



Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
Statistics Division

International Meeting on Measuring Human Mobility

27 – 29 March 2019, Tbilisi, Georgia

Hosted by the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GeoStat)

Concept note

The international community agreed to 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets to be achieved by 2030 - a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. To monitor progress, a global set of SDG indicators has been developed which all countries are required to regularly report on. For example, SDG indicators should help to monitor progress on target 8.9 (to promote sustainable tourism which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products) or target 10.7 (to facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people). Traditional data collection methods, such as surveys, may not be sufficient to address the increased demand in timely, frequent and granular data.

For this reason, the UN Statistical Commission created a UN Global Working Group (GWG) on Big Data for official statistics to develop and test the use of new data sources and new technologies. The aim of the GWG is to lower the barriers of entry, particularly for developing countries, in the use of big data. A range of task teams were established under the GWG to explore the use satellite data, mobile phone data, scanner data, and social media data.

Mobile phone data could help determine where tourists and migrants come from, how long they stay and where they go. The granularity of information which potentially can be obtained through the use of mobile phone data is much higher than what can be obtained through traditional surveys. The time lag from data collection to analysis could also be significantly reduced. The project on measuring human mobility (as part of the deliverables of the GWG task team on mobile phone data) aims to estimate population mobility patterns broken down by migrants, seasonal workers and tourists.

The international meeting is built on three parts, namely (1) measuring human mobility using mobile phone data, (2) compiling migration and tourism statistics using traditional data sources, and (3) project implementation using the UN Global Platform.

UNSD, ITU, national statistical offices, other national agencies and other international institutes will work together to develop and test methods to estimate migration and tourism statistics in Georgia with use of mobile phone data from Georgian mobile phone operators. Thereafter, other countries will test these new methods, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Oman, Italy, the Netherlands, Columbia and Egypt.