



Migrant Rights Initiative

Migrant Rights Initiative Launches New Database

By the Migrant Rights Initiative

The Migrant Rights Initiative, based at Cornell University, launched its Migrant Rights Database (MRD) on 7 March 2023 at events at the Palais des Nations and the Geneva Graduate Institute.

The Database is a rigorous comparative account of laws protecting the human rights of all migrants and the implementation that helps them flourish. You can explore visualizations of the data in English, French and Spanish here: MigrantRightsInitiative.org.

The MRD is the first global data source benchmarking the extent to which states fulfill their international obligations to protect the rights of all migrants in national law as well as how they implement them. It applies a novel instrument that permits an objective, cross-national accounting of the laws protecting migrants' rights enshrined in national legal frameworks. The indicators include **36 country cases**, accounting for **nearly 70 percent of the world's current migrants**. In the coming years, it will be expanded to include 45 countries worldwide.

The MRD includes myriad indicators closely linked to GCM objectives, though not all states studied have endorsed the Compact. For example, the data show that 33 of the 36 states included in the database already mandate the registration of the births of the children of all migrants. 13 of the 36 countries studies prohibited the detention of migrant children on the basis of their status as a migrant, while 30 required an individualized determination before a migrant could be detained. 19 of the 36 countries evaluated guaranteed equal access to healthcare to all migrants. More analysis of the many more points of intersection with the GCM can be viewed [here](#).

The launch-events featured welcome remarks by UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Professor Felipe Gonzales Morales, who noted the link between the database and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the **"need to enhance the collection and systematization of data regarding the situation of migrants."** Both events also included comments by Director of the International Organization for Migration's Global Data Institute, Dr. Koko Warner, who likewise applauded the release and utility of these data.

The launch-event at the Geneva Graduate Institute included remarks by Vice-Chair of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, Professor Maya Sahli-Fadel. She noted the important potential of the database to inform national migration policy and invited representatives of the Migrant Rights Initiative to present their data at the next Commission session in Addis Ababa.

The 36-country study evaluates national compliance with **65 indicators** measuring formal and practical implementation of **17 important categories of rights** as of 1 January 2020. It was carried out over several years under the supervision of a global research team with input by scores of qualified attorneys, independent of government. It allows data to be aggregated and compared across countries.

The database shows that while **65 percent of the indicators** of migrant rights are reflected in the letter of national law in the case countries — nearly two out of every three — **national authorities actually implement these formal protections only 66 percent of the time**. Taken together, this suggests that **only about 43 percent of migrant rights are both protected and implemented** in the countries examined. A number of civil and political rights are widely protected, but there is less coverage of rights related to health, education or family unity.

The Migrant Rights Initiative (formerly the International Migrants Bill of Rights (IMBR) Initiative) is in the process of expanding the database to evaluate the treatment of migrants in 45 countries under law in place on 1 January 2023 and is in talks with multiple UN Network members about how these data can be mainstreamed into work to protect the rights of all migrants.

Additional launch events will be held throughout the year worldwide. You can reach the Migrant Rights Initiative for more information at: migrantrights@cornell.edu.

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