

Recommendations

on Data Collection and Research on Migration and Development

Hosted by the Government of Finland, a group of international experts from academia, international agencies, governments and civil society met in Helsinki on 1 October 2008¹ to consider priorities for improving data on migration and development. The meeting was organised as a follow-up event to the First Meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) held in Brussels in July 2007.

Below are the conclusions from this meeting for consideration at the Second Meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development on 29–30 October 2008 in Manila, the Philippines.

1. The value of better data and research

- Without better data and research, better policymaking on migration and its impact on development will be impossible.
- There needs to be a commitment from Governments to devote adequate resources to the collection and dissemination of data.

2. Priorities areas for strengthening data and research

- **Impacts of migration on development.** We need to understand the economic and social impacts of migration, especially the wider impacts on gender, families and human rights.
- **Migration futures.** How will trends in development impact migration? What will be the drivers and restraints on future flows of migrants around the world? For example, climate change, demographic change, food crisis, world economic crisis and wars. What migration scenarios are likely?
- **Assessment of policy impacts.** There is a pressing need to assess the effectiveness of migration-related policy initiatives. For example, how does migration policy affect return migration? How do visa policies in destination countries affect skilled worker movements and education? How does a specific design of a temporary workers program affect their mobility? Which effect do policies on unauthorized migrants have?
- **South-South migration.** There is a call for improving the state of knowledge of migration within the Southern world. How many people move between and transit through developing countries? Are their characteristics and the impact of their movement different from South-North and/or North-North migrations and migrants?
- **Diaspora communities.** We need to know more about how diaspora communities shape development in the countries they left. What are the characteristics of diaspora communities, what are the skills and occupations of community members in the host country? In what ways do

¹ The Expert Meeting was arranged by the Department for Development Policy of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and the Institute of Migration in Finland.



communities engage with their countries of origin? How can developed and developing countries leverage the development benefits of diaspora communities?

3. Improving the coverage, comparability and timeliness of migration data

There is an urgent need to collect more reliable basic data, which means better quality, improved coverage and more timely data on the extent and nature of migration. Therefore, we recommend Governments to:

- Seize the important opportunity presented by the 2010 round of national censuses to dramatically improve the coverage and comparability of migration-related data.
 - Adopt the United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses² to ensure that there is better comparability of data and that adequate migration questions are included in each Census.
 - Share migration-related data from censuses in a timely and accessible fashion, for example, through one master database compiled by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations.
 - Use data from the 2010 round of censuses as the basis for regular updates of migration estimates using survey and administrative data.
- Make further and better use of administrative data relating to migration through elaborating individual records, linking and integrating registers, and setting up regular data collection systems, while respecting the United Nations Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration³.
- Make available and share, where possible, administrative data relating to migration.
- Develop standardised questionnaire-modules relating to migration and to insert these, where possible, into national and special surveys, such as Labour Force Surveys, Demographic and Health Surveys and Living Standards Measurement Study Surveys and Household Surveys.
- Assess whether and where it is possible to release and share anonymised micro data (for example, from the Labour Force Survey) and other datasets relating to migration produced or sponsored by Governments with the research community.

We believe that the initiatives for improving existing data sources suggested above will help answer some of the most pressing issues, but also that additional initiatives are needed to assess particular areas of interest.

4. Ensuring progress

- We believe that Governments should prioritise capacity building in data collection and cooperation on data exchange (bilateral/multilateral level).
- We recommend the creation of National Task Forces in each state to produce regular country reports that will compile and present coherent and appropriate data and research on migration and development using a similar template.
- We propose that regional and inter-regional consultation and cooperation mechanisms discuss GFMD conclusions on data and research and explore possibilities of support.
- We propose the creation of a “Data and Research Working Group” composed of a small group of representatives from states, international agencies, the research community and civil society to review progress on improving data and research in migration and development. We believe this group could also be a forum for making recommendations on data and research, to share best practice and identify priorities in the lead up to future GFMD meetings.

² ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/67/Rev.2

³ ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/58/Rev.1