

Significance of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Ensuring Safe Migration

Sarat Dash, Chief of Mission, IOM

Background and Introduction

International migration is a complex phenomenon that touches on a multiplicity of economic, social and security aspects affecting our daily lives in an increasingly interconnected world. Migration is a term that encompasses a wide variety of movements and situations involving people from all walks of life and backgrounds. More than ever before, migration touches on all States and people in an era of deepening globalization¹. Key to the transformation in this phase of globalisation is the role of technology, especially information and communication technology (ICT). The unprecedented growth on the technology has made possible different array of things, which were unthinkable few years ago. From mobile based route planning to the ability to create electronic identities for the people that can be read globally.

Migration is intertwined with geopolitics, trade and cultural exchange, and provides opportunities for States, businesses and communities to benefit enormously. Migration has helped improve people's lives in both origin and destination countries, and has offered opportunities for millions of people worldwide to forge safe and meaningful lives abroad. However, not all migration occurs in positive circumstances. We have in recent years seen an increase in migration and displacement occurring due to conflict, persecution, environmental degradation and change, and a profound lack of human security and opportunity. While most international migration occurs legally, some of the greatest insecurities for migrants, and much of the public concern about immigration is associated with irregular migration².

In 2015, migration was for the first time officially included in the global development framework by the international development community. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which sets the development priorities to be achieved by 2030 contains a target specifically dedicated to migration under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 on reducing inequalities: Target 10.7 calls for all countries to implement policies that "facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies"³. Inclusion of migration in SDG points, to the fact that the prominence of migration as a public policy issue and newsworthy topic has perhaps never been more pronounced. Migration is increasingly seen as a high-priority policy issue by many governments, politicians and the broader public

¹ IOM, 2018 – World Migration Report 2018

² IOM, 2018 – World Migration Report 2018

³ <https://gmdac.iom.int/sites/default/files/presentations/safe%20migration/Final%20report%20Nuremberg%20workshop%2018%2008%2016%20%28002%29%20SHARED%20WITH%20PARTICIPANTS.pdf>

throughout the world. Its importance to economic prosperity, human development, and safety and security ensures that it will remain a top priority for the foreseeable future. This is becoming more pronounced at the national level as the focus on migration intensifies, but it is also evident at the international level. Similarly, incremental advancements in international cooperation on migration have taken a further step with States committing to agree on a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018.

Ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration requires effective implementation of policies and systems, access to regular channels for migration, well-administered visa and entry schemes, and effective identity management practices. Maintaining the integrity of migration and mobility schemes requires the ability to detect irregular migration and prohibit illegal cross-border activity, such as, in particular trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and other relevant criminal activities. It also requires the ability to identify and properly address, the specific needs of all migrants potentially crossing borders and understand the underlying gender and power dynamics that may contribute to irregular migration and illegal cross-border activity⁴.

In short, “the concept of safe migration concerns the promotion of legal labour migration as a means to safeguard the rights of migrant workers, who leave country of origin in search of opportunities elsewhere. Safe migration is also about raising awareness of the risks that are inherent to irregular migration processes and the dangers of trafficking in persons”⁵. Nation States, UN and international organisations are rooting for use of technology in ensuring safe migration and creating and sharing of electronic data to counter irregular migration.

The present paper aims to highlight the role of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in promoting safe migration. The paper is divided into three sections including the current section. The second section documents the global migration trends and highlight the gravity of irregular and unsafe migration; the third highlights the role of CRVS in ensuring safe migration and last section concludes the paper.

Global Migration Context

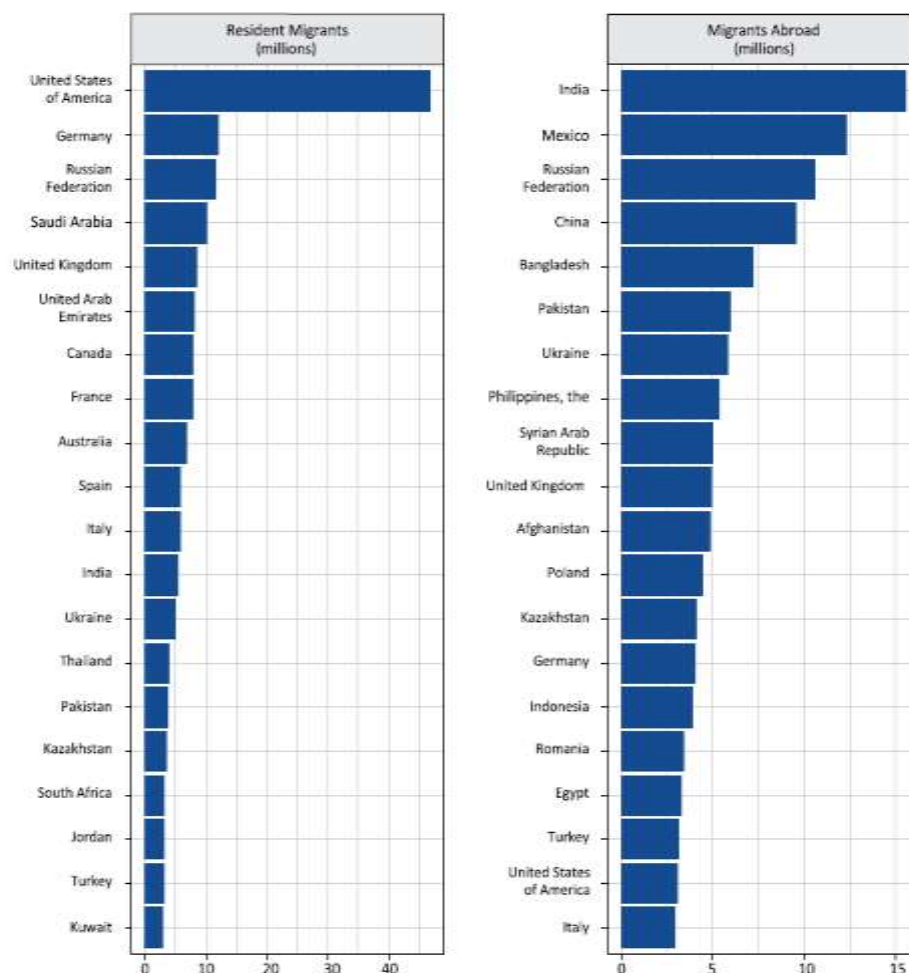
International migration is a complex phenomenon that touches on a multiplicity of economic, social and security aspects affecting our daily lives in an increasingly interconnected world. The increase inequality between the regions and nation-state, revolution in the information and communication

⁴ http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Promoting-safe-migration_IOM_IATF-Issue-Brief.pdf

⁵ <http://informedmigration.ge/cms/en/Introduction-to-Safe-Migration>

technology and globalization of aviation sector played a key role in the increased level of global migration⁶. This unprecedented mobility has challenged many traditional notions regarding migration such as: (a) Migration can no longer be seen as just from the economic prisms and there are other factors, socio-cultural, socio-political factors and inter-personal, which is affecting migration decision making; (b) The lines between voluntary and forced migration were never as

Figure 1: Top 20 destinations (left) and origins (right) of international migrants in 2015 (millions)



Source: UN DESA, 2015a. Datasets for the 2015 Revision available at www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml.

blurred as they are today. How would you describe the 2015 maritime route to Malaysia; The migration flow does not follow the linear pattern any longer. As depicted in figure one, Gulf

⁶ WMR, 2018

countries have become important destination countries in the past decades; (d) Moving away of the pessimistic scholarship on migrants more and more positive aspect of migration is coming to the fore. For example, recently (Dec 2016), McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) produced a global migration report “People on the Move: Global Migration’s Impact and Opportunity” highlights some key positive aspect of global migration”. The study made an interesting observation on global GDP and migration. It states that Migrants make up just 3.4% of the world’s population but nearly 10% of global GDP. Migration drives global productivity, particularly in developed economies. After moving from their countries of birth, many migrants land in an environment where they have much greater potential to be productive in absolute dollar terms (particularly true for those moving voluntarily from developing to developed countries). In other words, Mobility “magnifies” productivity. Analysing the global GDP, the MGI estimates migrants contributed roughly \$6.7 trillion (9.4%) to global GDP in 2015; 3 trillion more than they would have produced in their home country”.

In 2015, there were an estimated 244 million international migrants globally (3.3% of the world’s population): an increase from an estimated 155 million people in 2000 (2.8% of the world’s population). However, contrary to the popular narrative, refugees and asylum seekers, only constitutes 10% of the whole migration stream. Another interesting point is the gender segregation of the migrants’ population – against the popular belief female migrants constitutes 48% of the whole migration population (WMR, 2018). Also as Figure 1 suggests, the western nations no longer dominate the migration flow as south-south migration is gaining prominence. In 2015, almost 37% of the international migrants moved between global south countries a greater share than south-north movement⁷. Also, there is no clear water tight boundaries between sending and receiving countries; for example, many countries (such as India, Pakistan, Turkey, USA, Kazakhstan etc.) in table 1 features on both top destination as well as origin countries.

The discussion on “safe migration” has to elaborate upon irregular migration as well which remain the main challenge in promoting safe and regular migration. Irregular migration is hardly quantifiable or measurable, given the often-clandestine nature of irregularity, the difficulty in accessing administrative data on immigration status, and the fact that a migrant’s status can change. Spiralling networks of traffickers and smugglers are one of the biggest challenges in regulating migration. It is estimated that human trafficking and smuggling makes 150 billion dollars in illegal profits per year, more than 40.3 million victims of modern slavery exist globally today, with more than 60 per cent of these victims are in Asia Pacific. There is a strong connection between migration and human trafficking. In fact, it’s estimated that 44 per cent of people living in conditions of forced

⁷ <https://gmdac.iom.int/gmdac-migfacts-international-migration>

labour are migrants. The World Migration Report (WMR 2018) attempts to synthesize different crude estimates on irregular migration by country/region which is outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Estimates of Irregular Migrant Population in Selected Countries and Regions

Country/Region	Year	Estimated Irregular Population
Australia	2011	58,400
European Union	2008	1.9-3.8 Million
	2008	8 Million
Germany	2014	180,00-520,000
Greece	2011	390,000
Israel	2015	150,000
Italy	2008	279,000-461,000
Russian Federation	2011	5-6 Million
South Africa	2010	3-6 Million
Spain	2008	354,000
United Kingdom	2007	417,000 - 863,000
United States	2014	11.1 Million
	2016	11.3 Million

(Source: WMR, 2018 p. 21)

Safe Migration and CRVS System:

Very limited attempts have been made to bring safe migration into CRVS system. Apart from Bangladesh, only the Pacific CRVS has established links between SDG and CRVS⁸. SDG clearly recognise the importance of CRVS and advocates for it (Target16.9, 17.18).

The importance of data management and seamless sharing of data is key to safe migration management. Some key recommendations from the global discussions are: 1. The use of standardized registration data systems in different countries could improve the quality of the data collected and thus enable better comparison activities; 2. Governments, agencies and organizations collecting data, related to safe migration (such as passport/visa details, skill certification, health status, insurance status etc.) should collaborate more: data should be easily accessible and ready to share. In order to ensure safe migration, digitization of migration management is taking place in many countries. Initiatives such as promoting machine readable passports, e-visas, e-skill certification, online banking and money transfer and linking these crucial information to bio-metrics have been seen as important intervention towards countering irregular and unsafe migration. In addition to the basic population data required to address safe, regular and orderly migration; orderly migration relies on adequate identity documentation and the security (veracity) of this information – in order to ensure confidence between countries that ID documentation is reliable. Strong CRVS systems (that record all births and deaths) provide the foundation for such a national

⁸ https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/crvs/Global_CRVS_Docs/news/CRVS_and_the_SDGs_2016.pdf

system. The CRVS ++ for example will be very useful when it records complete migration information – passport/visa status, entry/exit, health status, and insurance status. In this direction, the SMART⁹ card initiative of Bangladesh is of particular relevance and during the implementation of CRVS the implementer should deliberate on interlinking CRVS and Migrants’ SMART card.

Migration, Citizenship and CRVS

Registration at birth can become first step for citizenship. This can become important tool for people looking at multiple citizenship, children of migrants and returnee migrants. Citizenship law varies from state to state however registration at birth and tracking throughout the lifecycle will provide extra impetus to granting citizenship. For example, in some cases it is observed that rescued trafficked victim fail to obtain citizenship of their country of origin due to lack of birth registration. A robust and complete CRVS system can be very useful in such cases.

Migration Management and CRVS

Safe migration management has four main areas:

1. Migration and Development which basically analyses role of remittances, migrants’ productivity and diaspora in development of country of origin and destination;
2. Facilitating Migration which looks into the issue of labour migration, family reunification and Integration;
3. Regulating Migration which focuses on visa systems, border management, counter trafficking and counter smuggling; and,
4. Forced Migration which deals with issues like refugees, resettlements and displacements.

The CRVS can support all four areas on migration management in a very meaningful way. The table below highlights some linkages between different components of migration management and CRVS.

Components of Migration Management	How CRVS can help
Labour Migration	Tracking of educational qualification can help in skill determination or skill promotion. This will have positive impact on employability of the migrant workers at the destination countries as the e-skill certificates will reduce the chances of fraud and will bring more reliability and trust. Migration tracking will promote safe migration by again reducing the fraud related to manual passports/visa, and other certificates. Additionally a robust and complete data set will help in tracking missing

⁹ For details on SMART card please visit <http://www.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/resources/Static%20PDF%20and%20DOC/publication/Migration-BOEP.pdf>

	people from a particular geographic area. The “missing citizen” which may have taken irregular migration route. This initiative can be implemented in the high risk trafficking areas.
Family reunification	Complete birth registration and tracking at different stages will make family reunification process easy, especially in the case of forced migration and trafficking/smuggling.
Passport/Visa system	If procedures for verifying identity documents and evidence for registration are in place then the passport/visa verification process will be simplified and fast. In a fully functional CRVS system the passport/visa issuing authority will have review a single system access all the documents of the person.
Border Management	Registering all citizens at birth will boost countries identity management which is one of the key component of border management. Adding bio-metric component CRVS will make verification of movement of people much faster.
Counter trafficking/smuggling	<p>A complete registration of residents and subsequent tracking will help monitor at risk community and as mentioned above tracking of “missing people” will become easier.</p> <p>A robust, up-to-date and bio-metric bases CRVS system will help in protection of victims of trafficking by better targeting the victims to provide social protection.</p> <p>It will also help in better prosecution of traffickers/smugglers as impersonating will be literally impossible with a functional CRVS system.</p> <p>One of the aim of CRVS is better targeting of social protection schemes. This may impact overall poverty situation as well in the long run.</p>

Conclusion

The global initiatives like Global Compact for Safe orderly and regular migration and SDGs will play a crucial role in ensuring safe migration. A fully functional and bio-metric based CRVS system can help policy makers and executioners to realise the goal of safe migration by reducing fraud, better tracking, and faster verification process. However, we have to be cautious and extremely careful to safeguard interest of people. The online digital world is not completely safe either. Hacking of online system and data breach have become very common. Therefore, the CRVS system should pay full attention to maintain confidentiality and security of the data and information generated in the system.

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