somaliland. Given the high youth unemployment rate in Somalia and limited access to visas to enter other countries legally, irregular migration seems to be the only option for the young people. ‘Therefore, it’s important to make information available about safer and better alternatives,’ said Bashe Ahmed.