



Contrary to the [common belief](#) , less than half (40 percent) of all migrants worldwide move from the developing countries of the [South](#) to the developed countries of the North, according to data published in the International Organization for Migration's [2013 World Migration Report](#) .

International migration, however, is an ever growing phenomenon, but it does not mean that there are more migrants per se. The number of international migrants has grown to 232 million in 2013 (from 175 million in 2000 and 154 million in 1990), but this is mainly the result of population growth. Migrants as a share of the world's population have remained fairly steady at between 2.5 and 3 percent.

The United Nations' (UN) International Migrants Day is annually held on December 18 to recognize the efforts, contributions and rights of migrants worldwide.

People migrate for reasons ranging from [climate change](#) and poverty to education or dream job offers. As the UN Secretary-General has pointed out on several occasions: "There are 232 million people living outside their country of birth, including myself."

Director General of the [International Organization for Migration](#) (IOM) William Lacy Swing, noted that 2013 may have been the costliest year on record in terms of lives lost, for migrants

seeking to cross international borders clandestinely.



“We will never know the true total, as many migrants died anonymously in deserts, in oceans or in other accidents,” stated Ambassador Swing. “However, our figures show that at least 2,360 migrants died this year while chasing the dream of a new life. These people are desperate – not even a very real fear of death prevents them from making their journey.”

The Mediterranean island of [Lampedusa](#) , the Caribbean, and the seas off Thailand and Indonesia have all seen tragedies involving overloaded, un-seaworthy vessels going down resulting in the deaths of dozens of migrants per episode.

The US Mexico border area and the desert route from West Africa to Libya are the most dangerous land routes, with migrants perishing in train accidents, murdered, or dying of thirst in their quest for a better life.

Conflict and natural disasters are adding to the number of people on the move. Some 5,000 people a day left the Central Philippines following typhoon Haiyan last month. A further 100,000 fled fighting in the Central African Republic in the first half of December.

“On this International Day we focus on the well-being and safety of migrants. IOM calls for strengthening existing policies or developing new ones to protect the [human rights](#) of those who leave home to seek better opportunities. We are ready to assist our Member States and

other partners in the development and implementation of policies.”