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Better Migration Management
Horn of Africa



Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme in Ethiopia



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General context

Ethiopia is the third largest host country in Africa, home to over one million refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from Somalia, Eritrea, South Sudan and, most recently, Sudan. The population of around 129.7 million (United Nations Population Fund) includes a dramatically growing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), that UNHCR estimates at approximately 4.2 million (June 2024).

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 or fleeing conflict, most of them young people. Many 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 protection.

With regards to migration trends, around 108,000 exit movements from Ethiopia have been tracked between January and June 2024, an 18% increase

Project name	Better Migration Management
Political Partner in Ethiopia	Ministry of Justice
Partner countries	Djibouti, Ethiopia, 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).

compared to the previous year. For the same period, 1,101 returns from Djibouti and Somalia have been reported. By June 2024, the number of forced returns from Saudi Arabia to Ethiopia (57,075) had already surpassed the total recorded for the entire year of 2023 (42,948), according to IOM. 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. ©CIVIPOL/M.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 coordination with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union. 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 it 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 is BMM's main implementing partner.

A National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is in place as well as a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Amhara, Dire Dawa, and the former Southern Nations, Nationalities and People (SNNPR) Regional State that ensure the identification and protection of vulnerable migrants.

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 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 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, Benshangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Somali, Afar, Harari, former SNNP Regional State, as well as in Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa City Administrations. BMM continues to strengthen the capacities of the NPC and RPCs and has supported drafting Organisational Development Plans.

The majority of unaccompanied child migrants in Djibouti are from Ethiopia, going abroad to find employment. Minors are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked for labour and sexual exploitation, adoption, forced marriage and other purposes. For the protection of child migrants and the referral of unaccompanied minors, BMM supports cross-border cooperation between Ethiopia and Djibouti and facilitated exchange 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 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. A cross-border MoU is planned to be signed before the end of 2025.

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. In addition, procurements to strengthen key Border Crossing Points (BCPs) were completed in 2024/2025.

In coordination with the NPC, the Ministry of Education and Universities, BMM promoted improved migration research to better inform government policies and actions. To this end, BMM facilitated the first and second National Migration Conference that brought together academics and practitioners.

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 cases of trafficking in human beings (THB) and smuggling of migrants (SoM) through Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and equipment for evidence collection.

To improve the quality of investigations and prosecutions, SOPs on THB and SoM have been introduced and are being implemented in 8 Regional States. They are also part of a BMM developed study course that was mainstreamed into the curriculum of Police Colleges and Academies in all these Regional States (except Tigray). To strengthen the implementation of the SOPs, as well as national referral mechanisms and guidelines for the protection of the rights of victims of trafficking, BMM delivers Multi-Agency simulation-based training.

In 2024, these efforts contributed significantly to a successful operation of the National Intelligence and Security Services of Ethiopia as well as the Ethiopian Federal Police, who cracked down on illegal employment practices and arrested 49 agency owners facilitating illegal labour recruitment. Another successful result is the referral of 148 victims of trafficking to service providers.

BMM, in collaboration with the EU-funded Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) Programme, supports the Ethiopian Police to establish a crime scene management training centre, including training facilities (e.g. classroom, control room, crime scene rooms), laboratory and outdoor areas for open-air forensic training. The rooms have been equipped and a training of trainers has taken place. In addition, BMM will support the implementation of the Trafficking Crime Scene Management SOPs.

With the support of BMM, a MoU has been signed between Ethiopia and Djibouti to establish a Joint Investigative Team to exchange information and intel-

ligence and target criminal groups operating along the Eastern route.

Furthermore the programme delivers specialised training on Illicit Financial Flow and Cyber Crime related to THB and SoM to investigators, prosecutors and officials from Financial Intelligence Services.

In addition, BMM supports the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) by strengthening complaint mechanisms and by enhancing the capacities of its staff, enabling them to fulfill their mandate of raising awareness, increasing knowledge on migrants' rights and relevant laws.



Multi-Agency simulation-based training enhances the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases and improves the referral of victims to protection services. ©CIVIPOL

Protection

BMM enhances assistance and protection services in Ethiopia. To this end, it partners with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that are providing support to migrants in need and victims of trafficking.

BMM has supported the Good Samaritan Association in renting a suitable compound for its women's shelter and strengthening its protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration services. Additionally, the programme provided financial assistance to Agar Shelter for the protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration of 106 female victims of trafficking, along with 23 accompanied children. The vocational training center HOPE Enterprise also receives funding to train victims of trafficking, with 144 individuals graduating in the first cohort.

In addition, BMM provides national-level training to CSOs and regional training through the BMM-initiated East and Horn of Africa Anti-Trafficking (EHAAT) Network. These training sessions cover topics such as gender-based violence, survivors' voices, communication, and organisational development.

In December 2024, the Digital Service Provider Directory (DSPD) was launched. This online platform helps migrants and victims of trafficking in Ethiopia, Kenya, the Somaliland region, and Uganda access essential services such as medical care, shelter, legal aid, and education.

To improve access to justice, BMM collaborates with CSOs and relevant actors to provide shelter for victim witnesses participating in investigations and court proceedings related to trafficking cases. As part of this effort, the Federal MoU on Supporting the Participation of Victims of Human Trafficking in Investigations and Court Proceedings was revised, endorsed, and signed, along with its Implementing Guidelines and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning System. A similar MoU was also signed in Dire Dawa,

where BMM supports a government-owned shelter for victim witnesses. The shelter has been equipped and will begin operations soon.

Moreover, through selected university legal aid centers, the programme supports the provision of free legal assistance. At Arbaminch University, counseling and legal advice services - including pleading preparations and court representations - have been provided to approximately 1,800 migrants, returnees, and victims of trafficking.



Meet the Graduates: Migrants, returnees and survivors of trafficking celebrate their graduation after completing a vocational training at Hope Enterprise Ethiopia supported by BMM.

Results of BMM (April 2016 – September 2024)



8,311 governmental and non-governmental actors supported to strengthen coordinated migration management, national migration policies, legislation and cross-border cooperation



157 capacity building measures were implemented for **3,472** governmental and non-governmental actors implemented in the areas of investigation and prosecution of human trafficking, integrated border management, and the referral of migrants to services



~ 19,000 vulnerable migrants were directly and indirectly assisted with accommodation, basic services, and medical support



~ 80,000 million individuals were potentially reached through awareness-raising activities on human trafficking and migrants' rights

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