CITIZENS REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS (CRVS) – BOON OR BANE?

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Ministerial declaration

"…Affirming that universal and responsive civil registration and vital statistics systems have a **critical role in achieving inclusive, equitable and people-centred development**…

…importance of civil registration and vital statistics for **measuring aid effectiveness and raising the visibility of and improving policy focus on the most vulnerable groups** …

…importance of civil registration and documentation for the **protection of refugees** and that the lack of civil registration and related documentation makes persons vulnerable to statelessness and associated protection risks

Aadhaar in India

- Biometric based identity proof for the Indian citizens (UID)
- It started as a voluntary registration though universal and aims to make the welfare schemes inclusive and to reduce duplication and corruption
- Eventually almost many services were linked to Aadhar – tax return, welfare schemes, opening bank accounts etc – so made compulsory
- In 2018 APFSD NITI Aayog Vice-Chair Rajiv Kumar said: Aadhaar has potential for delivery of welfare schemes with minimal leakage

Reality – Finger print authentication of this lady?

Reality – Some media reports

- Of 42 hunger-relayed deaths since 2017, 25 are related to Aadhaar issues - The Wire (Sept 2108)
- In a Delhi slum, Aadhar deprives several families of Rations: The Quint (Sept 2018)
- Maid denied safe abortion without Aadhar, resorts to illegal abortion
- Woman died after being denied treatment without Aadhar
- Aadhar details available for Measly sum of 500 Rupees
- 10 year old Dalit girl loses scholarship because Aadhaar spells name wrong
- Woman's Aadhaar card linked to 9 sim cards without her knowledge
- No network at ration shop. Biometric Machine hung from tree to get network

Essence

- No Aadhaar – no subsidised rice
- Biometry not matching
- Internet not working in remote areas
- Medical treatment denied without Aadhaar
- So on and so forth
- SC ruling was not fully encouraging – mandatory for welfare schemes
- **Role of CSOs** – field studies, highlighting in media and cases in SC
- For migrants, some CSOs facilitated the registration of Aadhar

National Register of Citizens in Assam state, India

- 4 million people in Assam state are excluded form the draft national register.

- They are treated as illegal migrants from Bangladesh – most of them migrated to India before the 1972 war, when Bangladesh was separated from Pakistan

- Documentary evidences are being asked

- Now its been 50 years. Where will people go?

- Allegation of targeting a particular community

Elections in India – women left out

- India has the general elections in April 2019
- 21 million eligible women voters are left out of the Voter list due to technical reasons – a revelation
- This year, women will turn out in more numbers than men
- Allegations/fear: It may be advantage the ruling party BJP
- **CSO initiatives:** Mera Desh, Mera Vote, Mera Mudda (My country my vote my issues)
- Facilitating the registration with the election commission of the voters from marginalized groups
- No funding for such work though

Scenario in Pakistan and Bangladesh

- Pakistan wants to deport more than 3 million Afghan refugees , who came during Soviet invasion to Afghanistan in 1979

- Some 600,000 have been deported as reported in 2017

- Afghanistan situation is very unstable which has internally displaced people amounting to a million

- A huge humanitarian crisis on an anvil

- Rohingyas shelter in Bangladesh approx 8 million – Biometric registration by UN agencies (Good practice)

Recommendations

- Theoretically CRVS is a good mechanism, but it may well be misused or are being misused

- Policy level clarity needed on migrants, refugees etc – otherwise CRVS will do more harm than good

- More thrust on the same may actually create more identity-less people

- An humanitarian approach is needed to address the issues of citizenship

Thank you

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