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Independent Mid-term Evaluation: Better Regional Migration Management Programme – Phase II

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Countries: Ethiopia, Djibouti, South Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

Evaluation date: 31 August 2024

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Mid-term

Administrative Office: Addis Ababa

Technical Office: MIGRANT, SKILLS, STAT, SOCPRO, SOCIAL FINANCE, SME, ACTEMP, ACTRAV, CO Dar es Salam, Regional Office for Africa, DWT-Cairo, DWT-Pretoria

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DC Symbol: RAF/21/10/GBR

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Key Words: Regional migration management, labour migration governance, labour migration statistics, Labour migration Technical working groups, Labour migration advisory group, Bilateral Labour Migration agreement, Labour migration Information system, Tripartite framework, skills development, Skills partnership, Skills recognition and harmonization, social protection, potential and returned migrants, fair recruitment initiative, ILO Conventions, international labour migration conventions and standards.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT	
Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure	Commissioned by the ILO, this independent mid-term evaluation is for the BRMM project, phase II, funded by the FCDO. The project started in July 2022 and is intended to terminate by the end of March, 2026. The general objective of the project is to strengthen the capacities of countries of East and Horn of Africa (EHOA) to govern labour migration.
Present situation of the project	The BRMM II project builds on the achievements of Phase I in enhancing East African countries' capacities to govern labour migration. It focuses on improving labour migration statistics, skills development and recognition, and the protection of migrant workers' rights for better development outcomes at both national and regional levels. The project is implemented in 7 countries of EHOA together with the Regional Economic Committees (REC).
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	The purpose of the Midterm evaluation was to assess the implementation of the project so far, review the coherence, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and Impact orientation and sustainability and cross-cutting themes of interventions and its progress. It aims to contribute to enhanced learning, ensure successful achievement of the project's objectives and generate conclusions and related recommendations. In support of the 2030 Agenda, the evaluation looked at how the UNEG ethical principles of Integrity, Accountability, Respect and Beneficence ¹ are considered in the design and implementation, governance and monitoring while examining their, interlinkage and mutual reinforcement.
Methodology of evaluation	The evaluation used an inclusive, participatory and transparent approach and combined it with results-based and theory-based approaches and engaged various partners and stakeholders nationally and regionally. It is based on the six OECD/DAC criteria. ² It examined the extent to which "leaving-no-one-behind" and "do-no harm" approaches and relevant conventions and international standards are mainstreamed. The evaluation process involved a comprehensive document review, including project reports, policy documents, and monitoring data. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with ILO staff, tripartite constituents, implementing partners, and beneficiaries, capturing diverse perspectives. Additionally, field visits were carried out in selected project countries to gather first-hand insights into implementation progress and challenges.
MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS	<p><i>RELEVANCE, VALIDITY OF DESIGN, COHERENCE AND STRATEGIC FIT</i></p> <p>The BRMM project remains highly relevant to labour migration governance in the EHOA region. The project effectively addresses the demand for labour migration data and policy frameworks, aligning with ILO conventions, SDG targets (8.8, 10.7, and 8.10), and regional migration frameworks and agreements such as the AU Free Movement Protocol.</p> <p>The project's design and tripartite approach ensure coherence, fostering collaboration between governments, employers, and workers' organizations. It integrates labour migration into national policies, reinforcing social protection, fair recruitment, and skills recognition.</p>

¹https://procurementnotices.undp.org/view_file.cfm?doc_id=302194#:~:text=The%20four%20UNEG%20guiding%20ethical,Accountability%2C%20Respect%2C%20and%20Beneficence.

² Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Assistance Committee's OECD.2021. *Evaluation Criteria*. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>



EFFECTIVENESS

Through capacity building and strengthening, the Labour Market Migration Information System (LMMIS) contributes to improving labour migration governance, through informed policy making and programme development.

Protection of migrant workers’ rights is ensured through the support in the development of Labour Migration Policy and Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs) in line with international labour standards.

The involvement of social partners in negotiations of BLMAs and in protecting migrant workers’ rights has in its turn empowered these partners. This is critical influencing policies, promoting standards and government programmes in a sustainable way.

The entrepreneurship trainings and business development services received by potential and returned migrants have been essential to their integration and gaining self-esteem. In addition, the unexpected, positive and important effect of these trainings, had a multiplier effect with demands from other NGOs and associations involved in supporting potential and returned migrants in reintegrating them into the labour market. More importantly, the trained returnees are ready to actively reach others at the grass-root level and transmit the knowledge they have acquired.

EFFICIENCY

The implementation design and intervention modality of the project ensures its efficiency and coordination through the two tiers structure at the national and regional levels. The project has experts backstopping that ensure the quality and efficiency of its intervention structure and design. The BRMM project utilized 98.5% of the total released budget during the evaluation period.

IMPACT ORIENTATION & SUSTAINABILITY

The tripartite structure, the interconnectedness of the outcomes and the implementation approach altogether ensure sustainability and ownership of the project’s interventions.

Different levels of ownership are already attained. There is a strong ownership from involved governments of having an LMMIS. There is a real ownership of the social partners in their involvement in negotiations of BLMAs, agreements and partnerships.

BRMM’s contribution is having its impact on behavioural and mindset changes towards increased protection of migrants’ rights. There is increased interest by governments for sound migration management through evidence-based policies. Behavioural changes with migrants who are more aware of their rights and chances to be protected and reintegrated. Major behavioural changes occur with Employers’ organizations showing readiness to employ returned migrants recognising that the skills acquired abroad will contribute to develop new sectors in the country. Unions are active in building agreements with counterparts to ensure the protection of migrant workers’ rights. All the stakeholders understand that common standards empower sending countries vis à vis impositions of destination countries.

The trainings for returned migrants in business entrepreneurship had also a positive unexpected effect, which is their full engagement in sharing their experience informing and transmitting more informed migration



practices at the grass-root level. The multiplier effect of the trainings is a huge contribution to reduce irregular migration and promote regular migration.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

The project has a gender-sensitive approach in all its interventions: policies, BLMAs, union-to-union agreements. Disaggregated data shows a large participation of women in all workshops and trainings. The Convention N°189 on Domestic Work dominated by women, is one of the 4 conventions the project pursues to be ratified or domesticated. In addition, disability inclusion, rights-based intervention and social dialogue are also cross cutting issues of the project.

CONCLUSIONS

Relevance

- The BRMM project is highly relevant in addressing labour migration governance challenges in the East and Horn of Africa, aligning with international frameworks such as the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and ILO conventions. It responds to policy gaps and enhances institutional capacity at national and regional levels.
- The project's demand-driven approach has successfully tailored interventions to national priorities, ensuring greater ownership by tripartite partners. However, the extent to which this approach has influenced long-term policy adoption remains uneven across countries, with some governments demonstrating stronger commitment than others.

Effectiveness

- The project has made substantial progress, with over 60 percent of its output indicators met by March 2024, demonstrating its ability to deliver on planned activities. However, the extent to which these outputs translate into long-term structural changes remains uncertain, particularly in countries where migration policies are still in early stages of development.
- The establishment of Labour Market Migration Information Systems (LMMIS) has enhanced migration data collection and analysis in some countries, but challenges in system interoperability, data accessibility, and institutional coordination persist, limiting their full potential.
- Entrepreneurial training and skills development initiatives have benefited potential and returned migrants, leading to increased economic opportunities. However, access to financial support, particularly for returnees seeking to establish businesses, remains a critical gap that hinders long-term reintegration efforts.
- Trade unions and employers' organizations have been engaged in BLMA negotiations and migration governance, but not all agreements have led to tangible improvements in migrant worker protections, as enforcement mechanisms in destination countries remain weak.

Efficiency



- The decentralized implementation structure through ILO Country Offices has ensured localized coordination, but inconsistent communication and reporting mechanisms across countries have created challenges in tracking implementation progress at the regional level.
- The complementarity between BRMM and other ILO projects, such as FAIRWAY and PROSPECT, has optimized resource use and prevented duplication, but better integration with national migration frameworks is needed to maximize impact.
- While national-level Technical Working Groups (TWGs) and Labour Migration Advisory Groups (LMAGs) have played a key role in guiding project interventions, some stakeholders have expressed concerns about the uneven frequency and effectiveness of these meetings in certain countries, affecting timely decision-making and coordination.

Impact

- The project has contributed to positive behavioural changes among key stakeholders, with governments showing increased commitment to migration governance, migrants becoming more aware of their rights, and employers recognizing returnees' skills as assets. However, the long-term sustainability of these shifts depends on stronger legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms in both origin and destination countries.
- The harmonization of skills recognition frameworks and regional coordination efforts have advanced, but gaps in Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and labour mobility pathways persist, requiring greater policy alignment across countries.
- A notable impact has been the active role of returnees in reducing irregular migration, as trained migrants are increasingly involved in community awareness initiatives. However, scaling up this effort requires more structured engagement with migrant associations and grassroots organizations.

Sustainability

- The project's sustainability is reinforced by strong institutional ownership, policy integration, and the standardization of skills frameworks, but some national governments still lack the financial and technical capacity to sustain project initiatives without external support.
- The ratification and domestication of key ILO conventions have progressed in some countries, but policy enforcement remains weak, and legal gaps persist in protecting migrant workers from exploitation and unfair recruitment practices.
- Financial sustainability measures, such as SACCOs for returnees, provide an alternative to traditional credit access, but the overall financial ecosystem for migrant reintegration remains underdeveloped, limiting long-term livelihood opportunities.
- The project's contribution to SDG 10.7 on safe, orderly, and regular migration and SDG 8.8 on migrant worker protections is evident, but scaling up these contributions requires stronger regional



collaboration, enhanced monitoring mechanisms, and more robust partnerships with financial institutions and private sector actors.

Cross-Cutting Issues

- The project has effectively mainstreamed gender-sensitive approaches in migration governance, particularly in sectors where women migrants are overrepresented, such as domestic work, reinforcing protections through BLMA negotiations, advocacy for ILO Convention 189, and fair recruitment initiatives.
- Social dialogue has been strengthened through the tripartite-plus approach, engaging trade unions, employers, and government institutions in shaping migration policies and agreements.
- Environmental sustainability considerations have been integrated through skills training in agriculture and climate-resilient employment sectors, promoting sustainable livelihoods. However, stronger linkages between migration policies and national climate adaptation strategies are needed to enhance resilience and job opportunities for migrants impacted by environmental factors.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Strengthen experience-sharing and peer learning amongst the project partners for sustainable impact: The project should strengthen experience-sharing mechanisms among tripartite constituents, stakeholders, and beneficiaries through peer-to-peer exchanges and structured learning initiatives. Facilitating cross-country knowledge transfer on LMMIS, MRC operations, SIYB training adaptation, and employer engagement in returnee reintegration will enhance policy implementation, capacity-building, and long-term sustainability of migration governance interventions.

Addressed to	Priority	Timeframe	Financial Resources
BRMM project team.	High	Second half	Low

Recommendation 2. Strengthen Existing Initiatives for Greater Stakeholder Engagement and Sustainability: To enhance ownership, sustainability, and impact, the project should expand and reinforce existing initiatives by increasing stakeholder participation and institutional partnerships. Strengthening MRCs through legal advocacy, empowering trade unions and employers' organizations, expanding SIYB and GYB training through NGO collaborations, mobilizing returnees as migration ambassadors, and enhancing Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanisms will improve migrant protection, skills recognition, and reintegration outcomes.

	Addressed to	Priority	Timeframe	Financial Resources
	BRMM project team Government partners.	Medium	Second half	Medium
	<p>Recommendation 3. Enhance the project’s Reporting and Monitoring Systems: To improve progress tracking, impact assessment, and future programming, the project should adopt a more structured reporting and monitoring approach. Implementing bi-annual or annual country-level reports, integrating cross-cutting themes into the ToC, distinguishing stakeholder and beneficiary impact, and developing qualitative indicators for an exit strategy will enhance data consolidation, strategic planning, and sustainability.</p>			
	Addressed to	Priority	Timeframe	Financial Resources
	BRMM project team.	High	Second half	Low
	<p>Recommendation 4. Reintegration capacities of origin countries need to be enhanced to avoid possible challenges of brain-drain. It is recommended to put more focus on sending countries’ labour markets and have an overview of their reintegration capacities with in-depth consultations. Involving public and private partnerships to put greater investment for decent work and skilled jobs.</p>			
	Addressed to	Priority	Timeframe	Financial Resources
	BRMM-ILO team, ILO and FCDO.	High	Future programming	New financial resources.
Main lessons learned and good practices	Lessons Learned		Emerging good practices	
	<p>1 - The interventions have been adapted to the different levels and needs but also to the different migratory profiles of countries. Through the participatory and ILO’s demand-driven approach the project empowers all stakeholders and ensures ownership of the initiatives.</p> <p>2 – Labour migration is not treated as a separate phenomenon but as part of the major labour market economy, due to ILO’s holistic approach. The approach recognises labour migrants’ contribution and full</p>		<p>1 - Through the TWG and LMAGs, the project has worked in a consultative manner with a wide range of stakeholders. This approach has contributed to raise awareness and commitments, and more importantly, to ensure the sustainability of all the interventions.</p> <p>2 – ILO’s holistic approach where labour migration is part of the labour market and is not treated as a separate phenomenon is a major good practice for migration management and contributing to GCM objectives. This approach based on the nexus Mobility-Skills-Protection of migrant workers’ rights, is holistic, supported by the ILO</p>	



<p>participation to the development of job markets in countries of origin and destination.</p> <p>23 – Training programs have proven essential in empowering potential and returnee migrants, fostering entrepreneurial skills and self-reliance.</p>	<p>conventions and is to be considered as a good practice in migration governance in general.</p>
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