***The Case for a Global Migrant Rights Index***

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Thank you for inviting me to contribute to this important conference. I want to use my remarks to make the case for the creation of a Global Migrant Rights Index which would lead to a step-change in international monitoring and debates of migrant rights.

**Why do we need a Global Migrant Rights Index?**

The lack of readily available and international comparative indicators of the protection of migrant rights in different countries is a major obstacle to more comprehensive monitoring of migrant rights at the international level. Without better data and evidence, which the Global Migrant Rights Index would provide, the effectiveness of international monitoring of the protection of migrant rights will necessarily remain limited.

While there has been a rapidly growing literature and policy interest in measuring human rights (for a review see, for example, Carr Center for Human Rights, 2005), there is currently no comprehensive global index of migrant rights. In the research literature, very few studies have tried to systematically measure the scope and variation of the legal rights of different types of migrants across high-income countries. Notable exceptions include Harald Waldrauch’s work (2001) which constructs a ‘legal index’ that measures the integration of migrants in six European countries and the more recent ‘Migrant Integration Policy Index’ (MIPEX) which uses a mix of legal and outcome indicators to measure policies for integrating migrants in EU Member States and three non-EU countries. Specifically, MIPEX measures the extent to which each country’s policies conform to European directives and European standards of best practice in six areas: labour market access, family reunion, long-term residence, political participation, access to nationality and anti-discrimination. The migration policy indices developed by Lowell (2005), Cerna (2008) and Klugman and Pereira (2009) also include an evaluation of a small number of migrant rights.

Ruhs (2011) has recently constructed an index of the rights of migrant workers in 46 high- and middle-income countries. While this is the most comprehensive database of migrant rights created to date, a key limitation of this analysis is the exclusive focus on ‘rights in law’ (rather than ‘rights in practice’) and the use of research assistants rather than country experts in constructing the indicators for rights in different countries. The dataset is also limited to two years only (2008 and 2009).

There is, therefore, a strong case for investing in the development of a new and comprehensive database of indicators of migrant rights protections in different countries over time.

**How could it be done, and what would it achieve?**

The rights of migrants vary by their immigration status (e.g. workers, family, student, asylum seeker, irregular) and, among workers, by skill levels (see Ruhs, 2011). A new global migrant rights index would therefore have to distinguish between different types of rights (e.g. civil and political, economic and social, residency rights, family reunion rights) for different types of migrants.  The rights indicators could be benchmarked against the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families.

The indicators could be conceptualised and designed by a group of experts including migrant rights specialists and measurement experts. The analysis could then be implemented by a group of country experts. If the information were collected every year, it would be possible to build up a longitudinal database of indicators of rights protections/restrictions across countries, different groups of migrants and over time. In addition to facilitating comprehensive monitoring, this database would allow analysis of the patterns, determinants and effects of restrictions of migrant rights. A range of questions could be analysed, for example:

* Patterns, variations and trends: how do rights restrictions vary across different rights, groups of migrants and countries? Which rights are most commonly restricted? How do rights restrictions evolve over time?
* Determinants: What are the drivers of restrictions of the rights of migrant workers? How are rights restrictions related to labour markets, welfare states and admission policies?
* Impacts: What are the effects of restricting the rights of migrants on the migrants themselves, migrant-receiving countries and migrant-sending countries?

The development of the index would require careful conceptualisation of the indicators, accurate measurement through a team of country experts and considered aggregation and presentation of the results in a way that makes them transparent and accessible to anybody. For example, the different migrant rights indicators could be presented on a dedicated website where people can interact with the data to create their own indices based on their own preferred indicators. See, for example, the interactive presentation of the UNDP’s Human Development Indicators: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>

**Summary: The Benefits of a Global Migrant Rights Index**

A Global Migrant Rights Index would provide new and highly transparent data, indicators and analysis to provide a better picture and monitoring of the rights of migrants around the world. It would enable policy-makers to critically assess their policies towards migrants in light of international experiences and assess the effectiveness of different policy interventions. A Global Migrant Rights Index would empower stakeholders and advocacy groups to more effectively campaign on migration and migrant rights issues based on a rigorous and widely respected evidence base. The new indicators would also enable social science researchers from a range of different disciplines to explore questions and conduct innovative analysis about the variation, determinants and effects of migrant rights over time.

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