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Better Migration Management  
Horn of Africa



# Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme in Uganda

## Context

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. Limited livelihood opportunities drive a significant number of young people into labour migration.

The largest destination for Ugandan migrant workers is Saudi Arabia, estimated at over 180,000, the majority of whom are women, according to the Government of Uganda. While measures and frameworks are in place to promote safe labour migration, a study conducted by the international consultancy ICF and Makerere University shows that 87% of Ugandan labour migrants experience conditions indicative of forced labour as they continue to be recruited through deceptive means and irregular channels, potentially exposing them to risks in the host country, such as unacceptable living or working conditions (*Ugandan Labor Migrants to the Middle East: Labor Conditions*, United States Department of Labor, 2024).

Uganda is a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants, and Africa's main host country, with

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Project name	Better Migration Management Programme
Political partner in Uganda	Coordination Office for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (COPTIP)
Duration	April 2016 to September 2025
Partner countries	Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda
Implementing partners in Uganda	British Council, CIVIPOL, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). GIZ heads the implementing partnership.

about 1.7 million refugees and asylum seekers (UN, 2024). The country has progressive policies to support the integration of those who have fled their homes, but the continuous influx of refugees and migrants to Uganda has challenged response capacities in recent years. Uganda also registers considerable internal migration, due to factors such as natural disasters and climate change, and also as a

Implemented by



result of poverty and limited opportunities, which increase migrants' vulnerability to instances of trafficking in human beings (THB).

Uganda has taken steps to counter THB, including the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) in 2005 and enacting the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (PTIP) Act in 2009, and its regulations in 2019, which have served as a model for other countries. Responsible for the implementation of the PTIP Act is the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA), i.e., the Coordination Office for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (COPTIP) and the National Task Force on Prevention of Trafficking in Persons ("National Task Force"). The latter consists of relevant ministries, government departments and agencies, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), as well as international organisations and programmes, including from the United Nations.

Despite significant progress towards promoting safe, orderly, and regular migration, Uganda continues to face challenges in establishing and implementing a comprehensive legal and policy framework for migration.

The Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme accompanies the Government of Uganda in developing and improving national migration policies and frameworks and in contributing to regional migration governance.

## BMM's approach and activities

The objective of BMM is to enable national authorities and institutions to facilitate safe, orderly, and regular migration and to effectively address and reduce THB and the smuggling of migrants (SoM) within and from the Horn of Africa region using a human rights-based approach. Activities are implemented in three components: migration governance, strengthening effective institutions to address THB and SoM, and the protection of vulnerable migrants and victims of trafficking.

BMM focuses on consolidating a regional, holistic and sustainable approach to migration management. Through alignment and cooperation with other projects and international initiatives, BMM and its national and implementing partners work towards building synergies in pursuit of the programme's objective.

## Migration Governance

With the support of BMM, the MoIA has drafted and validated the National Migration Policy.

Furthermore, BMM supports the operation of the National Trafficking in Persons Database, improving the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking. The programme also assists COPTIP in reviewing the National Action Plan for Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (NAP) 2019–2024 and supports anti-

trafficking District Task Forces, which include representatives from the judiciary, local district leaders, police, and CSOs, in expanding their capacities and network.

To strengthen migration management at grassroots level, three community platforms have been established in partnership with local CSOs to define a community engagement strategy that addresses challenges faced by migrants and migration-affected communities and to formulate recommendations to government actors at all levels.

BMM gives technical support to the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM) under the Office of the Prime Minister to facilitate partnership and dialogue on migration related issues in Uganda. This includes support to the development, validation and dissemination of the Uganda National Action Plan to implement the Global Compact for Migration (GCM).

Following the support of BMM to ratify protocols supplementing the UNTOC, Uganda ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, marking a milestone in harmonising national legislation with international legal requirements.



Data-driven solutions: The National Trafficking in Persons Database facilitates the referral of trafficking victims to protection services (©IOM)

## Effective Institutions to Address Trafficking and Smuggling

BMM improves the effectiveness of institutions in implementing migration policies and legislation, amongst others by strengthening inter-institutional cooperation on THB and SoM between first responders, law enforcement agencies, prosecution, the judiciary and civil society. To this end, BMM supports the development and nationwide implementation and monitoring of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for investigating and prosecuting cases of THB under the supervision of a multi-agency Task Force.

At the regional level, multi-agency Task Forces from different BMM partner countries are brought together to assess, promote and reinforce cross-border, regional and international cooperation.

The programme further supports partner countries in mutual legal assistance and investigations, including the development of guidelines that enhance cooperation between law enforcement agencies and engage Labour Inspection Services to detect trafficking cases regarding labour exploitation.

In addition, the programme provides targeted and needs-based training for first responders, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and judicial officers, including multi-agency simulations, where participants also learn to apply the SOPs.

It further supports the protection and participation of victim-witnesses in investigations and court proceedings of THB cases, for which a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in February 2024 between anti-trafficking stakeholders, including the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution (ODPP). The safe referral of victims is an integral part of the multi-agency training and MoU. As a result of both, local authorities reported the referral of 105 child victims to protection services in 2024.

BMM continues to promote the mainstreaming of training on investigating THB and SoM into the curricula of police training institutions to enhance law enforcement officers' capacity to manage cases of THB, including the protection and referral of presumed and identified victims and the preparation of cases for prosecution.

The programme also facilitates training for criminal justice practitioners and supports specialised anti-trafficking units in tackling transnational organised crime. In 2024, TiP Crime Scene Management SOPs were developed in cooperation with the Directorate of Forensic Services, police and prosecutors to mainstream procedures.

Furthermore, BMM supported the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) in establishing a helpline for external labour migrants and a comprehensive Complaint Management Module to track and resolve migrant workers' cases. The programme also assists the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) in capacity building, awareness-raising and monitoring to improve the reporting, and follow-up of human rights violations against migrants, including visits to key border points like Entebbe International Airport.

On the regional level, BMM accompanied the establishment of a regional working group of national human rights institutions and supports these in developing solutions and recommendations to protect migrants' rights and inform knowledge management and decision-making processes, for example on finding alternatives to detention.



Learning-by-doing: Simulation-based training on the prosecution and investigation of human trafficking. (©CIVIPOL)

## Protection

BMM strengthens referral systems which improve the provision of assistance and protection services for vulnerable migrants and victims of trafficking, including shelter, legal aid, and medical and psychosocial support. To this end, the programme facilitates the implementation of the National Referral Guidelines for Management of Victims of Trafficking (NRG) in all of Uganda's regions.

On a regional level, the East and Horn of Africa Anti-Trafficking Network (EHAAT) of over 100 CSOs serves as a platform for exchange and cooperation. BMM provides training to the members to strengthen their services and their role in the referral systems as well as to develop policy recommendations. In Uganda, the network's activities are being promoted in cooperation with the Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons - Uganda (CATIP-U).

With BMM support, the Digital Service Providers Directory (DSPD) was launched. The DSPD is an online platform that helps migrants, refugees, and vulnerable individuals on the move to locate and seek key services. It is a joint cooperation of CATIP-U, the Ethiopian National Partnership Coalition (NPC), the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) and the Somaliland National Human Rights Commission (SLNHRC).

BMM also works with the Government of Uganda and CSOs to improve trauma-informed care, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), as well as awareness raising on gender-based violence (GBV), and shelter provision.

As part of its protection portfolio, BMM supports relevant CSO activities to enhance the referral of migrants, victims of trafficking and returnees to socio-economic initiatives in the form of vocational and skills training. For example, to strengthen financial and entrepreneurial skills of migrants and

trafficking survivors, BMM cooperated with the *Deutsche Sparkassenstiftung* to conduct Micro Business Games. 310 participants from all over the region benefitted from this activity.

With the involvement of the government, CSOs and private sector, BMM further supports the implementation of the Regional Remediation Guidelines for Vulnerable Labour Migrants and a MGLSD-led platform that coordinates and enhances referrals.



The *Deutsche Sparkassenstiftung* Micro Business Games strengthen financial and entrepreneurial skills of migrants and trafficking survivors.

Moreover, BMM assists COPTIP and CSOs in raising awareness on safe, orderly and regular migration, focusing on the most at-risk districts and border communities. Communication strategies are being implemented in these areas, including at the Uganda-South Sudan border, where up to 36,000 people have been reached, mainly in schools.

In the framework of a Social Action Project, over 100 youth have been trained with support of CSOs to raise awareness for safe migration and to develop and implement short-term projects aimed at addressing trafficking and exploitation in their communities.

### Results of BMM (April 2016 – September 2024)



**4,152** governmental and non-governmental actors were supported to strengthen coordinated migration management, national migration policies, legislation, and cross-border cooperation



**107** capacity-building measures were implemented for **2,375** governmental and non-governmental actors in the areas of investigation and prosecution of trafficking, integrated border management, and the referral of migrants to services.



**35 million** individuals were potentially reached through awareness-raising activities on human trafficking and migrants' rights.

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**Project** Better Migration Management Programme Rue de la Charité 33 / Liefdadigheidsstraat 33 1210 Bruxelles/Brussels , Belgique/België

**Contact** Marina Mdaihli, Programme Director  
E-mail: [Marina.Mdaihli@giz.de](mailto:Marina.Mdaihli@giz.de)

[GIZ website](#)  
[INTPA website BMM Phase III](#)  
[Phase II EUTF website / Phase I EUTF website](#)

**Contact** BMM Office Uganda, Theodoor Houthoff  
[theodoor.houthoff@giz.de](mailto:theodoor.houthoff@giz.de)

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