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
4 million people in Assam state are excluded from 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 it's 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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