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IOM'S APPROACH TO IDENTITY, CRVS AND BORDER MANAGEMENT IN THE PACIFIC

Laura Scorretti

Senior Immigration and Border Governance Specialist

IOM Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific



ePASSPORT TRANSITION IN ASIA PACIFIC: IOM's approach to capacity development

1 Beyond the Booklet

Having an ePassport booklet does not automatically deliver benefit in terms of mobility options and facilitation.

2 Implementing Global Standards

Global standards are written for large, resourced states, but the Pacific's Small Island Developing States don't have the same infrastructure, population size, or border footprint.

3 Mobility-led Transformation

The mobility dynamics that ePassport transition is meant to address, both from facilitation and security perspectives, shall guide the business requirements development.

4 CRVS at the Core

ePassport implementation from a border management perspective puts CRVS at the center of the transition to exclude risks on what the border cannot see.

5 National Ownership Matters

ePassport transition projects driven by industry, political or donor logics, rather than country's needs and risk assessment, may be underperforming.

6 Affordability Enables Inclusion

For countries that depend on migration for economic growth and climate change adaptation, ePassport booklet price shall be fixed to include people in remote areas.

7 Capacity as the Critical Enabler

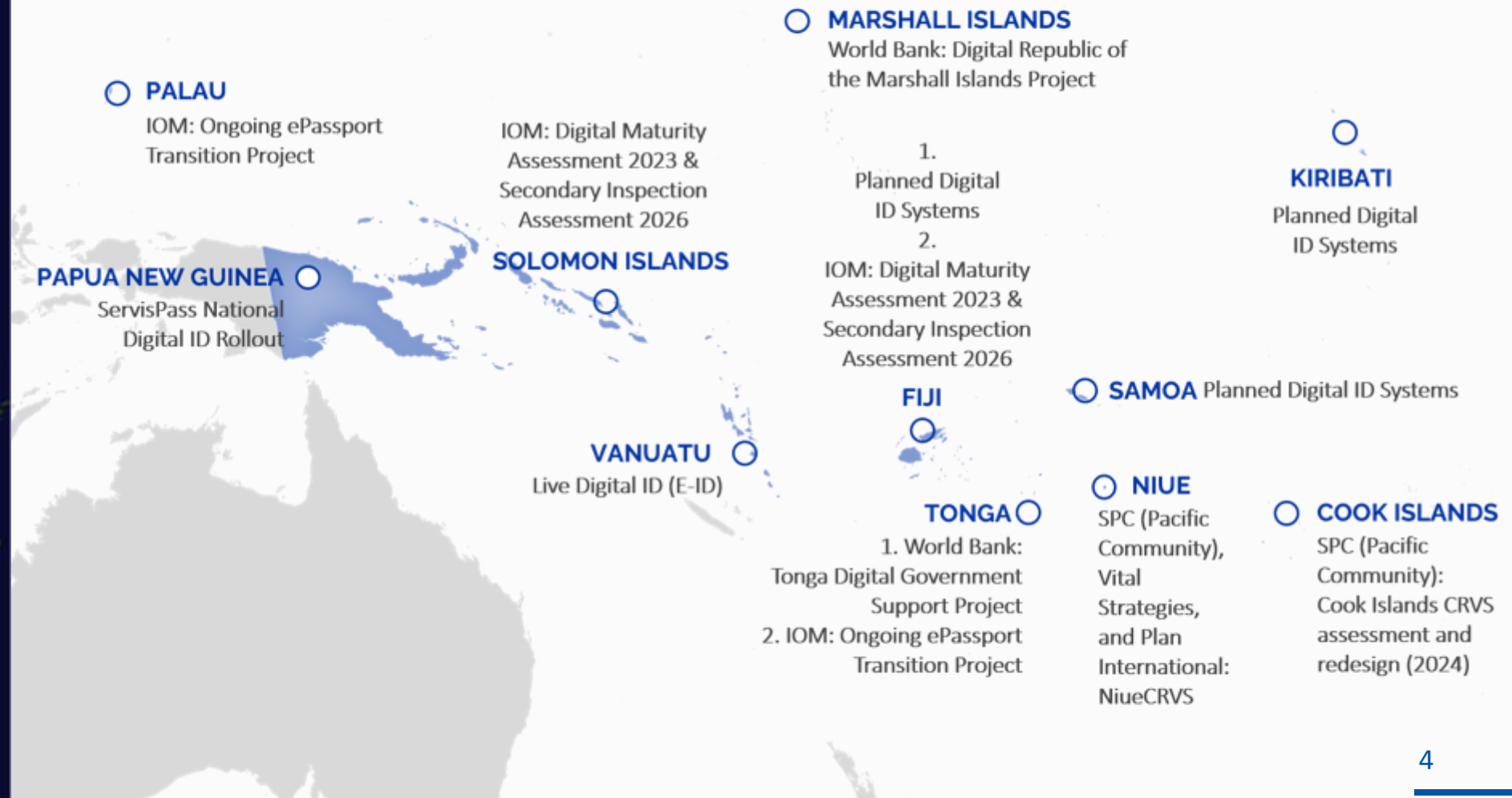
The pace and timeframe for ePassport transition shall be adjusted to the size and absorption capacity of available human resources.



1 Beyond the Booklet

Having an ePassport booklet does not automatically deliver benefit in terms of mobility options and facilitation.

DIGITIZATION AND DIGITALIZATION IN THE PACIFIC



This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.



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2

Implementing Global Standards

Global standards are written for large, resourced states, but the Pacific's Small Island Developing States don't have the same infrastructure, population size, or border footprint.



2024 PIDC Annual Meeting in Honiara, Solomon Islands

PIDC established the ICAO Sub-Regional Working Group for the Pacific



KEY ASPECTS

Migration is overwhelmingly intra-regional and circular:

- PALM (~32,000 workers) and RSE (20,750 cap)
- Smaller Micronesia/Polynesian states show high rates of regional movement and return migration (e.g. Nauru ↔ Kiribati, Tokelau ↔ Samoa)

Permanent Emigration and Diaspora:

- More Niueans and Cook Islanders live abroad rather than at home; remittances critical source of household support

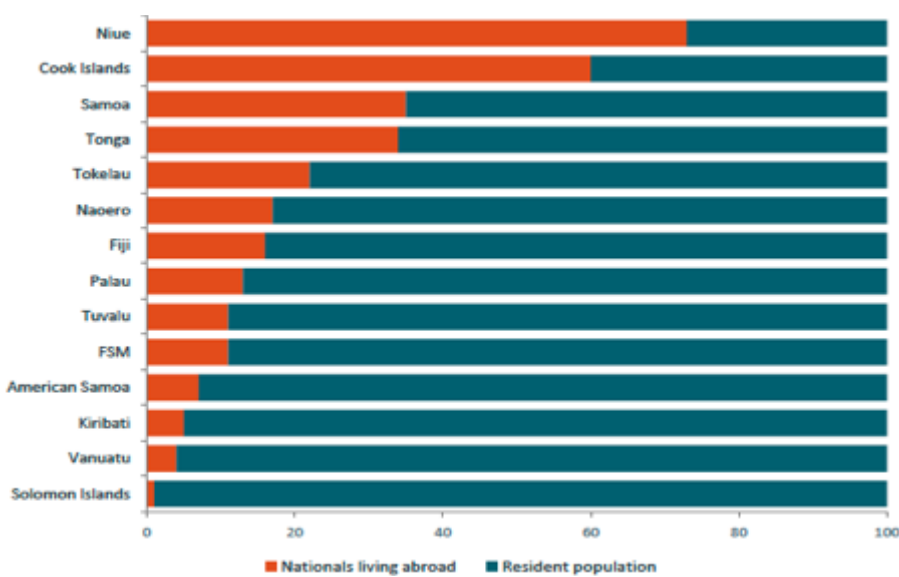
Climate change is an existential mobility driver for some states:

- Kiribati and Tuvalu project large-scale land loss within decades
- Up to 1.7 million Pacific islanders potentially displaced by 2050
- Tuvalu–Australia Falepili Union (2023): the first bilateral climate-mobility treaty, creating the Pacific Engagement Visa (280 places/year), ~50% of the 5,000 Tuvaluans applied in the first round
- Developing frameworks for planned internal relocation (e.g. Fiji)

DRIVERS

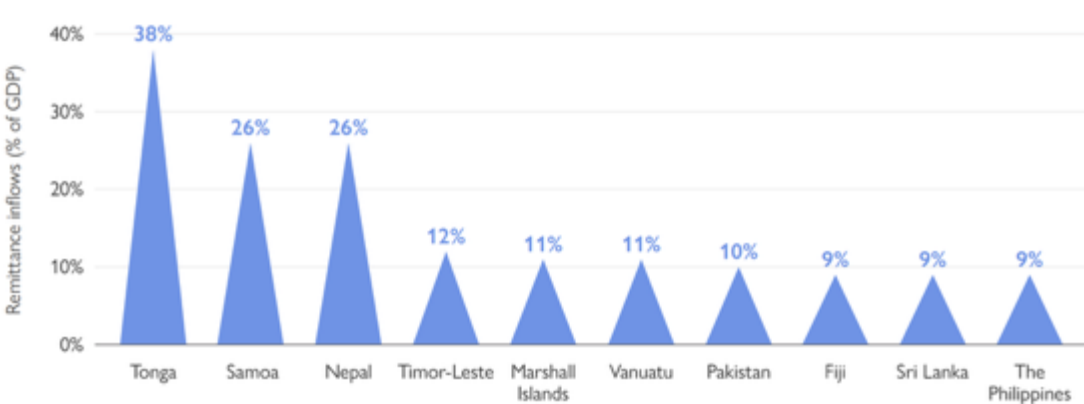
- Accelerating sea-level rise and coastal degradation
- Increasing frequency and severity of climate-related hazards
- Emigration linked to limited domestic opportunities
- Wage differentials and expanding destination-country options
- Concentration of jobs and services in capitals drawing outer-island and rural populations

Nationals living abroad versus resident population (%)



Source: UN DESA International Migrant Stock 2024 and World Population Prospects 2024.

TOP 10 RECIPIENTS OF REMITTANCES AS A SHARE OF GDP IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC IN 2024



Source: Author's calculation based on World Bank, 2024b.

Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2025. Asia–Pacific Migration Data Report 2025. IOM Asia–Pacific Regional Data Hub, Bangkok.



3 **Mobility-led Transformation** The mobility dynamics that ePassport transition is meant to address, both from facilitation and security perspectives, shall guide the business requirements development.

PASSPORT VS. ePASSPORT?



**Increasing Pacific demand
for mobility**



**Global demand for trust and
confidence in travelers' identity**

Secondary Inspection goal does not extend back to CRVS



IOM Verifier TD&B End-user Training, Jacksons International Airport, Papua New Guinea, October 2025



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Through the **Data Exchange Solution for Counter-smuggling (DESC)** initiative, participating countries voluntarily share **secondary inspection cases** that provide insights into current or emerging document and identity fraud trends. Reported **ePassport-related fraud** includes counterfeit documents, imposters, biodata page substitution, data alteration, and in-airport travel document swapping,

Examples of Fraud Cases involving ePassports, reported to DESC, 2025-2026:

FIRST INTERCEPTION OF CANADA’S NEW PASSPORT SERIES IN SRI LANKA

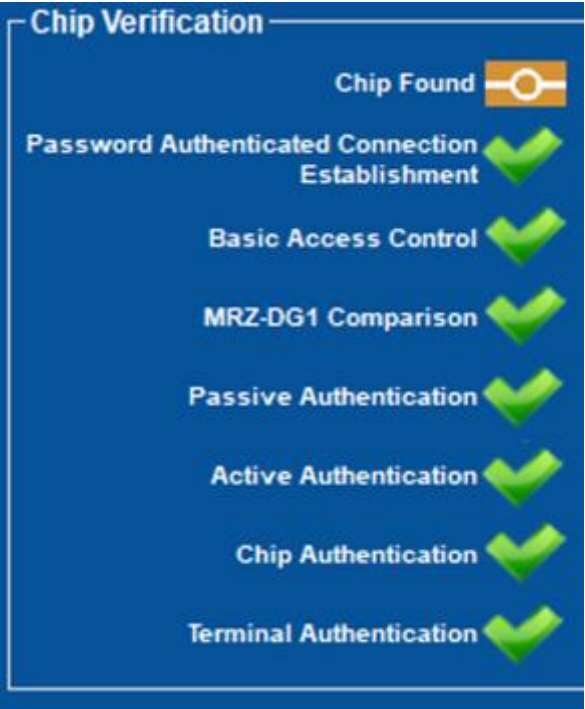
Sri Lanka intercepted counterfeit Canadian ePassports from the latest passport series

ONGOING TRENDS: IN-AIRPORT TRAVEL DOCUMENT SWAPPING

Thailand detected travel document swapping scheme at Suvarnabhumi Airport, demonstrating ongoing vulnerabilities in transit areas and the value of route-based risk assessment for fraud detection.

SIMILAR CHINESE ePASSPORT FRAUD TECHNIQUES DETECTED IN THAILAND AND THE PHILIPPINES

Thailand and the Philippines intercepted similarly altered Chinese ePassports, indicating a potentially linked fraud operation and the value of cross-border intelligence sharing.



4 CRVS at the Core

ePassport implementation from a border management perspective puts CRVS at the center of the transition to exclude risks on what the border



Fraudulent breeder document
→ genuine passport →
match at the border



Look-alikes and twins



Deduplication problem — one real person, two legal identities



WHAT DOES AUTHENTIC MEAN TODAY DURING DIGITAL ONBOARDING AMID GENERATIVE AI?

EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY: GAPS IN THE PACIFIC

Low and uneven birth registration

Historically weak, but a proven-solvable trajectory: Vanuatu rose from ~26% (2008) to ~83–85% coverage through hospital-discharge and school-enrolment integration plus remote "catch-up days"; Kiribati rose from ~68% to ~82%

Death registration lags birth registration by a wide margin everywhere

E.g. Vanuatu ~52% death vs. ~83% birth completeness in the same period — creating "ghost" records that undermine deduplication and can be reactivated fraudulently

Vital events occurring abroad and never registered at home

Births/deaths of Pacific citizens in Australia, New Zealand, or neighboring states often never re-enter the home civil registry without deliberate data-sharing arrangements; a jurisdictional gap, not a capacity gap

Name changes and inconsistent name recording

Not always single record across birth, marriage, school, and passport systems in largely paper-based or partially digitized registries

Outer-island and remote registration access

Solvable (Vanuatu's decentralization and catch-up days prove it) but requires deliberate design, not just capital-city infrastructure

Duplicate, uncertain, or potentially fraudulent underlying records

Accumulate in long-paper-based systems and directly weaken downstream biometric deduplication

Procedural challenges

Possibility to apply and collect passports and certificates on applicants' behalf without proper identity verification





The Third Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific
Bangkok, Thailand, June 2025



Side Event organized by SPC and IOM on the Mobility Dimension of CRVS, hosting Palau, Niue, Thailand and OpenCRVS, June 2025

United Nations

ESCAP/MCCRV5/2025/6/Add.1



Economic and Social Council

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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Third Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and
Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific

Bangkok, 24–26 June 2025

**Ministerial Declaration on a Decade of Action for
Inclusive and Resilient Civil Registration and Vital
Statistics in Asia and the Pacific**

1. We, the ministers and representatives of members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, have gathered in Bangkok from 24 to 26 June 2025 for the Third Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.
2. We reaffirm our shared vision that all people in Asia and the Pacific will benefit from universal and responsive civil registration and vital statistics systems that facilitate the realization of their rights and support good governance, health and development.

Ministerial Declaration on a Decade of Action for Inclusive and Resilient Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific



GCM Objective 4

Ensure that all migrants
have proof of legal identity
and adequate
documentation



SDG Target 16.9

By 2030, provide legal
identity for all, including
birth registration



Measure risks before defining ePassport business requirements

Vendor/tech lock-in

Proprietary data formats, licensing tied to a single support contract, and lack of knowledge transfer leave governments unable to competitively re-tender or migrate their own citizens' data

Buying more than institutions can use, or too early

E.g. expensive ePassport booklets acquired before agencies have the integration capacity or mandate to use their full functionality

ICAO PKD decision

Joining PKD versus developing an equivalent directory infrastructure (cost higher than PKD membership fees?). Problems with certificates exchange are invisible at home, surfacing abroad when a foreign system can't validate the chip

PKI development

A state must develop its own CSCA and DSC before the first e-passport is personalized. This cannot be retrofitted.

Not inclusive, affordable passports, and not self sustaining ePassport roll out

This requires well thought cost recovery models that do not focus on revenues, but on continuous investment in human resources capacities and maintenance to manage the ePassport issuance effectively.

Relative small size of civil service resources available

Change management required to absorb high volumes of technical information and transform it in competences is a major challenge in the Pacific.

Cybersecurity

ePassport transition bears increased risks of personal data breach. Cyberattacks and malwares can negatively impact on citizens' trust in the new digital infrastructure.



What is the optimal price that allows to recover the increased ePassport production cost without having the citizens pay beyond what they would be capable and willing to pay?

6 Affordability Enables Inclusion

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7 Capacity as the Critical Enabler

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IOM’S GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN ASIA-PACIFIC ePASSPORT TRANSITION

- 1

Invest upstream in identity management, not just in issuance and border-control technology
- 2

Interoperability across CRVS, national ID, and passport systems, only where cybersecurity and PKI are under control
- 3

Consider hybrid solutions, not fully digital, at least through the 2030s
- 4

Capacity-building and cost-recovery models that strengthen people and institutions, not just fund equipment
- 5

Affordable, inclusive enrollment reaching outer islands and remote areas
- 6

Procurement discipline from day one: embedded open standards, PKI governance, and PKD accession

Thank You

