



WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2018:
CHAPTER 1

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Cover photo: Lidya immigrated to London, United Kingdom, to study International Relations and Journalism, two fields that did not have many job opportunities in her homeland of Lithuania. Today, she owns and runs a Public Relations firm, which mainly caters to UK clients. She feels that part of her success in London is the result of her exposure to different cultures, including the British culture, which she credits for helping her understand the various needs of her UK-based clients. © IOM (Photo: Muse Mohammed)

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1 REPORT OVERVIEW: MAKING SENSE OF MIGRATION IN AN INCREASINGLY INTERCONNECTED WORLD¹

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 of all walks of life and backgrounds. More than ever before, migration touches all States and people in an era of deepening globalization. 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. Not all migration occurs in positive circumstances, however. 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 migration.

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 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. Incremental advancements in international cooperation on migration have taken a further step with States committing to agree a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018.

Barely a day goes by without multiple media reports – whether in traditional or newer forms of media – focusing on aspects of migration, frequently on negative aspects. While this may reflect, in part, the changing nature of migration in certain regions of the world, it is important to be aware how media and news are constructed and produced – news reporting continues to place greater emphasis on “bad” news. Social media is widely acknowledged as a forum that provides little or no filter, with the consequence that there tends to be much greater emphasis on opinion than on facts and analysis. Amid the often polarized political, public and media discussions and debates on migration, evidence, knowledge and balanced analyses that encompass historical insights as well as strategic implications appear to have little space or traction. Nonetheless, such aspects continue to be critical to developing a better understanding of the various forms and manifestations of migration, as well as how best to enhance its opportunities and benefits and respond to the challenges that it can present.

Against a backdrop of growing interconnections between people and States, making migration safer and better regulated have become key global priorities. This is reflected, for example, in the United Nations 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which sets out the intention of States to develop a global compact

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on migration as well as a separate global compact on refugees by the end of 2018. The specific content and commitments agreed in these Compacts are still under discussion at the time of writing this report. However, the fact that States have agreed to discuss and negotiate these new instruments of global governance shows that there is growing recognition of the importance of improving our common understanding of the dynamics and complexities of international migration and displacement, and of addressing these issues at a global level.

In this context, the *World Migration Report 2018* seeks to use the body of available data and research to contribute to more evidence-based analysis and policy debates about some of the most important and pressing global migration issues of our time. By their very nature, the complex dynamics of global migration can never be fully measured, understood and regulated. However, as this report shows, we do have a continuously growing and improving body of data and evidence that can help us make better sense of the basic features of migration in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.

How is migration changing?

In most discussions on migration, the starting point is usually numbers. The current global estimate is that there were around 244 million international migrants in the world in 2015, which equates to 3.3 per cent of the global population.² A first important point to note is that this is a very small minority of the global population, meaning that remaining within one's country of birth overwhelmingly remains the norm. The great majority of people in the world do not migrate across borders; much larger numbers migrate within countries (an estimated 740 million internal migrants in 2009³). That said, the increase in international migrants has been evident over time – both numerically and proportionally – and at a greater rate than had been anticipated by some. For example, a 2003 projection was that by 2050 international migrants would account for 2.6 per cent of the global population or 230 million (a figure that has already been surpassed).⁴ In contrast, in 2010, a revised projection for 2050 was 405 million international migrants globally.⁵ However, in formulating global population projections (of which international migration is one part) demographers note that “international migration was the variable that had shown the greatest volatility in the past and was therefore most difficult to project with some accuracy”.⁶ Notwithstanding this uncertainty, which is in part related to significant economic and geopolitical events (such as the global financial crisis in 2008 and the current conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic), it is likely that the underlying fundamentals related to increasing connectivity will see the trend continue. Given the considerable rise in migration in certain parts of the world over the past few years, it is likely that the next estimate of the global number of international migrants produced by UN DESA will show a further rise in the scale of international migration and perhaps also in the proportion of migrants in the global population.

In recent years we have also seen a significant increase in displacement, both internal and across borders, which has largely stemmed from civil and transnational conflict, including acts of violent extremism outside actual war zones. Current data indicate that in 2016 there were 40.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide and 22.5 million refugees.⁷ Further, the total number of people estimated to have been displaced globally is the

2 UN DESA, 2016.

3 UNDP, 2009.

4 See, for example, IOM's 2003 *World Migration Report*, which drew upon UN population data (UN DESA, 2002) and migration data (IOM, 2000).

5 IOM, 2010.

6 UN DESA, 2003.

7 IDMC, 2017; UNHCR, 2017.

highest on record. At the time of writing, more than half a million Rohingya refugees had fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh since late August 2017, adding further to the world's displaced population. It is likely that 2017 estimates of displacement will remain as high as the 2016 global figure, if not reaching higher.

When considered together, these numbers paint a concerning picture of migration and displacement globally, and more pointedly, they indicate that such large numbers of people moving (including under duress) are related in part to significant events, such as conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.⁸ The global migration picture must, therefore, be seen as a sum of many parts and it is important to put recent developments in specific regions into global and historical contexts. Migration corridors that have developed over time often have a foundation in geographic proximity, but they are also shaped by trade and economic factors, conflict and human (in)security, and community and ethnic ties, as well as smuggling and trafficking. Further chapters in this report examine these aspects, including by geographic region (see chapter 3); a global overview of migration and migrants is presented in chapter 2.

Notwithstanding a natural tendency to focus on the challenges that migration presents, so that they can be better understood and therefore managed, it is well worth revisiting briefly what we know about some of the considerable benefits of migration. In a period of heightened internal and international displacement (and related irregular migration), the enormous benefits of migration can become somewhat lost in the debate. The need to rebalance considerations of migration has been recognized by many international organizations, and there has been a recent resurgence in critical examinations of the relationship between human development, economic growth and migration at the global level. Recent work by the IMF, McKinsey Global Institute and the OECD, as well as the ongoing work of the World Bank and regional development banks, highlight the importance of ensuring that we remain focused on the successes of migration as well as the challenges.

Benefits of migration

Migration can generate very large benefits for migrants, their families and countries of origin. The wages that migrants earn abroad can be many multiples of what they could earn doing similar jobs at home. For example, a study conducted in 2009 found that the ratio of wages earned by workers in the United States to wages earned by identical workers (with the same country of birth, years of schooling, age and sex, and rural/urban residence) abroad ranges from 15.45 (for workers born in Yemen) to 1.99 (workers born in the Dominican Republic), with a median ratio of 4.11.⁹ The wage differences and relative income gains from migration are largest for lower-skilled workers, whose international movements around the world are the most restricted.¹⁰ The increase in migrants' earnings can also lead to considerable improvements in the welfare and human development of migrants' families, either directly if they are with the migrant in the host country, or indirectly through remittances. Importantly, the beneficial effects of migration for migrants and their families go beyond economic impacts and frequently include improvements in other dimensions of human development, such as education and health.¹¹ For example, according to a recent report by the World Bank, "migrants from the poorest countries, on average, experienced a 15-fold increase in income, a doubling of school enrolment rates, and a 16-fold reduction in child mortality after moving to a developed country".¹²

8 UN DESA, 2017.

9 See Clemens, Montenegro and Pritchett, 2009.

10 See, for example, the influential study by Gibson and McKenzie (2011), which evaluated the costs and benefits for migrant workers from participating in new low-skilled labour immigration programmes in Australia and New Zealand.

11 See UNDP, 2009.

12 World Bank, 2016.

In addition to benefiting individual migrants and their families, there is a large research literature that evidences the wider beneficial effects that emigration can have for migrants' countries of origin.¹³ Emigration can reduce unemployment and underemployment, contribute to poverty reduction, and – with the appropriate supportive policies – foster broader economic and social development in origin countries in a variety of ways. For example, the remittances sent by migrants back to their countries of origin provide significant financial capital flows and a relatively stable source of income. Remittances are generally a less volatile and more reliable source of foreign currency than other capital flows in many developing countries.¹⁴ According to the World Bank, in 1990 migrants remitted around USD 29 billion to lower- and middle-income countries in 1990.¹⁵ This amount had more than doubled to USD 74 billion in 2000 and reached USD 429 billion in 2016.¹⁶ Globally, remittances are now more than three times the amount of official development assistance. Migration can also result in the transfer of skills, knowledge and technology – effects that are hard to measure, but that could have considerable positive impacts on productivity and economic growth. Beyond these economic impacts, emigration can generate beneficial societal consequences for countries of origin, including poor and fragile States. For example, it is increasingly recognized that migrants can play a significant role in post-conflict reconstruction and recovery.¹⁷

There is widespread agreement that migration can also generate economic and other benefits for destination countries. The precise nature and size of these benefits at a given time critically depends on the extent to which the skills of migrants are complementary to those of domestic workers, as well as on the characteristics of the host economy. In general, immigration adds workers to the economy, thus increasing the gross domestic product (GDP) of the host country. There are also a variety of ways in which migrants can have positive effects on labour productivity and GDP per head, e.g. if migrants are more skilled than national workers and/or if immigration has positive effects for innovation and skills agglomeration.¹⁸ By nature or necessity, migrants are often more likely to be risk takers, and this quality has led to enormous contributions to many destination countries in areas such as technology, science, the arts and a range of other fields. In addition to enhancing national income and average living standards in destination countries, immigration can have a positive effect on the labour market by increasing labour supply in sectors and occupations suffering from shortages of workers, as well as helping address mismatches in the job market. These positive labour market effects are not just evident in high-skilled sectors, but can also occur in lower-skilled occupations.¹⁹ Immigration increases both the supply of and the demand for labour, which means that labour immigration (including of lower-skilled workers) can generate additional employment opportunities for existing workers. Of course, immigration can also have adverse labour market effects (e.g. on wages and employment of domestic workers), but most of the research literature finds that these negative impacts tend to be quite small, at least on average. Beyond the labour market and macroeconomy, the immigration of young workers can also help with easing pressures on pensions systems of high-income countries with rapidly ageing populations. Finally, in contrast to popular perceptions, a recent OECD study found that the net fiscal effects of immigration, i.e. the taxes migrants pay minus the benefits and government services they receive, tend to be quite small and – for most OECD countries analysed in the study – positive.²⁰

13 For a recent brief review, see, for example, World Bank, 2017. Also see UNDP, 2009.

14 World Bank, 2016.

15 World Bank Databank, 2017.

16 World Bank, 2017.

17 For a critical discussion of different forms of diaspora engagement in conflict settings, see, for example, Van Hear, 2011.

18 For a review of the research evidence on these issues, see, for example, Migration Advisory Committee, 2014.

19 See Ruhs and Anderson, 2010.

20 OECD, 2013.

The World Migration Report Series

IOM's first World Migration Report (WMR) was published in 2000, initially as a one-off publication designed to increase the understanding of migration by policymakers and the general public. Its contribution to migration policy as well as migration studies was timely, and its success heralded the world migration report series. Since 2000, nine world migration reports have been produced by IOM (see text box below) and it has become the organization's flagship publication series. Its continued strong focus is on making a relevant, sound and evidence-based contribution that increases the understanding of migration by policymakers, practitioners, researchers and the general public.

World Migration Report 2000

World Migration Report 2003: Managing Migration – Challenges and Responses for People on the Move

World Migration Report 2005: Costs and Benefits of International Migration

World Migration Report 2008: Managing Labour Mobility in the Evolving Global Economy

World Migration Report 2010: The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change

World Migration Report 2011: Communicating Effectively about Migration

World Migration Report 2013: Migrant Well-Being and Development

World Migration Report 2015: Migrants and Cities: New Partnerships to Manage Mobility

World Migration Report 2018

At a time of heightened concern of migration, and its increasing complexity and growing interlinkages with a multitude of other public policy issues, there is an even stronger case for maintaining the series' contribution to understanding migration. However, as the profile of migration has increased, so too has its various manifestations and its increasingly complex processes, including those that are becoming more transnational in nature. It is not hard to comprehend why people may at times feel overwhelmed by what they may read in media on migration, some of which may confound and confuse readers rather than clarify in a balanced way some of the complexities that continue to emerge under the ever-widening umbrella-term of "migration". In light of this, the world migration report series has been refined in order to focus on two key contributions for readers:

- Part I: key information on migration and migrants (including migration-related statistics).
- Part II: balanced, evidence-based analysis of complex and emerging migration issues.

It is our intention that the two parts of this and future world migration reports, therefore, provide both overview information that helps to explain migration patterns and processes globally and regionally, as well as insights and recommendations on major issues that policymakers are or will soon be grappling with. Refinement of the series is also in recognition that as the focus on, and complexity of, migration intensifies, reports limited to a single theme have the potential to understate or miss entirely the broader changes that are occurring in migration transformations globally. A world migration report series that is better able to provide overview information on migration and migrants along with analyses of more topical issues, is more likely to be an important resource for a greater number of people. In addition, we are cognizant that IOM's capacity as a publisher of migration-related material provides ample opportunity for thematic reports to be produced outside of the world migration report series (see, for example, the discussion in chapter 4 on IOM's research-related publications).

A further consideration of the series is its intended “value-add”. As an intergovernmental organization, and a new United Nations related organization, it is critical that IOM ensures the world migration report serves the public in providing information and analysis that is relevant, accessible, sound, accurate and balanced. IOM also recognizes, however, the existing substantial published material on migration, and so the world migration report must also be able to serve as a significant reference publication on migration that is able to draw on existing body of evidence and knowledge. Given recent work on migration governance, such as IOM’s Migration Governance Framework and the Migration Governance Index (now called Migration Governance Indicators) produced in collaboration with the Economist Intelligence Unit, the need to avoid duplication or significant overlap is a genuine one. In this way, the world migration report series has been reframed to offer a strategic focus on complex and emerging issues facing migration policymakers, rather than describe or assess current policy and governance on migration. The series is intended to complement rather than duplicate existing work.

World Migration Report 2018

This edition of the world migration report is the first in the revised series designed to better contribute to understandings of current and strategic migration issues. Part I, on “key data and information on migration”, includes separate chapters on global migration trends and patterns; regional dimensions and developments; and a discussion of recent contributions to migration research and analysis by academia and a wide range of different organizations, including IOM. These three chapters have been produced institutionally by IOM, drawing primarily on analyses by IOM experts, practitioners and officials around the world based on data from a wide range of relevant organizations.²¹

The six chapters in Part II are authored by applied and academic researchers working on migration and mobility. They cover a range of “complex and emerging migration issues” including:

- the development of global governance frameworks for international migration;
- the relationship between migration and rapidly changing levels and types of transnational connectivities;
- migrants’ perspectives on migration journeys;
- media reporting on migration and migrants;
- the relationships between migration and violent extremism; and
- migrants and cities.

While the choice of these topics is necessarily selective and subjective, all the chapters in Part II of this report are directly relevant to some of the most prominent and important debates about migration in the world today. Many of these topics lie at the heart of the conundrums that face policymakers as they seek to formulate effective, proportionate and constructive responses to complex public policy issues related to migration. Accordingly, the chapters aim to inform current and future policy debates by providing a clear identification of the key issues and questions, a critical overview of relevant research and analysis, and a discussion of the implications for future research and policymaking. The chapters are not meant to be prescriptive, in the sense of advocating particular policy “solutions”, but informative and helpful to what can be highly contested debates that preclude “silver bullet” solutions. In many of the chapters, the need to formulate multifaceted responses that take into account relevant evidence as well as emerging strategic issues is highlighted as critical for migration policy and practice.

21 Guy Abel, a global expert on migration data, also contributed to the analysis in this part, especially to the analysis and presentation of statistical data in chapter 3.

All the chapters of the *World Migration Report 2018* are relatively self-contained and can also be downloaded as individual chapters and contributions. There are, however, a number of important cross-cutting themes and issues that are discussed throughout the report. For example, a major cross-cutting issue relates to the important *variations* of migration and its impacts, as well as of public and policy debates about migrants, across space (e.g. between different countries and regions), demographic groups (e.g. by gender and age), and/or across different levels of governance (distinguishing, for example, between policymaking and debates at the level of cities, subnational regions, States, world regions and globally). The report's emphasis on highlighting geographic, demographic and political variations is meant to provide a more nuanced and – we argue – more accurate picture of global migration, than the highly simplified and often misleading pictures of global migration sometimes painted by popular media reports. To be more effective and evidence-based, public and policy debates on global migration issues need to be aware and take account of these important variations.

A second key issue discussed and highlighted throughout the report is that migration is not an isolated phenomenon that can be effectively analysed, debated and regulated without considering a range of important interconnections across:

- “space” (e.g. between policies of different countries), scale and levels of governance (e.g. linking cities, regions, States, supranational and global governance structures);
- migration types, categories and policies (e.g. considering the links and often blurred lines between migration for work, protection, family reasons and study);
- “time” (e.g. across temporary and permanent migration flows and policies); and
- migration and wider public policies (such as labour market policies, welfare policies, education and training, housing policies, etc.).

These interconnections and linkages are critical to understanding and responding to global migration and mobility.

Overall, the *World Migration Report 2018* thus suggests that, to make better sense of migration and regulate migration more effectively, we need to be aware of and consider the important geographic, demographic and geopolitical variations of migration issues, as well as to recognize the many interconnections in the analysis and policymaking on migration. Although these fundamental insights are in many ways obvious, they are frequently ignored in public and policy debates on migration and migrants around the world. They should instead be at the heart of debates about migration, including the current international debates about how to develop a new global compact on migration as well as a global compact on refugees. Where relevant, the various chapters of this report highlight key insights and implications for these two global compacts.

Part I

Chapter 2 provides an overview of global data and trends on international migrants (stocks) and international migration (flows). It also provides a discussion of particular migrant groups – namely, migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs – as well as of remittances. In addition, the chapter highlights the growing body of IOM programmatic data, particularly on missing migrants, assisted voluntary returns and reintegration, migrant health, resettlement, displacement tracking, diaspora mapping and human trafficking. While these data are generally not global or representative, they can provide insights into changes that have occurred in relevant IOM programming and operations globally. The chapter also discusses key data gaps and challenges.

Following the global overview, chapter 3 provides a discussion of key regional dimensions of, and developments in, migration. The discussion focuses on six world regions as applied by UN DESA: Africa, Asia, Europe,

Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America and Oceania. For each of these regions, the analysis includes: i) an overview and brief discussion of key population-related statistics; and ii) succinct descriptions of “key features and developments” in migration in the region, based on a wide range of data, information and analyses, including from international organizations, researchers and analysts. To account for the diversity of migration patterns, trends and issues within each of the six regions, descriptive narratives of “key features and recent developments” are presented at the subregional level.

There is a substantial amount of research and analysis on migration that is being undertaken and published by a range of actors such as academics, governments, intergovernmental organizations and think tanks. Chapter 4 provides a selective overview of such contributions, focusing mainly on academics and intergovernmental organizations and covering the period 2015–2016. The knowledge derived from rigorous analysis and research can and should play an important role in informing people, including policymakers and migration practitioners, about the changing world around us, including migration. Understanding the variety, nature and characteristics of the different types of research and analysis being produced on migration is important for people who may be studying migration, working on migration policies or in migration practice, or trying to develop a better understanding of migration.

Part II

Chapter 5 critically discusses the global governance of international migration. The chapter first reviews some of the major global norms and institutions relevant to the global governance of migration and then discusses the following three themes and recent developments:

- key dialogues and initiatives instrumental to building momentum and confidence towards greater action at the global level;
- specific initiatives build normative frameworks to enhance protection of migrants;
- the integration of international migration into global-level responses on other issues.

The chapter argues that the step-by-step process of consultation, cooperation and confidence-building that has taken place to date has shown that progress can occur, albeit in incremental ways. The authors of the chapter suggest that this incremental progress remains the most promising path towards more effective global migration governance.

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. 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. The authors provide examples of how transnational connectivity can affect these different migration actors and conclude with implications for migration governance, including the global compact on migration.

Chapter 7 discusses the importance of understanding migration from migrants’ perspectives, principally by listening to and learning from migrants through rigorous research. While all migrants make decisions before and during their journeys – some decisions being of greater consequence than others, and even involving life and death scenarios – this chapter focuses more on people who have fewer means and more restricted

choices. The chapter first provides a brief discussion of migrants' self-agency (i.e. migrants' abilities to make and act upon decisions and choices) and the continuum of agency that explains variations in choice when it comes to migrating. It then analyses four key issues and factors that can have important impacts on migrants' considerations and decisions during the migration process: (mis)information, preference for visas, risk and reward, and pressures to migrate. The chapter also reviews recent advances in research methods and technology that are making migrant-centric research more feasible globally. The authors argue that better understandings of migrants' choices about migration and migration journeys are of fundamental importance to more effective policymaking on migration. Their chapter concludes with implications for research and policy initiatives, including those related to the global compact on migration.

The media can play an important role in shaping how and what people think about migration, including policymakers and migrants themselves. Chapter 8 critically discusses media reporting on migrants and migration. Drawing on existing research in different countries, the analysis addresses four key questions: What do media around the world say about migration and migrants? What impacts does this coverage have on what members of the public, policymakers and migrants themselves think and do? How does the practice of journalism itself contribute to coverage? What implications arise from recent experiences of media and migration for future research and practice? The authors argue that variations of media coverage of migration partly reflect the considerable differences in how countries' media systems operate. While there is a growing body of research on the relationships between media, public opinion and policies on migration, the authors argue that much more research needs to be done into the role of the media in transit and origin countries – and particularly migrants' own use of, and preferences for, different types of media. This is especially important for understanding how and to what extent information sources shape perceptions.

Around the world, a number of political leaders, reflecting varying degrees of popular sentiment, are linking migrants and migration with the rising threat of violent extremism. Recognizing that this is a sensitive topic that has attracted significant media attention, chapter 9 provides an analysis of the existing evidence on the relationships between migration, violent extremism and social exclusion. The chapter starts with a brief overview of definitions and data, emphasizing the need for analytical clarity, pointing to a shortage of reliable data, and highlighting the challenge of distinguishing causation from correlation. Next, a simple typology of the intersections between migration and violent extremism is developed, following the logic of the migration cycle from departure to settlement and, at times, return. The chapter ends with a series of preliminary implications for further policy debate.

Chapter 10 is a follow-up to *World Migration Report 2015*, which was devoted to a single theme: the relationship between migration and the cities of the world. Building on the foundations of *WMR 2015*, the chapter looks at the role of the modern city in migration governance, taking advantage of some of the recent research on the evolving nature of cities and their roles in the world. This includes discussion of sanctuary cities and, more generally, the role of cities in responding to the recent large-scale displacements and migrations. The authors argue that the continuing growth in the influence of cities over social and economic affairs and over migration trajectories, both international and internal, demands greater attention from both scholars and policymakers.

Overall, this world migration report has been produced to help deepen our collective understanding of the various manifestations and complexities of migration. We hope that all readers are able to learn something new from this edition, as well as to draw on its contents as they undertake their work, study or other activities.

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