

Regional workshop on strengthening the collection and use of international migration data in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Concept note

Introduction

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (represented by Statistics Division (UNSD) and Population Division (UNPD)) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (represented by the Statistics Division and the Social Development Division), are jointly organising a regional workshop on strengthening the collection and use of international migration data for the achievement of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development for selected countries in South and South-East Asia.¹ The meeting will be supported by interested members of the RCM Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Societies, which also deals with international migration.

The workshop will take place at United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand, from 31 January to 3 February 2017.

The workshop will bring together experts from a range of ministries and departments within national governments concerned with the collection of migration statistics including national statistical offices, ministries of labour, immigration, human resource development and ministries dealing human displacement. Experts from international organizations will be invited to participate as resource persons.

Objectives

The workshop aims to increase the capacity of participating countries to produce comprehensive national migration data that meets international standards, and to enhance understanding of the uses and limitations of migration data for policy purposes and for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The specific objectives of the workshop are to strengthen the technical capacity of government officials working in national statistical offices and relevant ministries to:

- (i) understand data needs on migration for national policy making and for monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- (ii) produce, compile and analyse migration data from relevant sources including population censuses, sample surveys and administrative sources; and
- (iii) use such data on migration and its impact to inform comprehensive national migration policies and development planning to achieve the 2030 agenda, including through the creation of national clearing houses for comprehensive migration data.

¹ Suggested target countries could include: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand

The workshop will cover issues such as migration data needs for policy making at national level and for monitoring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the extent to which countries are able to provide such data, international standards on concepts and definitions related to migration statistics and data sources. Participants will also discuss ways to exchange and disseminate migration data, as well as the potential opportunities afforded by new technologies to gather and compare data.

The workshop is expected to yield the following outputs:

- Identification of country priority needs and actions to improve the availability and quality of data and statistics on international migration in support of national and global development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Recommendations to strengthening regional cooperation and capacity building, including data exchanges

Background and justification

Migration and sustainable development

International migration has shaped the region of Asia and the Pacific in various ways – over 60 million international migrants resided in the region in 2015, and nearly 90 million international migrants originated from the region.² Main features of international migration in the region include labour migration, undocumented migration and migration for humanitarian reasons.³ Such population mobility has significant development impacts, for example serving to increase GDP and filling vital skill and labour force gaps in countries of destination, while sending large volumes of remittances to countries of origin. The potential for well-managed international migration for development is well-recognized, and expressed through documents such as the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, the Asia-Pacific input to the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development 2013, as well as the outcome of the second High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

However, migrants face specific challenges related to their rights and inclusion in development processes. Migrants are often concentrated in occupations that are low-skilled and low-paid, facing risks of exploitation, and many are in an irregular situation which exacerbates their vulnerability. They may also be excluded from social protection schemes and face specific difficulties accessing healthcare and other social services. As a result, migrants can be considered a group with specific needs for support to overcome vulnerabilities.

In recognition of these realities, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development addresses international migration in a number of areas, in order to support Governments to develop policies which maximize these development benefits and to minimize negative impacts, as well as to ensure that development policies are effective in reaching migrants as a vulnerable group. The 2030 Agenda makes specific references to migration and migrants in its several targets, including target 10.7 which calls for orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people.

² International Migrant Stock 2015, UN Population Division, 2016

³ Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2015 - Migrants' Contributions to Development, UNESCAP, 2016

Furthermore, in recognition of the cross-cutting nature of the issue of migration, the global monitoring frameworks aims that “Sustainable Development Goal indicators should be disaggregated, where relevant, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, **migratory status**, disability and geographic location, or other characteristics.”

Data needs

In order to support evidence-based policy making and to achieve the SDGs related to migration, comprehensive data will be required on migration and migrants, drawn from a range of different sources and covering a wide range of different areas. On the basis of data detailing the size, composition, socio-economic situation and access to services of migrants, Governments of countries of origin and destination can understand their needs and potentials, and tailor policies to provide migrants with specific support to overcome vulnerabilities. Data needs may include:

- Stocks of migrants (disaggregated by age, sex, duration of stay and country of origin);
- Flows of migrants (disaggregated by age, sex, duration of stay/absence and purpose of migration)
- Income level of migrants;
- Education level of migrants;
- Labour force status of migrants and sectoral distribution and occupation of migrant workers;
- Access of migrants to health services;
- Registration of birth of migrant children;
- Social protection coverage of migrant workers; and
- Numbers of victims of trafficking

All data should be disaggregated by relevant factors such as age, sex, country of origin. Such data may be developed through targeted initiatives aimed specifically at migrants, as well as through enabling the disaggregation of migrants in all forms of population data, including administrative data.

However, despite the strong policy needs for statistics on international migration, the availability of such data in the region is not yet sufficient. Out of 43 Asian countries that have conducted at least one population census between 2005 and 2014, only 16 countries were able to provide some data on stock of international migrants to the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook*. Data on migration flows are also scarce – only around 10 out of 48 Asian countries provided some information on inflows and outflows to the *Demographic Yearbook*. (See Annex 1 for more information).

The dearth of migration data in the region is attributed to multiple reasons. In some countries it may reflect lack of capacity to gather these data, or lack of awareness on the importance of these data. In other countries, however, it may be primarily due to the lack of coordination within and between Government offices and other actors which produce different migration statistics. Finally, much migration within the Asia-Pacific region is undocumented, hidden from both country of origin and destination authorities through clandestine border crossing or working without authorization following regular entry. Another challenge faced by countries lies in the collection of emigration data, which relies on effective data-sharing between countries of origin and destination, which does not occur in practice.

Responding to the lack of migration statistics in countries, the Secretary-General, in his report on migration statistics to the forty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission (E/CN.3/2014/20), held in March 2014, observed that more needed to be done (1) to encourage the tabulation, dissemination of census data on international migration, (2) to foster coordination within national statistical systems so that data generated from administrative sources are disseminated, and (3) to provide technical assistance to enhance the statistical capacity of countries. Improving national capacity in producing and using statistics on international migration also corresponds directly to the 2030 Development Agenda Target 17.18 which calls for enhancing “capacity building support to developing countries to increase significantly the availability of high quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by... migratory status”, among others, as key to delivering on the commitment in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

Methodology

The workshop will be held using an interactive format facilitating exchange of information, good practice and challenges faced by countries with a range of experiences. There will also be a presence of experts from a range of experts to assist in generating a comprehensive picture of the situation with regards to migration data needs and availability.

A pre-workshop questionnaire on data sources for international migration statistics and their use will be provided to participating countries to assess the current stage of the development and use of these data and structure the workshop to effectively meet the needs of the target countries.

Annex 1. Status of Asian countries on availability of statistics related to international migration with relevance to the SDGs

Country	Census years	Census questionnaire evaluated	Information asked on censuses			Availability of stock data		Availability of flow data	
			Country of birth	Citizenship	Year of arrival	Country of birth	Citizenship status	Inflows by reason for admission	Outflows by status of departure
Afghanistan	2014 (only part of country)		1						
Armenia	2011	1	1	1		1	1		
Azerbaijan	2009	1	1	1		1	1		
Bahrain	2010								
Bangladesh	2011	1	1		1				1*
Bhutan	2005	1	1			1			
Brunei Darussalam	2011						1		
Cambodia	2008	1	1						1*
China	2010	1							
China - Hong Kong SAR	2006/2011	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
China - Macao SAR	2006/2011	1	1	1		1		1	1
Cyprus	2011	1	1	1	1	1			
Georgia	2014								
India	2011	1	1						1*
Indonesia	2010	1		1				1	1*
Iran, Islamic Republic of	2006/2011	1	1	1		1	1		
Iraq									
Israel	2009	1	1		1	1		1	1
Japan	2005/2008/2010	1		1			1	1	1
Kazakhstan	2009	1	1	1	1			1	
Korea, Democratic People's Republic	2008	1		1			1		
Korea, Republic of	2005/2010	1		1	1	1	1	1	1
Kuwait	2005/2011						1		
Kyrgyzstan	2009							1	1
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2005	1	1	1			1		1*
Lebanon									
Malaysia	2010								
Maldives	2006/2014	1	1	1					
Mongolia	2010	1	1	1			1		

Myanmar	2014								1*
Nepal	2011	1	1	1					1*
Oman	2010						1		
Pakistan	No census in 2010 round								1*
Palestine, State of	2007	1	1	1		1	1		
Philippines	2007/2010	1		1			1		1*
Qatar	2010	1	1	1					
Saudi Arabia	2010	1		1					
Singapore	2010	1				1	1		
Sri Lanka	2012	1	1						1
Syrian Arab Republic									
Tajikistan	2010	1	1	1					
Thailand	2010	1	1	1		1	1		1*
Timor-Leste	2010	1	1	1					
Turkey	2011	1				1			
Turkmenistan	2012								
United Arab Emirates	2005/2010	1		1	1				
Uzbekistan									
Viet Nam	2009	1						1	1*
Yemen									
Census conducted in 2010 round	43	33	23 (out of 33 countries)	22 (out of 33 countries)	7 (out of 33 countries)	13	16	9	7

Source: United Nations Demographic Yearbook database, UN Statistics Division; Census questionnaire database, UN Statistics Division (last accessed May 2016); ILO database - Outflow of nationals by sex and country of destination (Thousands); ESCAP labour migration outflow database at <http://sitreport.unescapsdd.org/labour-migration-outflow>

* Data refer to organised labour migrants