There are no translations available.

The recently published Africa Migration Report of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) analyses the phenomenon of migration in Africa, offering (among others) an overview of the main obstacles to the free movement of persons and goods at land borders. One of the main challenges that immigration authorities face at these sites, the report observes, is the effective management of travelers' data. Despite the fact that nowadays, Border Management Information Systems (BMIS) have been rolled out in most African countries, their use is still not possible at certain border posts, especially those located in remote areas, where the lack of power and of IT connectivity impedes the exchange of data with the Immigration headquarters, with the consequence that all controls on the movement of persons at these sites are conducted manually.

This challenge, apart from Immigration, is common to all the other border agencies, as also these ones need to be connected to their headquarters or the line-Ministries from which they depend in order to exchange electronically the data necessary to carry out their tasks (which in the most modern border posts is done via optical fibers connecting each border agency to the national ICT backbone of their respective countries, and through this, to their headquarters). When this condition does not materialise, controls must be necessarily conducted manually, which obviously causes delays at borders that also impact on the costs of movement of persons and goods.

BMIS are IT tools that improve efficiency, allowing for real-time data capture, and effectively collecting, processing, storing and analysing information, thereby allowing countries to better track the movement of people and goods across borders. BMIS also promote consistency in the border inspection process and accountability, as well as the official handling of traveler's clearance, thus helping to reduce confusion, inefficiency and potentially corruption in the process. The United Nations, through the IOM, has developed MIDAS (Migration Information and Data Analysis System), which has been adopted so far by 17 African countries (Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Congo, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda), and its deployment has been planned in other African countries, including Ethiopia.

MIDAS is an IT system capable of reading through special readers the biometric data in passports and other travel documents, and allows Immigration to collect, process, store and analyse information for the purpose of identification and analysis of travelers. MIDAS supports the evaluation of cross-border traffic, helps determine the optimum deployment of human resources at border posts and supports a better understanding of human mobility flows.

However, as indicated above, its functioning is often not possible in those border posts located in desert or remote geographical areas, even though solutions have been developed for overcoming this challenge. The IOM report mentions, for instance, the case of Somalia, where solar power systems have been installed at some border posts to ensure continuity of operation of the MIDAS system.