Better Migration Management in Djibouti

Context and objective

Due to its strategic location between East Africa and the Gulf States, Djibouti is a key transit country for bi-directional migration flows across the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. Most of the migrants, mainly from Ethiopia and Somalia, head to Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Middle East, in search of a better income. Since the conflict in Yemen reignited in 2015, Djibouti has also received refugees from that country. No fewer than 150 migrants transit through Djibouti every day (IOM, 2019).

Djibouti’s population stands of nearly one million, some 12 percent of whom are migrants (UN, 2019). Often out of necessity, many travel irregularly, meaning without a visa or valid papers. That makes them vulnerable and increases their risk of experiencing economic exploitation, physical abuse, and sexual assault during their journey. The fact that 47.4 percent of migrants are women and 22.7 percent are minors underscores the need for effective migrant protection.

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 strengthens migrant’s rights to protection. Activities have been implemented in four interlinked areas: Policy harmonisation and regional cooperation, capacity building, protection, and awareness raising.

Achievements

The project has promoted regional and bilateral collaboration. In March 2018, BMM organised a regional conference on the protection of child migrants with 170 participants from BMM’s partner countries in Djibouti. Thus, the project has supported the intense collaboration between Djibouti’s Commission Nationale des Droits de l’Homme (CNDH) and the Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) on migrants’ rights and child protection. It has also supported cooperation between the coastguards of Somalia and Djibouti. These jointly signed an Aide-Mémoire on the organisation of effective collaboration to address migrant smuggling and human trafficking at sea and to implement appropriate protection measures for victims. Furthermore, BMM has facilitated the participation of Djiboutian governmental and non-governmental actors in regional meetings and forums on migration in other BMM partner countries.

To promote inter-institutional coordination on migration, BMM provided relevant ministries and authorities with information and encouragement on adopting a whole-of-government approach to migration. Furthermore, it advised the Djiboutian Government to enact two protocols of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) in national law: the “Smuggling of Migrants Protocol” and the “Protocol of Trafficking in Persons”.

Results of phase 1 (2016-2019)

- **18,900** migrants, potential migrants, and host community members involved in outreach activities
- **1,000** government and civil society representatives engaged in workshops, trainings, or other events. **13** government institutions and **15** civil society actors supported
- **10** capacity building measures for **293** government and civil society representatives implemented
- **6,300** vulnerable migrants assisted. Thereof, **670** women and **1,150** children
BMM has also facilitated consultative meetings in Djibouti on the signing of the "Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration".

The project 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. BMM also set-up an e-visa-system and the Migration Information and Data Analysis System in Djibouti to simplify entry procedures, analyse migration trends, detect crime, and improve the migrant support more effectively. Border officials were then provided with training on the new systems, on document examination and fraud detection, and – together with other first responders from police, immigration, customs, and CSOs - on identification and assistance of vulnerable and trafficked migrants.

BMM has expanded services for migrants. In Obock, BMM built a clinic in the Migration Response Centre (MRC) that provides migrants with medical and psychosocial assistance, accommodation, and counselling. The project also supported mobile health patrols. Overall, some 5,300 vulnerable migrants and victims of trafficking received medical services in the first project phase.

BMM supported by Regional Councils and CNDH in establishing information centres in Tadjourah, Dikhil, Ali-Sabieh, and Obock. These centres serve as “one-stop-shops” providing information on children’s rights and existing protection structures. They offer referral services for vulnerable cases and operate as the secretariat for multidisciplinary protection teams. They will also assist CSOs in their role as first responders. The project improved the services of 15 CSOs including Caritas Djibouti and the Association de

Mobile health patrols

On 12 December 2017, Djibouti’s Ministry of Health of Djibouti launched a mobile patrol programme in the port city of Obock to assist migrants along the migratory route. BMM supported the patrol, operates twice a week.

Dr Warsama Abib Ibrahim, a doctor at Obock’s Centre Medico-Hospitalier, is part of the mobile health team that assisted 903 migrants in phase 1. He described his work, saying: ‘We cover the region from Obock to Dalay Af and from Obock to Khôr ‘Angar. We assist migrants with basic health support on the road. Due to their difficult journey they often suffer from diarrhoea and stomach problems and are generally in a very vulnerable state. They are often severely dehydrated, especially during the summer months. Those who are in critical medical conditions will be referred to a local hospital in the region. Through our engagement, we are also attempting to prevent any possible disease outbreaks such as acute watery diarrhoea and others, especially in a region like Obock, which is prone to such public health risks.’

Developpement et Protection de l’Enfant à Besoin (ADPEB), to empower them to take a more active role in migration management in Djibouti. BMM mapped the migrant services of 29 providers in Djibouti. The information gathered has since been made available online as a referral resource for first responders.

On International Migrants Day, the World Day Against Trafficking, and the Human Rights Day, BMM organised several outreach events for migrants and host communities. For example, in 2017, a girls’ handball and boys’ football tournament was held in Tadjourah. Cheered on by some 1,500 spectators, the competing teams each comprised a mix of local and migrant young people.

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