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Better Migration Management
Horn of Africa

Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme in Ethiopia

General context

Ethiopia is one of the largest host countries for people who have left their homeland: According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the total population is 129.7 million (2024). Around 1.9 million of these are migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from Somalia, Eritrea, South Sudan and, most recently, Sudan. As a result of conflicts and natural hazards (droughts, floods, and landslides) the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has grown dramatically, although some have recently been able to return. UNHCR estimates the number of IDPs at approximately 3.5 million (December 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. 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.

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).

Since March 2022, the Ethiopian authorities have assisted in the repatriation of over 100,000 Ethiopian migrants living in Saudi Arabia, many of whom had been detained due to the lack of papers (UN). 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

BRITISH COUNCIL   CIVIPOL   giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH   IOM UN MIGRATION   UNODC United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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.

The Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme, established in 2016 and funded by the European Union (EU) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), 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. 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 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been established in Amhara and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People (SNNPR) 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, as well as witness and whistle blower 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 entails 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 (Regional Partnership Coalitions, RPCs) have been effectively established in Amhara, Oromia, Sidama, Benshagul-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.

For the protection of child migrants and the referral of unaccompanied minors, BMM supports cross-border cooperation with Djibouti and facilitated exchanges and visits of the concerned stakeholders. This led to the launch of an action plan, and the establishment of a cross border Technical Working Group (TWG) comprising of representatives from all involved ministries on both sides of the border. The TWG convenes to discuss the most pressing concerns, and advises both governments on actions to be taken. This is important, because children left behind by their parents or going abroad to find employment are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked for labour and sexual exploitation, adoption, forced marriage and other purposes.

BMM supports the Immigration and Citizenship Service (ICS) in implementing an Integrated Border Management Strategy and a comprehensive Capacity Development System.

As part of the strengthening of Ethiopia's cooperation with Djibouti and Kenya, entry points were opened at the borders between the countries in 2020. This improved the cross-border infrastructure and enabled the safe movement of people.

The NPC and RPCs are being capacitated and trained in the whole-of-government approach to migration management.

In coordination with the Ministry of Education (Chair of the research working group of the NPC) and Universities, efforts are being made to collate studies and research on migration in one platform, to better inform government policies and actions. BMM also conducts studies as input for this platform.

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, and developed a study course that was mainstreamed into the curriculum of Police Colleges and Academies of all Regional States (except Tigray). In addition, 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).

Furthermore, SOPs on trafficking in human beings and the smuggling of migrants have been introduced and are being implemented in 8 Regional States.

BMM also delivers Multi-Agency simulation-based training for investigating and prosecuting human trafficking and strengthens referral mechanisms to support victims.

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

With the support of BMM, a MoU has been signed between Ethiopia and Djibouti to establish a Joint Investigative Team to exchange information and intelligence and target criminal groups operating in the Eastern route. Furthermore the programme delivers specialised training on Illicit Financial Flow and Cyber Crime related to human trafficking and smuggling to Investigators, Prosecutors and Officials form Financial Intelligence Services.

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 SOPs 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 further partners with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that are providing assistance to migrants in need. In addition to training and equipment, CSOs receive support in regional networking and in improving access to information about the services available. Since late 2023, BMM financially supports Agar Shelter, which offers protection, rehabilitation and reintegration support to victims of trafficking, as well as the vocational training centre of HOPE Enterprise.

To improve access to justice, BMM also collaborates with CSOs and relevant actors to provide shelter for victim witnesses who participate in investigations and court proceedings of trafficking cases. To this end the ´Federal Memorandum of Understanding on supporting the participation of victims of human trafficking in investigations and court proceedings´ was revised, endorsed and signed together with its ´Implementing Guidelines´ and its ´Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning System´. A similar MoU was also signed in Dire Dawa. Based on the outcomes of an assessment BMM conducted on the feasibility of government-owned victim witness shelters, the programme plans to support such shelters in Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa. Moreover, through selected university legal aid centers, the programme supports the provision of free legal aid service in Addis Ababa and SNNPR.

In Jigjiga (Somali Regional State), BMM completed the construction of an Emergency Migrant Response Centre for migrants passing through that area. Next to this, the Migration Response Centre in Tog-Wajalle was upscaled.

Results of BMM (April 2016 – September 2023)

6,853 representatives of government departments supported in improving the coordinated management of migration and strengthening national migration policies, legislation and cross-border cooperation.

112 capacity building measures for **2,416** governmental and and non-governmental actors implemented for the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking, integrated border management, and for the referral of migrants to services.

~ 18,000 vulnerable migrants directly and indirectly assisted with accommodation, basic services, and medical support.

~ 40,000 individuals potentially reached through public awareness-raising activities on human trafficking and migrant rights.