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Better Migration Management
Horn of Africa



Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme Uganda 2016–2025: 9 years of change



FOREWORD

Over the past nine years, the Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme has worked together with its partners to address the complex realities of migration at the Horn of Africa. Through close cooperation and the strengthening of collaboration at regional and national level as well as among governmental representative and civil society actors, we have contributed to building safer and more orderly migration systems protecting people on the move. Each partner and each country has brought its own experiences and priorities to this shared effort, creating a diverse and interconnected picture like pieces of a mosaic coming together to form a broader vision of progress and cooperation.

Uganda has played a significant role in this mosaic. As the largest hosting country in Africa, Uganda has shown remarkable commitment and resilience in managing diverse migration challenges. It has achieved important progress in enhancing frameworks for regular migration, strengthening capacities to prevent and respond to human

trafficking, and expanding protection and support services for migrants and survivors of exploitation.

Yet challenges remain. Migration continues to shape the region in profound ways, requiring sustained investment, coordination, and innovative solutions. When managed safely and regularly, migration contributes to social transformation, sustainable development, and new opportunities for individuals, their home countries, and host communities alike. However, irregular migration continues to pose significant risks, exposing people to exploitation and harm along dangerous routes.

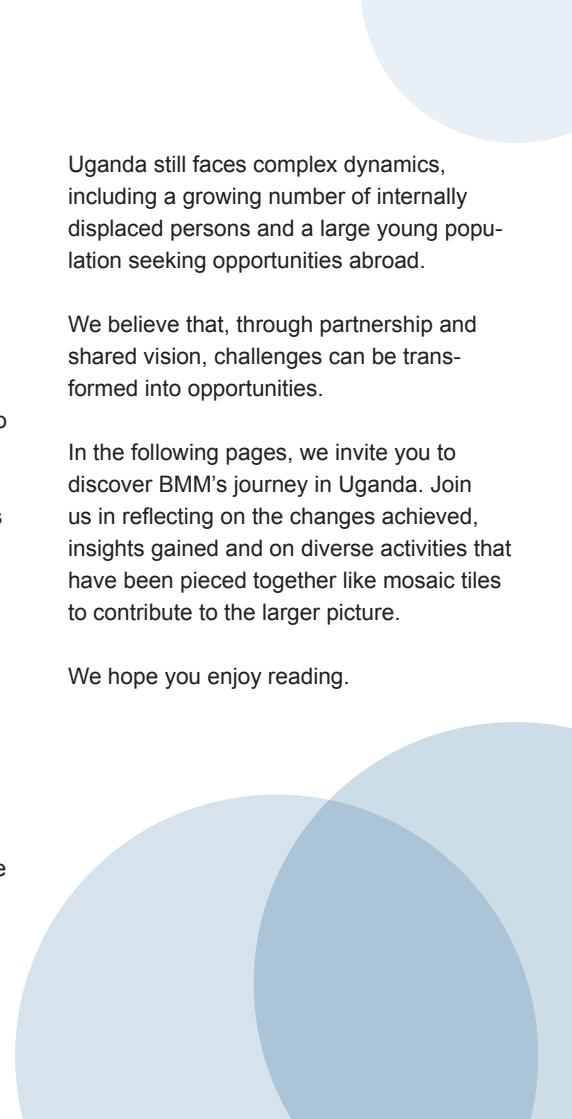
As Uganda phases out of the BMM Programme at the end of phase III, we look back and ahead. We reflect on the progress made, the lessons learned, and the work still ahead of us. It is crucial to consolidate these achievements and ensure that progress is carried forward into future initiatives.

Uganda still faces complex dynamics, including a growing number of internally displaced persons and a large young population seeking opportunities abroad.

We believe that, through partnership and shared vision, challenges can be transformed into opportunities.

In the following pages, we invite you to discover BMM's journey in Uganda. Join us in reflecting on the changes achieved, insights gained and on diverse activities that have been pieced together like mosaic tiles to contribute to the larger picture.

We hope you enjoy reading.



BETTER MIGRATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

Our objective

Our objective: Enable national authorities and institutions to facilitate safe, orderly, and regular migration, and effectively address and reduce trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants within and from the Horn of Africa region by applying a human rights-based approach.

Our components

We are working in 3 components:

1. Migration Governance to establish a political basis for regionally harmonised migration management
2. Effective institutions to address and reduce trafficking in human beings and the smuggling of migrants
3. Protection for victims of trafficking and vulnerable migrants

Our approach

We are bundling the resources, skills, and experiences of 5 international implementing organisations to provide integrated and comprehensive solutions.

- British Council
- CIVIPOL
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

GIZ heads the implementing partnership

Phase I: + Expertise France and the Ministero dell'Interno (Italy)

Our partner countries

Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda

Phase I and II: + Sudan*

Project period

October 2022 – September 2025 (Phase III)

October 2019 – September 2022 (Phase II)

April 2016 – September 2019 (Phase I)

Overall budget

122 mio Euros
BMZ: 17 mio Euros, EU: 105 mio Euros

** Sudan included only for regional BMM III activities on technical level*

Political partner in Uganda

Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA)

Implementing partner in Uganda

Coordination Office for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (COPTIP)

BMM tools and products

1. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

- a. SOPs for Investigating and Prosecuting Trafficking in Persons Cases
- b. SOPs for Crime Scene Examination in Trafficking in Persons Investigations.
- c. SOPs for Multi-Agency Task Forces.
- d. Digitalized Standard Operating Procedures
- e. SOPs for financial investigations

2. Tools & Digital Platforms

- a. Migrant Complaints form, module, protocol
- b. Migrant Support Helpline – SAUTI 116
- c. Labor Migrant Returnees Data Collection Tool & Database
- d. TIP database

- e. Digital Service Provider Directory DSPD – <https://services-for-migrants-africa.com>
- f. Online Service Directory CATIPU – <https://www.ucatip.org/>
- g. Determinants of Migrants Vulnerability (DoMV) Toolbox – <https://domvtoolbox.iom.int/>
- h. East and Horn of Africa Anti-Trafficking Network, EHAAT <https://www.freedom-collaborative.org/ehaat>
- i. Migration Response Centre Information System, MRCIS <https://mrcis.iom.int/>
- j. Joint Monitoring checklist – National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI)
- k. Data Sharing Checklist – NHRI

3. Guidelines, Frameworks & Policies

- a. Guidelines for labor inspection services on countering Trafficking in Human Beings
- b. National Remediation Guidelines for Workers in the Tourism, Industrial and Hospitality Sectors in Uganda
- c. National Action Plan for the Prevention of Trafficking in persons in Uganda
- d. Victim-centered criminal proceedings MoU
- e. ToR's for District Task Forces, DTFs
- f. Uganda National Migration Policy
- g. GCM National Action Plan for Republic of Uganda

4. Training Curricula, Manuals & Educational Materials

- a. Training Curriculum on the Guidelines for the Labor Inspection Services
- b. Training curriculum on investigating TiP and SoM for law enforcement training institutions.
- c. Integrated Border Management Training Manual with inclusion of TiP
- d. Training Manual on Human Rights and Migration – UHRC
- e. Predeparture Orientation curriculum for Migrant Workers from Uganda – Training Manual
- f. Pre departure Orientation Handbook
- g. A guide for First Responders and Community Based personnel on Mental Health and Psychological support for Victims of Trafficking and Migrants in Vulnerable Situations.
- h. Sensitization Guide for Trafficking in Person
- i. Migrants Handbook – UHRC
- j. Educational videos and 360 degrees dynamivreal-case images

5. Research, Mapping & Knowledge Products

- a. National Referral Guidelines for the management of Victims of Trafficking

OUR WORK IN FIGURES 2016–2024



8

National migration policies, strategies and legal frameworks, including UNTOC, supported, developed or revised



11

Policy recommendation for improved migration management generated by grassroots platforms established in 3 migration-affected communities

Strengthened civil society organisations to improve assistance to migrants and victims of trafficking (accommodation, legal aid, medical care, etc.) in cooperation with the regional EHAAT network and the Ugandan Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons (CATIP-U)



7,781

Stakeholder supported to strengthen national migration management and regional and cross-border cooperation



3,130

Staff from law enforcement, the judiciary and other relevant actors strengthened to investigate and prosecute human trafficking and migrant smuggling



105

Child victims of human trafficking referred to protection services following adoption of Standard Operating Procedures and multi-agency training



321

Border and immigration officials trained in facilitating the safe and efficient movement of people within and across borders



257

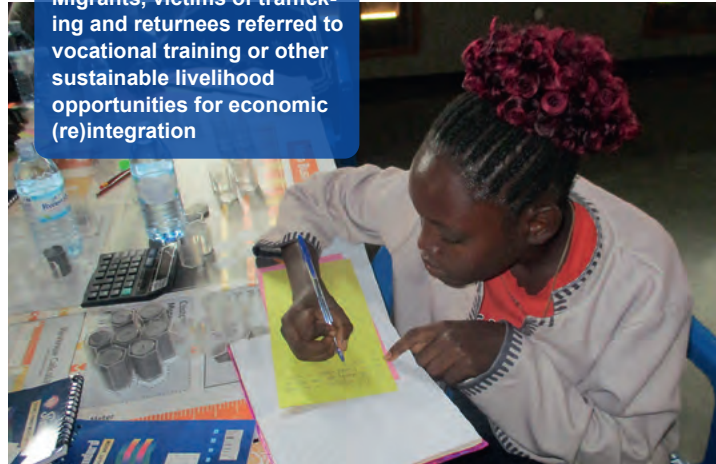
Cases of human rights violations against migrants monitored, reported and followed-up



8
Shelters supported with equipment, renovations, staff training etc.



> 400
Service providers assisting people on the move listed on the Digital Service Providers Directory



188
Migrants, victims of trafficking and returnees referred to vocational training or other sustainable livelihood opportunities for economic (re)integration



4
Communication strategies and awareness campaigns on safe migration implemented locally, nationally, and cross-border



~65,000
Migrants and victims of human trafficking assisted and/or referred across the region through joint efforts



3
Digital tools developed to promote safe labour migration:
• Digital Complaints Module
• Helpline App
• Migrant Returnee Database



National Database on Trafficking in Persons developed and launched to strengthen investigation and prevention



14
Youth Projects launched to tackle unemployment and provide alternatives to risky or irregular migration

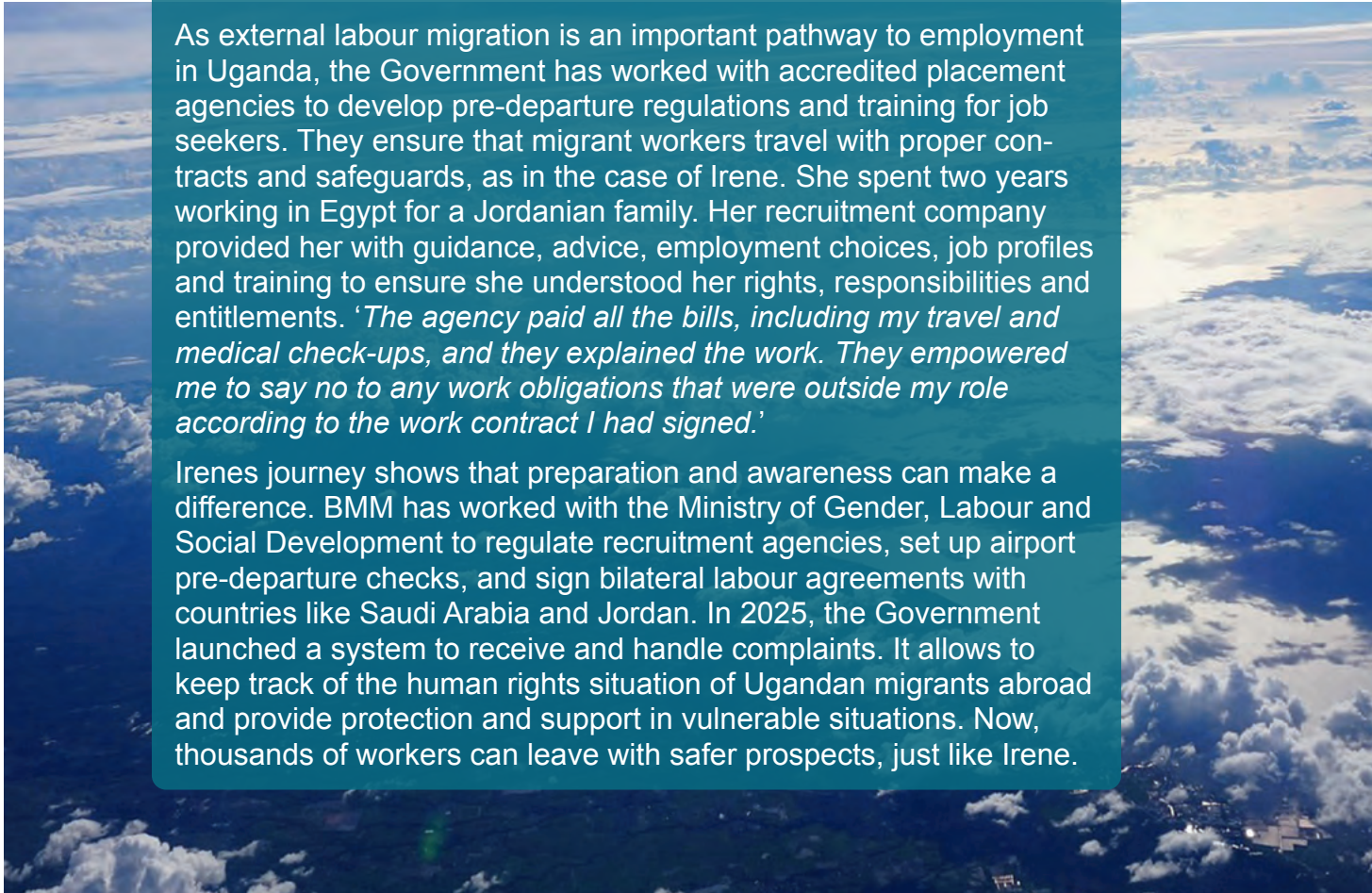
OUR WORK IN STORIES



Irene's Safer Journey

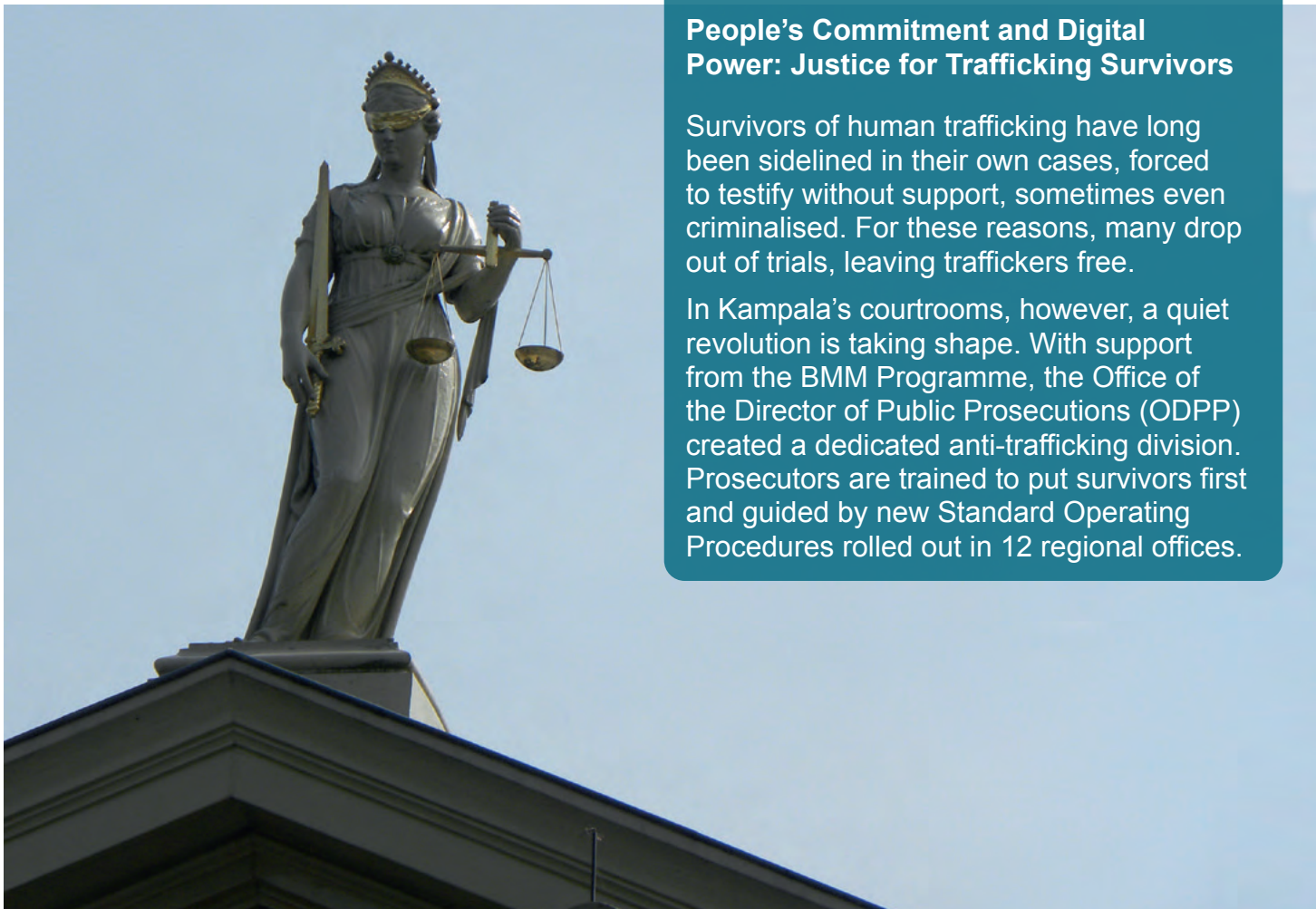
Just in her early 20ies, Irene Konga stood at a crossroads familiar to many young Ugandans. With youth unemployment soaring above 80% and most jobs in the informal economy, her prospect at home seemed uncertain.

Every day, young Ugandans leave for the Middle East or Asia in search of opportunities, only to return empty-handed, or never return at all. Many are trapped in exploitative jobs, trafficked into domestic servitude, or pushed into commercial sex. Although these crimes and fates are becoming more widely known, the lure of a “better life abroad” remains strong. Irene's story could have gone the same way but took a different turn.



As external labour migration is an important pathway to employment in Uganda, the Government has worked with accredited placement agencies to develop pre-departure regulations and training for job seekers. They ensure that migrant workers travel with proper contracts and safeguards, as in the case of Irene. She spent two years working in Egypt for a Jordanian family. Her recruitment company provided her with guidance, advice, employment choices, job profiles and training to ensure she understood her rights, responsibilities and entitlements. *‘The agency paid all the bills, including my travel and medical check-ups, and they explained the work. They empowered me to say no to any work obligations that were outside my role according to the work contract I had signed.’*

Irenes journey shows that preparation and awareness can make a difference. BMM has worked with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to regulate recruitment agencies, set up airport pre-departure checks, and sign bilateral labour agreements with countries like Saudi Arabia and Jordan. In 2025, the Government launched a system to receive and handle complaints. It allows to keep track of the human rights situation of Ugandan migrants abroad and provide protection and support in vulnerable situations. Now, thousands of workers can leave with safer prospects, just like Irene.



People's Commitment and Digital Power: Justice for Trafficking Survivors

Survivors of human trafficking have long been sidelined in their own cases, forced to testify without support, sometimes even criminalised. For these reasons, many drop out of trials, leaving traffickers free.

In Kampala's courtrooms, however, a quiet revolution is taking shape. With support from the BMM Programme, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) created a dedicated anti-trafficking division. Prosecutors are trained to put survivors first and guided by new Standard Operating Procedures rolled out in 12 regional offices.

"The well-being and safety of the victim must be at the centre of prosecution," stress Assistant Director of Public Prosecutions Rachel Bikhole and Chief State Attorney Joseph Kyomuhendo. Survivors now receive transport to court, legal counselling, and meals during long trials. The result: more successful prosecutions and survivors leaving court knowing their voices mattered.

At the same time, the fight is strengthened by data. Uganda's new National Trafficking in Persons Database, launched in 2023 with BMM support, tracks victims, perpetrators, and trends nationwide. Prosecutors use it to build stronger cases; social workers to refer survivors to shelters and care; policymakers to direct resources where they are most needed. Linked tools like the Trafficking in Persons Mobile App Platform (TIPMAP) and the [DSPD online service directory](#) connect frontline responders and service providers in real time.

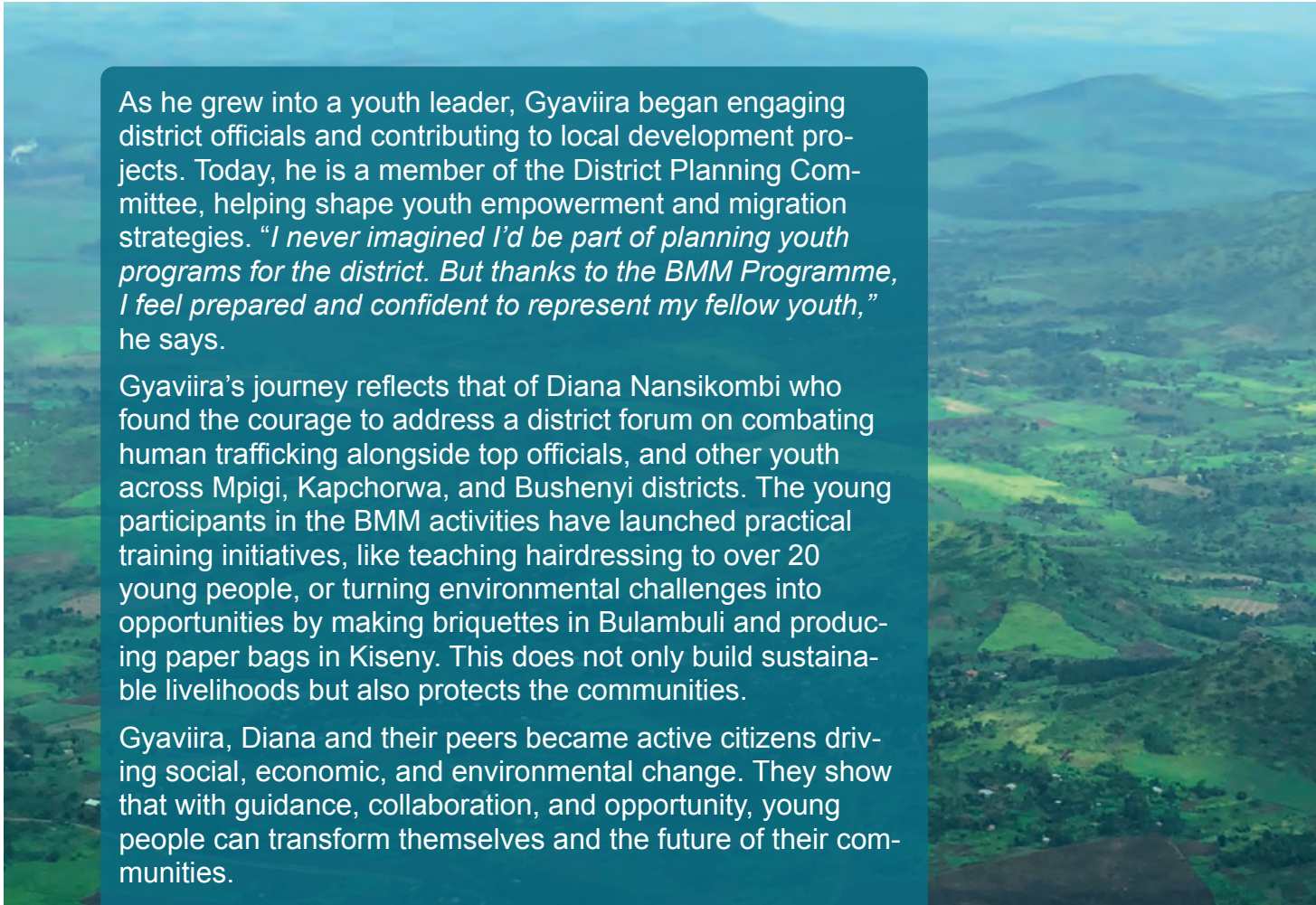
These systems are still growing, but together they mark a turning point. By combining victim-centred prosecutions with data-driven investigations, Uganda is making justice both more effective and more humane.



Youth-ful Leadership in Action

Uganda has one of the world's fastest growing and youngest populations, with over half of its people aged under 17 and nearly 80% under 30. Many young people face unemployment or work in the informal sector, with limited opportunities to develop skills, earn sustainably, or influence decisions that shape their communities.

Gyaviira Lutwama, 30, from Mpigi District had long accepted his fate and was unaware of his own potential. That changed in October 2024, when he was invited to a youth engagement meeting organised by the BMM Programme. It was a small opportunity, but it sparked a big change. Through skills and awareness programmes and campaigns, and cross-district youth exchanges, he gained knowledge, new skills, and discovered the power of youth working together.



As he grew into a youth leader, Gyaviira began engaging district officials and contributing to local development projects. Today, he is a member of the District Planning Committee, helping shape youth empowerment and migration strategies. *"I never imagined I'd be part of planning youth programs for the district. But thanks to the BMM Programme, I feel prepared and confident to represent my fellow youth,"* he says.

Gyaviira's journey reflects that of Diana Nansikombi who found the courage to address a district forum on combating human trafficking alongside top officials, and other youth across Mpigi, Kapchorwa, and Bushenyi districts. The young participants in the BMM activities have launched practical training initiatives, like teaching hairdressing to over 20 young people, or turning environmental challenges into opportunities by making briquettes in Bulambuli and producing paper bags in Kisenyi. This does not only build sustainable livelihoods but also protects the communities.

Gyaviira, Diana and their peers became active citizens driving social, economic, and environmental change. They show that with guidance, collaboration, and opportunity, young people can transform themselves and the future of their communities.

On the Airwaves and in Classrooms: Creating Awareness among the Youngest

Child trafficking remains alarmingly high. According to the UN, 38% of detected victims worldwide are children, many remaining invisible. In Uganda, children from regions such as Karamoja, some as young as eight, are trafficked to Kampala and other big cities, forced to beg or work as domestic servants. Families in Uganda's northeast, affected by poverty and drought, often see migration as a survival strategy.

COPTIP, with support from the BMM Programme, introduced a series of preventive measures. In Karamoja region, officials are now committed to intercepting child trafficking victims before they can leave their communities. New regulations for bus drivers prohibit them from picking up minors or young people except in designated areas with security surveillance. Local leaders were tasked with monitoring vulnerable households, and schools received support to keep children enrolled.

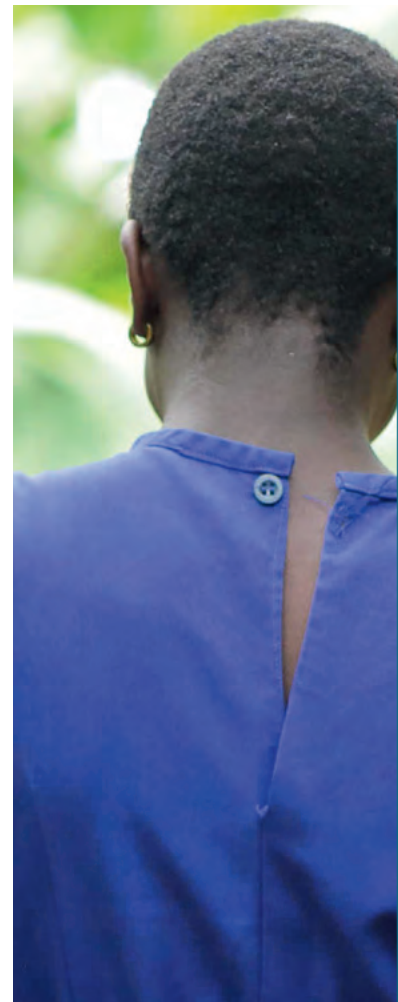
BMM has also supported COPTIP in launching a major campaign that has reached more than 53,000 students and staff across primary, secondary, and higher education institutions. *“Traffickers often target students with promises of attractive scholarship programs or appealing job opportunities, exploiting their vulnerabilities and leading them into traps,”* explains Commissioner Julius Twinomujuni.



In rural areas, where internet access is limited, radio remains the most trusted source of information. COPTIP and BMM collaborated with local radio shows to provide practical information: survivors share testimonies, elders discuss the risks of child marriage, and experts explain how to verify job offers.

These shows revealed how trafficking often hides behind offers of scholarships. As a result, communities began checking credentials and reporting suspicious recruiters. “Now parents ask questions before sending their children away,” says a local leader. In Kyotera, the case of a trafficked girl who died abroad was broadcast widely, prompting parents to demand documentation before sending their children away. In Napak district, the number of children trafficked to Kampala has declined, and many of those rescued are now back in school. Beyond education, prevention also includes peer-to-peer awareness: children perform drama skits about trafficking in their communities, using their own experiences to warn others.

Anti-trafficking efforts are strongest when they combine national policy with voices that people can relate to. In Karamoja, the protection of children, reinforced by awareness campaigns through radio, has reduced vulnerability and increased vigilance. As one survivor who now speaks on local radio put it: *“If my story can save even one child, then my suffering was not in vain.”*



The Silent Violation of Migrants' Rights and Uganda's Fight for Protection

When a monitoring team of the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) walks into a detention centre near the border, they often encounter men and women, whose “crime” is moving without the right papers. They are labelled irregular migrants but are human beings with rights.

The paradox is: Human rights are considered sacrosanct, yet often denied to migrants by arbitrary detention, lack of fair trial, or exclusion from health, housing, and education. This reality has made the protection of migrants' rights a pressing human rights issue. The UHRC, created by the 1995 Constitution, steps in to ensure these rights are respected.

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration of the UN, signed by Uganda in 2018, calls for detention to be a last resort. But UHRC continues to encounter migrants enduring overcrowding, isolation, and legal limbo during its visits to detention centres and border crossings. Many do not know their trial dates, have no lawyer, and face language barriers that leave them voiceless. Often, such violations stem from a lack of awareness or capacity within institutions.

To tackle this, BMM has adopted a dual approach: on the one hand, strengthening UHRC's ability to monitor, report and advocate; on the other, raising awareness and building capacity among police, border officials, and prosecutors through training on migrants' rights. By combining institutional empowerment with frontline training, the programme helps close the gap between Uganda's constitutional obligations and international commitments. Through BMM support, also for joining a regional working group of human rights institutions, UHRC is now better equipped to underscore a simple truth: migration is not a crime.

Beyond Protection: CSOs Helping Survivors Rebuild Future

Across the Horn of Africa, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) play a critical role in the fight against human trafficking and are often on the frontline of assistance for victims and vulnerable migrants. In Uganda, the Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons Uganda (CATIP-U) brings together CSOs to advocate for better co-ordination and resources, while member organisations such as Rahab Uganda offer shelter, rehabilitation, and long-term support.

At Rahab, care begins with safety, counselling, and medical support, before moving on to education, vocational training, and, where possible, family reunification. One girl, rescued from exploitation at just seven years old, is today a university graduate pursuing her second degree. She now returns to the shelter as a role model, showing other survivors that recovery and empowerment are possible.

Beyond Uganda, CATIP-U and its members are part of the regional East and Horn of Africa (EHAAT) Network created by BMM. The network unites over 100 organisations to establish shared standards, deliver better protection services, and ensure that no service gaps remain along key migration routes.

CATIP-U also partnered with stakeholders in Ethiopia, Kenya and the region of Somaliland to establish the Digital Service Providers Directory (DSPD), an online platform that helps people on the move to access critical services.

The work of CSOs is far from easy. Resources for aftercare remain scarce, and cross-border repatriation is complex. Yet the impact is undeniable: The combined efforts of BMM, civil society and governmental actors have provided assistance to more than 60,000 migrants and survivors of trafficking in the region.

OUR CHANGEMAKERS

The protagonists of our achievements and success stories are our national partners. Meet some of them!



'Without figures, you cannot support the development of policy. By capturing data and information on trafficking trends, we will be able to identify where more effort is needed and where resources should be allocated to prevent crime more effectively.'

TWINOMUJUNI JULIUS, National Coordinator, Coordination Office for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (COPTIP), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA), Uganda

COPTIP is responsible for formulating a comprehensive and integrated programme to prevent and suppress trafficking in persons, to develop measures and policies to protect, assist and support victims of trafficking, and for other functions. First achievements are the National Action Plan and National Referral Guidelines, developed by COPTIP and the MoIA with support from BMM. Another important step is the national database on trafficking in human beings that has been developed. It will help to capture data and information which shall be used to develop measures and policies to prevent trafficking in persons and protect victims of trafficking in a targeted manner and according to existing trends.

'The well-being of the victim must be at the centre of prosecution processes.'

RACHEL BIKHOLE, Assistant Director of Public Prosecutions, Uganda

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has prioritised handling and managing trafficking in persons cases (TIP) through setting up a special division in the International Crimes Department (ICD). All TIP cases in the country are managed and coordinated at the ICD. As deputy head of ICD and head of the TIP division, Rachel Bikhole ensures that TIP cases are investigated and charged accurately and prosecuted successfully. She is determined that this is done in a victim-centered approach. In collaboration with BMM and Uganda Police Force, the ODPP developed standard operating procedures (SOP) that *'have greatly enhanced cooperation with the police, making it easier for us to work together right from identification, investigation and prosecution of TIP cases.'* The ODPP has also introduced the Trafficking in Persons Mobile App Platform (TIPMAP), Uganda's first database to collect and share data about TIP investigations and prosecutions which also considerably helps to track offenders. Given that Uganda is a country with a high number of citizens going abroad for work, proper checks are also crucial, such as verifying the legitimacy of recruitment companies through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD).





'We must support victims first, then focus on the case. Safety first, then justice.'

JOSEPH KYOMUHENDO, Chief State Attorney at the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), Head of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division, Uganda

Joseph Kyomuhendo is Uganda's go-to expert for trafficking cases, being a crucial link between prosecutors from the ODPP and investigators from local police to INTERPOL. To standardise evidence gathering and prosecution nationwide, Standard Operating Procedures were introduced in 2024 to 12 of 19 Uganda's ODPP offices.

'These step-by-step instructions are making us better investigators and prosecutors,' Joseph says. However, he notes a key challenge: About 70% of evidence relies on victims, but many face barriers to testify in court, such as lacking bus fare. To address this, OPDD introduced measures with BMM support that prioritise victim needs such as transport, legal counseling and other services for victim-witnesses of trafficking cases.

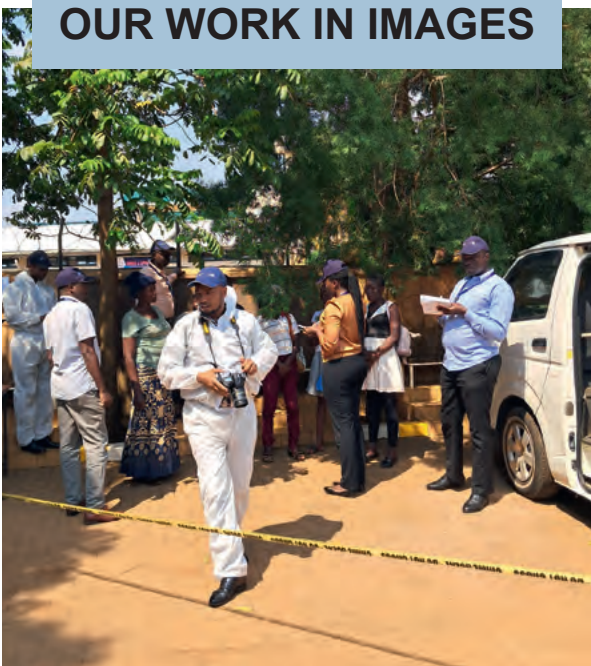
'One girl at a time – One life saved is our motivation to do what we are doing. We bring sunshine into the dark corners of human trafficking.'



DR. ANNETTE KIRABIRA, Director of Rahab Uganda

Rahab Uganda rehabilitates and reintegrates girls and women survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking in human beings. Director Annette Kirabira who is a counselling psychologist dedicating her life to promoting safe migration, highlights that *'community engagement is the key element'* to combat human trafficking. *'This is why we are going directly into communities to raise awareness.'* In its shelter, renovated with BMM's support, Rahab Uganda is providing protection and assistance to victims of trafficking through psychological support, education programs, family reconciliation and other services. BMM training on topics ranging from child protection to funding strengthened the capacities of Dr. Annette and her team and enabled them to train others as well.

OUR WORK IN IMAGES







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