

INTER REGIONAL MULTI-STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP ON IMPLEMENTATION OF ECOWAS FREE MOVEMENT PROTOCOL IN GHANA

A 2-day workshop on the Inter Regional Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Implementation of ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol in Ghana has been held in Koforidua, Ghana from 21st to 22nd June, 2018.

The workshop which was organized by the Center for Migration Studies, University of Ghana brought together over twenty participants drawn from ECOWAS, academia, border security agencies, civil society, ministries, departments and agencies responsible for the implementation of ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement.

Welcoming participants to the workshop, Prof. Mariama Awumbila, Coordinator for the project, expressed gratitude to members and expressed the hope for a very interactive, productive and fruitful workshop.

She gave an overview of the MADE West Africa Project as well as the objectives of the workshop.

Prof. Awumbila stated that the project focuses on intra-regional migration, particularly within the ECOWAS Region.

According to Prof. Awumbila, 80% of migration occur within the West Africa sub-region, i.e. a large percentage of West African migrants move to another West African country, however, there is very little information on the 80 % moving within the WA sub-region" she stated.

She stated that over the years, the focus had been on the negative aspects of migration i.e. drowning, brain-drain, putting pressure on resources etc.

"About the last decade we've begun to see the positive aspects of migration – remittances etc." she further mentioned.

She concluded by saying that the MADE West Africa project on migration and mobility aims at protecting migrants' rights with the view of enhancing their contribution to promote good governance.

The goal of the workshop was to improve coordination between ECOWAS, relevant government authorities and civil society and therefore contribute to a more effective implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement protocol in the target countries. The specific objectives are to enhance participants' understanding of the ECOWAS protocol; identify current obstacles to the implementation of the protocol and best practices and strategies to address gaps identified; develop a roadmap to support



governments from target countries to work towards the implementation of the ECMP and the removal of obstacles to the mobility of other ECOWAS citizens.

Participants discussed issues related to the history and general principles underlying the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement and related frameworks for governing migration.

Presentations were also made on the findings of the study: Assessment of the Implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol in Ghana and Sierra Leone by Prof. J.K. Teye.

During the break-out session, participants discussed the challenges of the implementation of ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol. In this session, the existing challenges of implementing the Free movement protocol was discussed and various best practices were identified and recommended.

As part of the deliberations, a road map for addressing the challenges to free movement was developed and key milestones for achieving the desired outcomes established.

Present at the workshop were Dr. Tony Luka Elumelu, Head of Free Movement and Migration, ECOWAS Commission, Prof. Mariama Awumbila, Lecturer, CMS, UG., Prof. J.K. Teye, Director, Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana, Eunice Asante, Migration Unit, Min. of the Interior, Harmonization of Migration Data across MDAs.

ECOWAS SETS UP COORDINATION CENTRE FOR EARLY WARNING MECHANISM

The National Coordination Centre for the Early Warning and Response mechanism of Cote d'Ivoire was inaugurated in Abidjan on 24 May 2018, by the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, in the company of the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Gen. Francis Awagbe Behanzin. The Centre's premises were provided by the Ivorian government.

In addition to inaugurating the building, Mr Brou, in a symbolic gesture, handed over some equipment and a vehicle to the Centre's Director.

According to the ECOWAS Commission President, the Centre is intended to be a Community instrument for solidarity, essential for the prevention, management and resolution of the conflicts besetting West Africa.

The Ivorian government will support the Centre in activity implementation, the attainment of its objectives and in efforts initiated at the regional level to counter insecurity and terrorist threats. This was made known at the occasion by Senior Minister and Minister of Defence, Hamed Bakayoko, representing the Prime Minister, who also thanked the United States of America for their financial support to the project.

Mr. Bakayoko officially launched the Centre's activities in the



presence of the Minister of African Integration and Ivorians Abroad, Ally Coulibaly, and the Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the United States Embassy in Cote d'Ivoire, Paul Yeskoo.

During the inauguration, the Centre was able to join in live video conference with the Centres in Mali and Burkina Faso.

Shortly after the ceremony, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Ivorian Prime Minister, Amadou Gon Coulibaly and ECOWAS Commission

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ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECOWAS FREE MOVEMENT PROTOCOL IN GHANA & SIERRA LEONE

A report based on a desktop review, thematic analysis of relevant administrative records and in-depth interviews with selected ECOWAS migrants and officials of institutions/agencies responsible for managing migration in Ghana and Sierra Leone, has been launched.

The assessment revealed that intra-regional migration is an integral part of livelihoods in the ECOWAS region. While all the countries in the sub-region receive migrants and at the same time send out migrants, countries in the Sahel zone (e.g. Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger) are the dominant migrant sending areas while the more prosperous countries in the coastal zone (e.g. Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria) are the migrant receiving areas.

Proximity, colonial legacy, common official language and ethnic ties still determine the choice of destination for many ECOWAS migrants. Many Sierra Leonean migrants travel to neighboring countries such as Guinea, Liberia and Ghana, while Ghanaians also mainly migrate to Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire.

With regards to the implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, both Ghana and Sierra Leone have made modest progress in the implementation of the



of the free movement protocol since such practices can go a long way to enhance the willingness of the government and citizens of Sierra Leone to welcome migrants as development agents.

While a number of countries in West Africa do not have comprehensive migration policies, both Sierra Leone and Ghana have recently formulated national level policies to govern migration in line with ECOWAS protocols.

The two countries have also ratified a number of international protocols to protect the rights of migrants and their families.

Sierra Leone however has not ratified some human rights instruments of relevance to the protection of migrant workers, such as the Migration for Employment Convention, 1049 (Revised) (No. 97), the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) and Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181).

Ghanaian universities are also promoting free movement through the development and implementation of a comprehensive system of recognition of academic certificates and reduction of fees for ECOWAS students.

Despite these good practices, there are still serious challenges to the implementation of the Free Movement protocols, especially with regards to the Phase 2 and Phase 3 components, but also with some aspects of Phase 1.

The key challenges identified include: contradictions between national laws on employment and ECOWAS Free Movement protocol; harassment of migrants at the borders; lack of travel documents by many migrants, and low level of knowledge about ECOWAS protocols among migrants and immigration officials.

While Ghana has more resources for border management than Sierra Leone, both countries clearly need support to fully implement the Free Movement protocol.

Other challenges which seriously affect the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol, in both Ghana and Sierra Leone, include fears of competition with successful immigrants, especially in Ghana; securitization of migration and migrants; lack of up to date data on migration flows, especially in Sierra Leone; weak labour market information system, especially in Sierra Leone; lack of opportunities for joint training and border management; and economic challenges and political instability in the ECOWAS region.

Lack of effective mechanisms for dealing with Member States that violate migrants' rights is also a challenge to the implementation of the protocol.

In view of these findings, a number of recommendations were made for promoting free movement in the ECOWAS sub-region. Training needs are also identified in the two countries.

Finally the future implementation outcomes of the ECOWAS protocol depend largely on the commitment of the Member States and financial support that they receive from ECOWAS and the development partners.

While ECOWAS must continue to lobby Member States to implement agreements and protocols, mechanisms must also evolve to deal with states that continue to violate the rights of citizens and migrants.



Phase I (Right of Entry) of the protocol. Apart from abolishing visa and entry requirements for 90 days, both countries have adopted the standardized ECOWAS Travel Certificate, even though this is currently not accepted as a travel document, especially in Ghana.

Both Sierra Leone and Ghana have recorded some achievements and good practices that can be followed by other countries in the sub-region.

These good practices include modest level of knowledge about intra-regional flows of migrants among some public officials, especially in Ghana and the recognition of the economic contributions of ECOWAS immigrants, especially in Sierra Leone. The acknowledgment of the contribution of immigrants to the economy of Sierra Leone is good for the implementation