



Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme in Ethiopia



General context

Ethiopia is one of the major host countries for people on the move: Out of Ethiopia's population of approximately 122 million, some 1.9 million are migrants, refugees or asylum seekers – primarily from Somalia, Eritrea, and South Sudan. As a result of conflicts and drought, the number of internally displaced persons (IDP) has grown dramatically in recent years to about 4.2 million, of whom around 3 million are in the northern regions of Amhara, Afar and Tigray (UNHCR, 2023).

Ethiopia is a major transit hub for migrants travelling to the Gulf region, South Africa, and Europe in search of a better livelihood, fleeing persecution or both. At the same time, thousands of Ethiopians migrate to other countries every year in search of economic opportunities, most of them young people under the age of 30. Many of them travel irregularly, i.e., without a visa or valid papers. This makes them easy targets for criminal networks, particularly human traffickers who exploit and abuse migrants. Men, women, and children are trafficked from or within Ethiopia and need appropriate support and protection.

Since March 2022, the Ethiopian authorities have assisted in the repatriation of over 100,000 Ethiopian

Better Migration Management Horn of Africa

Project name	Better Migration Management
Political Partner in Ethiopia	Ministry of Justice
Partner countries	Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda
Duration	April 2016 to September 2025
Implementing Partners in Ethiopia	British Council, CIVIPOL, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

migrants living in Saudi Arabia, many of whom had been detained due to the lack of papers. This has brought the total number of Ethiopians forcefully returned from Saudi Arabia since 2017 to half a million. Many arrive with no means and with severe medical and mental health problems.

Implemented by



Protect, support, prevent: The referral mechanism improves the coordination among actors such as the police, immigration authorities or civil society organisations to identify, refer and protect migrants in need. (©GIZ/Muse Zerihun)

The Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme, established in 2016 and funded by the European Union (EU) and Germany, accompanies the Ethiopian Government in developing and improving national migration policies and frameworks, as well as in contributing to regional migration governance. It works in close coordination with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU).

Ethiopia has a relatively advanced response to irregular migration and aims to further strengthen safe and legal migration through migration-friendly policies and legislation, regional and cross-border cooperation and knowledge management. In 2007, the Ethiopian Government ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and acceded to its protocols on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. Proclamation 909 was enacted in 2015 to prevent and suppress trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants and was substantially strengthened in 2020 by Proclamation 1178.

The National Partnership Coalition (NPC), established in 2020, is the body mandated to coordinate the actions of the government and other stakeholders to manage mixed migration-related issues and one of BMM's main partners. BMM has been supporting the NPC in developing and implementing formal mechanisms to enable vulnerable migrants to be effectively identified and referred to protection and assistance services, such as shelter, legal aid and medical and psychosocial care. A National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is now in place and memoranda of understanding (MoU) have been established in Amhara and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People (SNNP) Regional State serving as cooperation frameworks between the different actors.

BMM's approach and activities

BMM aims to enable national authorities and institutions to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration and to effectively address and reduce trafficking in human beings and the smuggling of migrants within and from the Horn of Africa using a human rights-based approach. Activities are implemented in three components: migration governance, strengthening effective institutions to address trafficking and smuggling and protection. BMM focuses on consolidating an integrated and sustainable regional approach to migration management and closely coordinates with other international organisations and projects funded by the EU to ensure synergies and avoid duplication.

Migration governance

BMM supported the NPC in developing a national migration policy and witness and whistleblower protection legislation. It continues to accompany the NPC to coordinate migration management at the federal and regional level based on a whole-of-society approach, which means engaging not only the government but also civil society, communities, academia and the private sector. Following the example of the NPC, region-based committees on migration management have been effectively established in Amhara, Oromia, Sidama, Benshangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Somali, Afar, Harari, SNNP Regional State, as well as in Dire Dawa and Addis Abeba City Administrations.

In addition, the programme supports the Ministry of Labour and Skills in informing stakeholders in the regions about the revision of Proclamation 1246/2021 on overseas employment as well as in developing bilateral labour agreements with countries receiving Ethiopian labour migrants. BMM also supports cross-border cooperation with Djibouti to improve the protection and referral of unaccompanied minors. Children left behind by their parents or forced to go abroad to find employment are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked for labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, adoption, forced marriage and other purposes.

Furthermore, BMM promotes Ethiopia's cross-border management cooperation with Kenya and Djibouti. Points of entry were opened at the borders between these countries in 2020 to improve cross-border infrastructure and manage the safe movement of people more effectively. An Integrated Border Management Strategy and a comprehensive Capacity Development System are also being designed in cooperation with the Immigration and Citizenship Service (ICS).

Effective Institutions to address trafficking and smuggling

BMM improves the effectiveness of institutions in implementing adapted migration policies and legislation. It strengthens cross-border cooperation and inter-institutional cooperation between national law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and judges on trafficking and smuggling cases through standard operating procedures (SOPs) and equipment for evidence collection.

Furthermore, the programme provides training to improve the quality of human trafficking investigations and prosecutions. A multi-agency training curriculum, with relevant training materials, was implemented in cooperation with the Federal Justice and Law Institute (FJLI), universities, one-stop service centres, the Ministry of Justice, the Federal Supreme Court, the Ethiopian Lawyers' Association and the Department for Criminal Forensic Investigations of the Ethiopian Federal Police (EFP).

In addition, BMM is working with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to increase its capacity to protect migrant rights through knowledge sharing and technical support.

Protection

BMM improves assistance and protection services in Ethiopia. The implementation of the MoU in Amhara Regional State resulted in the referral of around 11,000 migrants, victims of trafficking and returnees to services for assistance.

For the referral of unaccompanied and separated children in Amhara Regional State standard procedures for the best interest of the child determination have been put in place with support of BMM. So far, more than 100 children were brought back to safety through this process.

BMM partners with civil society organisations (CSOs) providing assistance to migrants in need. In addition to training and equipment CSOs receive support in networking and in improving access to information about the services available. BMM mapped and vetted essential services for victims of trafficking and migrants offered by more than 140 providers across Ethiopia and compiled a Service Provider Directory. This information will be provided online to enable migrants to access the services they need.

BMM completed the construction of an Emergency Migrant Response Centre in Jijiga (Somali Regional State) for migrants passing through that area.

In 2022, the programme published a report on sustainable opportunities for the socio-economic integration of migrants and returnees through vocational and livelihood training, involving relevant private, public and civil society actors.

Results of BMM (April 2016 – September 2022)



6,605 representatives of government departments supported in improving the coordinated management of migration and strengthening national migration policies, legislation and cross-border cooperation.



89 capacity building measures for **1,974** governmental and non-governmental actors implemented for the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking, integrated border management, and for referral of migrants to services.



17,659 vulnerable migrants directly and indirectly assisted with accommodation, basic services, and medical support.



39,314 individuals potentially reached through public awareness-raising activities on human trafficking and migrant rights.

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