International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The UN Migration Agency

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WORLD MIGRATION
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InfoSheet No 6
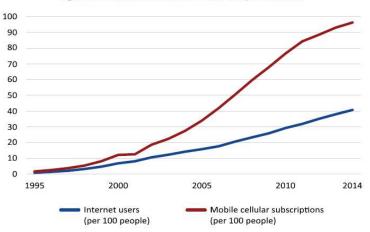# Mobility, Migration and Transnational Connectivity

Recent advances in transportation and telecommunications technology have heralded massive changes in how we access information and interact globally in real time. Increasing transnational connectivity is shaping how people move internationally in ways that were not previously possible.

The links between international migration and complex processes of greater interconnectedness are of growing importance for several reasons. Firstly, a better understanding of the linkages provides some insight into the broader global dynamics affecting populations likely to move, including those at risk of displacement and/or irregular migration. Secondly, it can help us appreciate the role and limits of policies in influencing and shaping migration trends and patterns. Thirdly, greater interconnectedness can present considerable challenges to better managing unsafe, irregular migration. Fourthly, the recent advances in transportation and telecommunications technology have heralded massive change already, which appears to be part of a longer-term trend that is unlikely to change course.

Chapter 6 examines what this increasing transnational connectivity means for mobility and migration and how related processes are being shaped. Following a brief overview of the key advances in transportation and telecommunications technology globally, the chapter discusses how transnational connectivity is affecting migration processes via impacts on migrants, non-state actors and states.

Figure 3. Global Internet and mobile telephone access

Internet users (per 100 people)   Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people)

KEY POINTS

- Migrants and their communities are experiencing increasing connectivity in a multitude of ways. These have included enhanced social contact, remittance flows, return and circular migration as well as integration. The impacts can be many and varied, depending on the circumstances of the country (economic, social and political) as well as the situations of the migrants themselves.

- Just as we have seen significant changes in the day-to-day lives of migrants and their communities brought about by advances in technology and greater interconnectedness, non-State actors involved in supporting, facilitating or reporting on migration and mobility have been profoundly affected in a variety of ways. For example, migrant smuggling and human trafficking networks are using ICT (especially smartphone technology) to organize international travel, connect with clients and (in some cases) extract ransoms from family back home. Smugglers also use social media to connect with new clients and advertise their services.

- As access to international movement has increased, States have sought to implement a range of strategies to manage this increase in scale, pace and diversity, and some States have sought to maximize the benefits of migration. Immigration and border management policies and practices, for example, have evolved rapidly to account for perceptions of risk associated with the movement of large numbers of people. An emerging practice between States and the private sector involves enhancing ICT and transnational connectivity to lessen migration pressure in rural or remote areas.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

- Continued investments need to be made in developing technologies that can be used by migrants to avoid dangerous and possibly deadly migration pathways as well as abuse and exploitation. Innovative ways of using technology, social media and apps (such as the mobile phone application, MigApp, developed by IOM) can support and facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration.

- Such technologies need to be rolled out and made available on a more even basis. The recent improvements in global connectivity, even in some of the more remote and least developed countries, needs to be further supported so that new technologies and applications (such as those related to mobile money) can assist communities worldwide, and reduce the risk of uneven implementation.

- While States have invested in technology based on real-time connectivity to enhance their ability to monitor borders and detect and prevent irregular entry, similar investments in analytical capability are needed for a better understanding of the changes in migration processes.

- As globalization and transnational connectivity deepen, further research on the impact on human rights of the indiscriminate sharing of personal data is necessary. This is critical to supporting more effective policy responses, including on global governance of migration.

- Greater recognition of the role of technology in migration management will be central in the development of global responses, such as the 2018 Global Compact on Migration. Although greater connectivity and the ability to move information, money and ideas in real time may pose challenges, it is likely that some of the most effective responses can also be found in emerging technology.

To read the report, please go to https://www.iom.int/world-migration-report-2018