National Conference on Youth Migration

13 – 14 March 2017

Khartoum - Sudan
Summary of Event

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in partnership with the Sudanese Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) and in collaboration with the Secretariat of Sudanese Working Abroad (SSWA) organized the first youth conference in Sudan. This event was supported through generous funding from the US State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) through the “Addressing Irregular Migration Flows and Upholding Human Rights of Migrants along the North-Eastern African Migration Route and North Africa Project” NOAH III, and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) through the “Enhancing Sudan’s Technical Capacity on Migration Management Project”. The conference was organized as part of the wider efforts of IOM Sudan to address youth concerns that drive an increasing number to migrate in search of opportunities in other countries and to better inform them on the risks of irregular migration.

Held on the 13 – 14 March 2017, the National Conference on Youth Migration gathered 150 youth participants coming from 18 states of Sudan. In addition to the youth, political parties, civil society and cultural institutions representatives, the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking (NCCT), COR (Commission for Refugees), the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Welfare, Media1, and the UK Embassy along with representatives from UN agencies such as UNICEF, and UNDP attended the opening ceremony bringing the total number of participants to 235.

Objective of the Conference

The main idea behind organizing this type of conference was to enable youth and youth institutions to engage and exchange ideas, hence creating a platform for open dialogue to discuss the challenges and drivers of migration as well as to enhance youth knowledge and raising their awareness on the risks of irregular migration. Both MoYS and IOM intended these discussions to then pave the way towards informing possible youth projects and policies related to youth migration. By supporting youth from different states to interact, both MoYS and IOM expected that these interactions would lead to the creation of a Nation Wide Network through which youth can share information.

The State Minister of MoYS, Mr. Hussien Hamdi, in his opening remarks stated that “…reasons for migration are many. This topic is a concern in Sudan because of the geographical position of the country. We cannot prohibit migration in Sudan but we must regulate it”.

Preparatory Work

The MoYS in Sudan has approached IOM as the leading UN migration agency for collaboration and technical support in organizing youth conference. The preparation and planning process took longer than anticipated by all parties. Nevertheless, in order to structure a conference with well delivered outcomes, it was necessary to conduct meetings with youth organizations, groups, bloggers, the British Council (working with youth groups), private sector and other stakeholders to hear from them youth perspectives and gain an understanding of the expectations and concrete outcomes from this type of conference.

Facilitation: Acknowledging that effective facilitation for these types of events is crucial, MoYS and IOM worked diligently to identify the appropriate facilitators for each session and working group. A total of nine highly qualified facilitators coming from UNFPA, Y Peer, MoYS, and Youth Diaspora were identified for the group. The decision to have three facilitators per group was deliberately made to ensure active engagement of each participant and objective driven discussion. Preparatory meetings with the facilitators were held beforehand explaining the objective of the conference and expected outcomes.

Cooperation with UNV: A couple of days ahead of the conference 15 youth volunteers from the United Nations Volunteering (UNV) programme were selected to provide organizational support as well as note taking during the conference.

Selection of Participants: The MoYS took the lead in identifying youth from multiple states through the state ministries and youth organizations. IOM actively identified youth from Khartoum in order to ensure diversity and equal opportunity to university students, youth initiatives and organizations and marginalized groups. This was done acknowledging that each category, through their diversified experiences and perspectives on the topic of migration, has an added value for the conference. Through this process, 150 youth were identified and invited to participate (54 coming from 18 states and 96 from the capital Khartoum).

*Media included; S24 channel and various Journalists.
The National Conference on Youth Migration

**DAY 1**

The opening speeches were followed with presentations on topics related to migration: The current situation of Youth in Sudan by Dr. Ghafari Fadlalla from MoYS; Reasons for Migration by Dr. Khaled Lord from Sudan Center for Migration and Development Studies, and the Risks of Irregular Migration by Altahir Badereldien from IOM.

This main topic of the day was supplemented with youth experience sharing. The first experience shared was by Mai Khidir, a young female who came back to Sudan from England and founded Al Sudaniya Mentoring Initiative. The organization’s main goal is to empower, engage, and inspire women through self-development initiatives, career planning and public speaking. This is supported and facilitated through sessions and video calls that they organize between mentors with international professional experience and young women in Sudan. One of the mentees from the programme shared her experience with the audience, commenting on how enrolling into this programme made her more confident and able to face challenges. Even after completing the programme she remains in contact with her mentor for advice.

The second experience shared was by a young man, Ahmed Nadir, who sought employment opportunities within Sudan. He shared the challenges he faced whilst job hunting and the strategies he applied to find a job such as attending additional courses to improve his skills. One challenge he faced was lack of money to pay for the courses, so he decided to teach to raise the needed funds. Now Ahmed has a career in Sudan with DAL Group; thus, sending out the message to the audience that once you are determined, anything is possible.

The private sector also took active part in showcasing the opportunities that are provided to youth in Sudan. The sector was represented by DAL Group and Haggar companies.

The day was concluded with a play on the risks of irregular migration named “Boats of Death” performed by the Mobile Theater team. This play was produced by IOM Sudan in partnership with the NCCT.

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**DAY 2**

Day two began with the presentations of the following papers:

- The demographic effect of youth migration by Dr. Ibtsiam Abdalla from the National Population Center.
- The social effect of migration by Dr. Fatma Ibrahim from Sudan Center for Migration and Development Studies.
- The economic impact of migration by Dr. Siddig Medawi from MoYS.

Following these three presentations, participants were divided into three working groups themed:

1. Safe migration, What is required to ensure safe migration?
2. Opportunities youth would like to see in Sudan?
3. Diaspora’s role in contributing to the development of Sudan and what they expect from Sudan in return.

Each working group was facilitated by the three facilitators from UNFPA, Y PEER, MoYS, and Youth Diaspora. According to the post evaluation forms, youth indicated that they have benefited from the group work and found the discussions stimulating outlet for expressing their views.

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**Closing Ceremony**

The closing ceremony was attended by the Egyptian Ambassador and representatives of the Egyptian Embassy, Embassy of India, Deputy of the Saudi Arabian Ambassador, Embassy of Germany, the State Minister of Youth and Sports, his deputy, and the Sudan Presidential Representative.

The closing ceremony was marked with the presentation of five project ideas, and recommendations as outcome of this conference. The Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, Mr. Nagmaldeen Mohammed Almardi, in his closing remarks indicated that “... these recommendations are important because they are coming from the youth”.

The State Minister at the Council of Ministers and the Presidential Representative Mr. Fadol Abdalla stated that “…the Government of Sudan will take advantage of the human mobility, and ensure safe migration that can benefit the country. The recommendations that were presented here are important in covering youth issues”.

After the closing remarks, a traditional dance representing different states in Sudan was performed by a cultural music group.
A total of thirty-four Recommendations came out of the three working groups at the conference varying between formulation of new policies and the development of youth to managing youth migration, and creation of job opportunities for youth. All of these recommendations are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs).

1. A

1.1 Encourage development programmes that have balanced approach particularly local development.

2. B

2.1 Support development of the infrastructure related to the youth activities throughout the country.

3. C

3.1 Strengthen the participation of youth in political, economic and social public affairs.

4. D

4.1 Integrate youth in the development plans and provide support to them through effective policies, strategies and action plans.

5. E

5.1 Ensure that young migrants have the required skills to benefit from migration, provide them with appropriate training and develop a manual to guide them.

6. F

6.1 Maintain and preserve the good Sudanese values and traditions.

7. G

7.1 Develop management system for the knowledge transfer and draft legislations to systemize it.

8. H

8.1 Provide psycho-social support to youth and their families and integrate related issues in school curricula.

Conference outcomes:

34 Recommendations
Empowering Youth

Economically

Youth Industrial
City

Youth and
Agriculture

Youth Bank

Patriotism among
Youth

To reduce irregular migration, improve the economic situation, and reduce poverty.

Increase national income, provide job opportunities, decrease unemployment, increase local production and the GDP, and reduce crime rate.

Help youth settle and contribute to the development of country’s economy.

Finance youth business ideas to contribute to reducing poverty and unemployment.

Enlighten Sudanese youth on and outside Sudan with the culture of Sudan, its heritage, values, folklore, and important people from its rich history in order to strengthen the sense of belonging to a nation.

To provide land to youth, and raise their awareness on the importance of agriculture. Train selected number of youth from different states in Sudan on industrial irrigation, cultivation of crops, creation of green houses and community projects.

Investing in closing the production cycle, to generate employment for at least 1,000 youth, focus on production of 150,000 units of fruits and its processing in juice with bottle production as integrated part of the production cycle. On this way the revenue generated can be increased up to 600,000 SDGs in one year.

The government in collaboration with investors, business companies and donors to provide agriculture lands for youth. Youth to do a feasibility study and apply for an ownership of an agriculture land of 4,500 Acres to live on and cultivate. The lands to be paid off in installments to the government with the support of funders.

To form a youth body to come up with ideas for youth project. The body to be registered at the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports. Upon the approval of the youth body and project ideas by the Council of Ministries, the projects should be supervised by the Central Bank of Sudan. Funding to be provided by International Organizations and local funding supporting youth initiatives.

Youth gatherings in universities, schools, youth clubs and centers, programmes through media, workshops, lecturers, mobile theaters, exhibitions and camping on a monthly basis.

Why?

1. Provide land to youth and raise their awareness on the importance of agriculture.
2. Finance youth business ideas to contribute to reducing poverty and unemployment.
3. Inform Sudanese youth on culture of Sudan, its heritage, values, folklore and important people from its rich history.

How?

1. Investing in the production cycle to generate employment for at least 1,000 youth on production of 150,000 units of fruits and its processing in juice with bottle production.
2. The government in collaboration with investors, business companies and donors to provide agriculture lands for youth.
3. To form a youth body to come up with ideas for youth project and registered at the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Evaluation of the Conference

Participants:
- 150 Participants
- 74 Participants
- 58% Filled out evaluation forms
- 42% Attended the National Conference

Youth expectations for the outcomes of the conference:
- To come up with recommendations that will help regulate migration and the need for these recommendations to be implemented
- To reduce irregular migration, improve the economic situation, and reduce poverty.

Reasons for Migration:
- Unemployment
- Poverty

According to youth:
- 31% believe diaspora can contribute to the development of their country
- 30% believe there are opportunities in Sudan worth pursuing

Among the main topics presented:
- The current situation of youth in Sudan
- Reasons for migration
- Risks of irregular migration
- Youth testimonies
- Private Sectors (opportunities in Sudan)
- Social and Economic impact

The majority of youth rated the paper on the risks of irregular migration as the most interesting and had good information.

General Opinions:
- 31% believe there are opportunities in Sudan they will not migrate
- 39% of the youth believe if they have opportunities in Sudan they will not migrate
- 64% Fair
- 33% Good
Lessons Learned

IOM, MoYS and the facilitators gathered after the conference, to reflect on the work that went into its organization and draw lessons learned regarding the challenges faced.

While the general agreement was that the conference came at the right time, a time when the topic of migration is at the center of global attention and Sudanese youth are increasingly using irregular channels in search of their dreams, it was also acknowledged that it is important far in advance to know exactly what this type of activity should achieve.

All involved parties agreed that the conference was a success in terms of presentations, discussions, and working groups and that in general it has met the objectives set; nevertheless, all agreed that in case of a next conference there is room for improvement. Although the objective of creating youth nationwide network platform was not fully achieved as planned because of the limited timing and extensive discussions during the working groups’ sessions which did not allow for the groups to come up with ideas for this platform; however, participants exchanged their contacts and created their own WhatsApp group to continue interacting with each other.

The parties also acknowledged the importance of appointing focal points for the project as early as possible in the planning stage, as delay faced in this regard from MoYS side caused delay in accomplishing timely some of the tasks. The lengthy administrative procedures, in specific from MoYS side, highlight the importance of reaching agreement on activities to be conducted in the early stage of the planning process.

Another lesson learned was that the budgetary expectations should be realistic and MoYS should advocate for having their own funding allocations in future for similar activities.

When it comes to the participant selection, all parties agreed that the lower number of youth attendees and diversified presentation was hindered by the MoYS selection of youth that led to the nomination of staff from the Ministry at the state level and that in future this should be avoided.

Despite many challenges faced, IOM and MoYS worked hard, hand in hand to resolve them demonstrating that the partnership between specialized agencies and ministries on specific topics is crucial in organizing these type of events.

Way Forward

This conference was the first of its kind in Sudan. Addressing youth and migration as a topic is of a big importance to Sudan being a country of both origin and destination. According to the youth and based on their discussions and evaluation forms, youth in Sudan are migrating because they have no job opportunities, poverty, in part driven by insufficient policies to protect and include them in development plans.

This conference was organized to sensitize the youth on the concept of migration and to hear their voices through the work-groups. For the participants, this conference was as an opportunity to raise their voices and debate on issues that are not addressed or being considered from a youth perspective. In one working group, there was a heated discussion between a youth activist and a member of the MoYS which shows that youth are ready to speak and critically engage when given a chance. Some benefited by learning migration terminologies that were new to them; “there are definitions and differences I did not know such as the difference between regular and irregular migration” stated one participant. The majority appreciated having the opportunity to discuss their views as it has been mentioned by a participant stating “We found someone to hear us and listen to our issues. We couldn’t find this in the past and now we found it. Another participant mentioned “The conference is the first of its kind discussing this topic. It was very special and I hope more is to come”.

IOM Sudan in partnership with the MoYS will closely look into the 34 recommendations and five projects that this conference generated and work on incorporating them into future project proposals that are sustainable, in line with the SDG’s and IOM’s Migration Governance Framework, and address the needs of those youth whilst supporting them to find the opportunities they are looking for in Sudan. IOM will also continue its efforts in supporting skills development programmes for young people and advocating for the protection of their rights as migrants and inclusion of their views in the national development plan for the country.

IOM WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK ALL DONORS FOR THEIR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON YOUTH MIGRATION

IOM EXTENDS ITS GRATITUDE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN FOR THE COLLABORATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON YOUTH MIGRATION