UN EXPERT GROUP ON MIGRATION STATISTICS

TASK FORCE 4 ON

DATA SOURCES FOR INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STATISTICS AND

OPERATIONALISATION OF REVISED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Terms of Reference (REVISED AS OF MARCH 2022)

Background

The United Nations Statistics Division, under the guidance of the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics, has initiated the work on revising the 1998 Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1 (referred to as *the 1998 Recommendations* thereafter). As a first step in this process, the Expert Group, through its Task Force 2, developed a revised conceptual framework on international migration and mobility and accompanying definitions, which were endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission at its 52nd session in 2021. Moreover, the Expert Group, through its Task Force 1, is developing a set of topics and indicators that are relevant for policy and are in line with revised conceptual framework.

Pursuant to Agenda 2030's, Sustainable Development Goal Target 17.18 calls for an enhancement of capacity-building support to developing countries to increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts by 2030. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration as a first objective also calls on Member States to strengthen international migration data by improving the collection, analysis and dissemination of reliable data, disaggregated by sex, age, education and other characteristics. The GCM is clear in strengthening the global evidence base on international migration by improving and investing in the collection and utilization of accurate, reliable, comparable data, disaggregated data relevant in national contexts, while upholding the right to privacy under international human rights law and protecting personal data.

The paucity of availability and reliability of data on international migration has long been recognized and requires major investment. Information about international migration comes from a variety of data sources that have their own strengths and limitations and can be used to produce different migration statistics. Main sources of data to inform the issue of international migration include a traditional population census (usually conducted every ten years), population registers, civil registration and other administrative data sources (such as residence permits, work permits, border records, etc.) as well as various household surveys. Non-traditional data sources also hold potential to inform the issue of international migration; examples of these may include mobile phone location data, passenger flight data, social media data, among others (see Annex for a brief description on data sources).

Even though the bulk of migration data emanates from administrative data sources, processing the information to generate international migration statistics remains a challenge for many countries. Countries may have their own priorities on the information they need to gather and rely on certain data sources for producing such data. However, it is important that all countries have a capacity to produce basic information on migration stocks and flows and make them publicly available.

Indeed, there are different capabilities and priorities across countries in the world. The production of migration statistics is part of the larger national data ecosystem with national statistical offices play leading roles in collaboration with line ministries, which may differ greatly in structure from one country to another.

Objectives and Task

The overall objective of this task force is to prepare a report on the operationalization of the revised conceptual framework and data sources on international migration and temporary mobility, taking into account country practices. The report will examine all relevant data sources that could be used for producing timely and accurate data on international migration and temporary mobility with a view of providing practical guidance to countries on how to adopt the revised conceptual framework and accompanying definitions, given their national context. In this regard, the report will also discuss potential quality concerns and other challenges in the use of data sources as well as strategies to mitigate them to get maximum benefits from each source and ensure the production of all data needed for the implementation of the revised conceptual frameworks.

In particular this task force will:

- Examine the types of data sources (traditional and non-traditional) commonly used for measuring international migration flows and stocks;
- Determine strengths and limitations of each data source in relation to data needs for the implementation of the revised conceptual framework and definitions, including resident population, migrant population, measurements of stocks and flows, migratory status and migrant population characteristics;
- Provide practical guidance on how to use effectively different data sources in producing international migration data -in line with the revised framework and the upcoming set of topics and indicators- taking into consideration differences in national statistical systems;
- Identify potential data sources (traditional and non-traditional) for international temporary mobility and provide recommendations on appropriate sources of data for measuring specific types of temporary mobility;

This task force also aims to compile good practices on:

- Use of integrated data sources for producing specific measurements of migration or better estimates of migration measurements, building on the work of Task Force 3 on Data Integration for Disaggregated Statistics on International Migration;
- Use of non-traditional data sources for international migration
- Use of traditional and non-traditional data sources for measuring temporary mobility
- Coordination among different agencies working on migration issues within the country;
- Dissemination and communication of migration data

The Task Force reports to the UN Expert Group on Migration Statistics and will work with a collaborative approach by soliciting input and feedback among members of the Task Force and members of the Expert Group.

Task Force membership and main responsibilities

The Task Force should be composed of members of the UN Expert Group on Migration Statistics. Other representatives from National Statistical offices or relevant national institutions responsible for migration data collection and compilation, experts and relevant international organizations, as well as academic experts can also be invited to contribute to the development of international recommendations on data sources by the co-chairs of the Task Force.

Ghana Statistical Service and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) will jointly coordinate the work of the Task Force.

Main responsibilities of Task Force members are:

- to contribute actively to the work of the Task Force, such as contributing texts, providing feedbacks;
- to share practices from their own country or area of work;
- to review draft documents for submission to the UN Expert Group and UN Statistical Commission.

Annex. Data sources of international migration statistics

Population and Housing Censuses

In many countries, censuses are the main source of data for providing information on a wide range of demographic, social and economic characteristics of the population allowing detailed data disaggregation by age, sex, ethnicity, labour force status, migration status, disability, housing conditions and small geographic areas in line with SDG target 17.18. While censuses, by their nature, do not collect information on a large number of variables, the number of observations is vast, especially for disaggregation of data and in comparison to household surveys. The unique benefit of a population and housing census, despite infrequent conduct, is that it represents the entire statistical universe, down to the smallest geographical unit, of a

country or region and is often only data source of information for rare or hard to measure events, such as international migration and disability.

The basic feature of the census is to generate statistics on small areas and small population groups with no or minimum sampling error. This implies that each individual and each living quarter is enumerated separately and that the characteristics thereof are separately recorded. The requirement of individual enumeration can be met by three different approaches- by the collection of information in the field, by the use of information contained in an appropriate administrative register or set of registers, or by a combination of these methods[1].

The potential impact of including questions on international migration in census questionnaires of the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, especially for censuses conducted with traditional methods, cannot be over-stated for advancing research on the stock of international migration as well as on the status and trends of migrant population's health, education, employment, access to mobile or other assets, and a wide range of other benefits and/or deprivations. While the majority of the previous censuses have collected data on migration, the main challenge is that the data have not been collected, analyzed and disseminated in a standardized and systematic way across countries and also between censuses.

Household surveys, including labour force surveys
Another major source of migration data is the household-based sample surveys such as labour force surveys, demographic survey and living standards measurement surveys. Such surveys normally do not produce data on international migration but few questions or migration module questionnaire could be added to such household surveys. However, more comprehensive information on migration requires special surveys focused on the subject. Household surveys are based on a representative sample of a country's population with the intention to yield statistics with more details or focusing on special population groups. Sample surveys enable relevant questions to specific migration issues are included. Further, the survey's sample design is also important to ensuring that migrant populations are taken into account and are among the survey's respondents. Another point of interest is that when household survey is repeated at frequent, regular intervals, it may be possible to estimate the size of net population movements between the survey dates.

Population register and civil registration
National population register or registers of foreign citizens may be of greatest use to measure basic information on the stocks and the flows . Population register usually include information on date of birth, sex, place of birth, marital status, place of residence for all people (including foreigners or separate register for foreign citizens) living in the country, and unique identifier for persons. Population register is continuously updated for births, deaths and changes in the place of

---

[1] UN Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses Revision 3

residence. It is important to note that the value of register data depends on data quality, data content (what is collected) and coverage to identify who is included in the register. Thus, population register(s) can provide timely information on international migration affecting a country. The identification of international migrants depends on national laws and whether the inscription or deregistration applies to citizens of the country or foreign citizens.

Other administrative data
The bulk of migration data emanates from administrative data which most often are scattered in different government offices. Administrative sources are designed to collect information and generate data for administrative functions and often are not designed to support research, statistical compilation or statistical analysis. The most useful administrative sources are those for visas, work permits, residence permits, and border crossing data.

Non-traditional data sources
Non-traditional data sources, such as mobile phone location data, passenger flight data, internet data, among other, may also be used to generate statistics on international migration and mobility, be it independently or in conjunction with traditional data sources. The use of non-traditional data sources in the realm of official migration statistics appears to be scarce, though countries may be prompted to make more intense use of them given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on traditional data collection modes.