Better Migration Management in Ethiopia

Context and objective

Among Ethiopia’s population of 112 million, some 1.2 million are migrants, the majority of them from Somalia, Eritrea, and South Sudan (UN, 2019). More than 70 percent of them are refugees and asylum seekers, making Ethiopia the third-largest refugee recipient country in East Africa. Ethiopia is also a major transit hub for migrants attempting to reach the Gulf region, South Africa, or Europe in search of a better income. 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. Victims of trafficking and child migrants in particular need appropriate support and protection.

In 2016, the European Union and Germany established the Better Migration Management (BMM) programme to improve migration management in the Horn of Africa. It 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

Regarding inter-institutional coordination on migration, BMM supported the Ethiopian Anti-Trafficking Task Force’s efforts to coordinate migration management at the national level with related institutions. Policy harmonisation has been notably improved, in particular, through the incorporation, at national level, of the Regional Migration Policy Framework (RMPF) of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on issues related to migration, internal displacement and human security. Furthermore, BMM supported the implementation into national law of international legal frameworks related to human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, as well as the development of a national migration policy. During a national meeting, more than 50 judges learned more about judicial integrity and about cases related to human trafficking and smuggling of migrants to ensure more effective justice. The project also supported the establishment of the Ethiopian witness protection unit to better sentence the perpetrators.

The project also promoted regional and bilateral collaboration. Thus, BMM increased the regional cooperation between Sudan and Ethiopia to enhance the situation of Ethiopian seasonal workers. Due to a lack of regulations they are vulnerable to be exploited and mistreated. BMM supported the implementation of a comprehensive action plan aiming at improving services (entry, employment law, health insurance) at official crossing-points and promoting regular migration. BMM also promoted Ethiopia’s cooperation with Kenya and South Sudan to improve border management and counter human trafficking.

Results of phase 1 (2016-2019)

- 39,314 migrants, potential migrants, and host community members involved in outreach activities
- 5,437 government and civil society representatives engaged in workshops, trainings or other events. 15 government institutions and 18 civil society actors supported
- 37 capacity building measures for 1,033 government and civil society representatives implemented
- 6,579 vulnerable migrants assisted. Thereof, 2,943 women and 2,454 children
In Amhara Regional State, the relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen their cooperation towards the identification and protection of victims of trafficking. The MoU aims to improve the participation of victims of trafficking in legal proceedings, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of anti-trafficking measures.

BMM 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. In total, more than 430 police officers, prosecutors, and immigration officers were trained on the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking and smuggling cases. The training focused on the application of existing legislation, and collection and analysis of information, and paid special attention to interviewing witnesses and vulnerable migrants. In addition, border officers, police officers, and representatives of CSOs (first responders) have been trained to refer vulnerable migrants and victims of trafficking to appropriate shelters and service providers for legal aid, medical and psychosocial support.

BMM has also expanded services and protection for migrants. Local CSOs, such as Timret Le Hiwot Ethiopia and Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment, have been strengthened to support unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable migrants such as young women. Such services include temporary shelter, best interest determination, psychosocial support, and vocational training. Specific protection facilities have been set up at the migration hubs in the regional states of Addis Ababa, Amhara, and Benishangul-Gumuz. BMM also supported temporary accommodation centres for minors and drop-in centres for other vulnerable migrants along the main migration routes. So far, 748 victims of trafficking and stranded migrants, of which 212 children, have been assisted with voluntary return and reintegration services. The project mapped more than 140 government and non-governmental protection and assistance services for victims of trafficking and vulnerable migrants. The information gathered has since been made available online as a referral resource for first responders.

BMM provided information and advice on migration. The project has run awareness campaigns to inform potential migrants about legal migration opportunities and alternatives to illegal migration and other livelihood options. A special emphasis was put on enlightening Ethiopian young people about life skills, safe migration, job and study opportunities abroad.

Shelters for victims

‘Unaccompanied children are often seen in Addis Ababa. They move alone for several reasons, for example, to escape abuse from their family or child marriage. Also, many families send their children away to find a better life. Children are an easy prey for human traffickers. That is why the Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment (FSCE) protects them from further exploitation, homelessness and death. We give them shelter, food, clothing, education, and counselling. We trace their families if it is in the best interest of the children to return home. With the support of BMM, we helped 1,415 children.’

Tesfaye Ebabuye works for FSCE on Sustainable Child Empowerment in Addis Ababa. BMM supports the Forum to extend their services to child migrants.

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