Better Migration Management (BMM) in South Sudan

Context and objective

South Sudan is the world’s youngest country, having gained independence from Sudan in 2011. During a decade of violent conflicts, many people had left their homes. There are some 1.9 million internally displaced persons, while 300,000 have fled to a number of countries, mainly in Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Kenya. South Sudan has a population of 11 million and is demographically one of the youngest nations in the world with roughly half the population under 18 years old. About 50 per cent of the country lives below the poverty line (UN, 2019). Not only a country of origin, South Sudan is also a destination and transit country for many migrants and hosts an estimated 865,000 migrants, mainly from Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This migration, which is often irregular, places these migrants in a vulnerable position and increases their risk of experiencing economic exploitation and physical abuse.

In 2016, the European Union and Germany established the Better Migration Management (BMM) programme to improve migration management in the Horn of Africa. The project aims to curb the trafficking and smuggling of migrants within and from the region and to strengthen migrants’ rights to protection. In South Sudan, activities were implemented in three interlinked areas – policy harmonisation and regional cooperation, capacity building, and

Results of phase 1 (2016-2019)

- 550 representatives of state authorities and civil society organisations engaged in workshops, trainings, or other events.
- 4 state authorities and 4 civil society organisations supported
- 13 measures for 226 representatives of state authorities implemented in the area of capacity building

Achievements

Policy harmonisation has been promoted through BMM’s support for the National Coordination Committee’s development of South Sudan’s first migration policy. The next step will be to support its adoption. The policy fosters a whole-of-government approach to migration management by including cross-thematic areas, such as the legal and institutional framework on free movement.
and border management, labour migration, forced migration, as well as migration and development.

BMM has been developed in line with relevant international conventions and standards as well as regional policy frameworks. The project has advised representatives of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation on the pre-accession to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its protocols: the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. The project supported the relevant authorities by facilitating meetings on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. With respect to domestication in national law, BMM has supported the judiciary on the need to revise the laws accordingly, for example to improve the definition of migrant smuggling or to develop additional regulations that allow practitioners to apply the law effectively. The project has also provided recommendations to the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior to strengthen institutional responses to counter trafficking in persons in compliance with international standards and norms.

BMM has promoted regional cooperation and knowledge-sharing on migration management and integrated border management by facilitating the participation of state and non-state actors in regional conferences, meetings, and forums on migration in other BMM partner countries. Among other activities, a delegation from the National Coordination Committee has shared their experiences with their Kenyan counterpart and liaised with other similar bodies in the region to benefit from good practices on strategic and operational issues. BMM has strengthened the capacities of representatives of state authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs) through training courses, study trips, and thematic workshops to facilitate safe and legal migration.

‘Migration in itself is not a bad thing’

‘We saw the need for South Sudan to come up with a migration policy when we realised that there were some legal loopholes,’ said Riaw Gatlier Gai, South Sudan’s Deputy Interior Minister. ‘We need to close these gaps.’ In October 2018, consultations with key stakeholders started to set the priorities for developing South Sudan’s migration policy – the first such policy in the young country’s history. In the months that followed, BMM supported its drafting with global expertise on developing migration policies. It was validated in February 2019. ‘We are committed to adopting this policy as it guides South Sudan in creating a conducive environment for foreign investment and ensuring migrants comply with the laws of the country for their protection,’ said Riaw Gatlier Gai. The Deputy Inspector General of the South Sudan Police, James Pui Yak, added: ‘Migration in itself is not a bad thing. We, South Sudanese, have been to so many countries as migrants and refugees. That experience has shown us the benefit of migration.’

Around 220 officials have been trained on integrated border management to improve cooperation between the relevant authorities effectively and efficiently. Working with their Ugandan counterparts, a dialogue was conducted with stakeholders and training provided on humanitarian border management at the Nimule border crossing. 45 law enforcement officers were trained in investigating and prosecuting human trafficking and smuggling. The training improved the participants’ knowledge and skills in identifying and investigating cases of trafficking in persons.

The project has also expanded the services and protection for victims of trafficking. More than 150 representatives of state authorities and non-governmental health care providers have been trained to deliver specialised care for the victims of trafficking.