



## Improving Data on International Migration

### *Towards Agenda 2030 and the Global Compact on Migration*

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# **The Global Need for Better Data on International Migration and the Special Potential of Household Surveys (Draft, for conference)**

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## **Conference Background Paper**

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## **I. Antecedents: The Need for Better Data on International Migration as Recognized by International Organizations and in International Fora**

The generally positive effect of international migration on migrants and on development in countries of origin and destination has come to be recognized in UN documents including Reports of the Secretary General as well as in academic studies. Furthermore, continuing and widening income/wage gaps between developed and developing countries, conflicts within countries and externally, wide differences in fertility/mortality and population growth and aging, natural disasters and climate change, differences in the timing of economic cycles and crises around the world, increasingly global and interconnected international trade and production, and the vast and continuing improvements in communications and transportation systems all point to international migration being an even more important factor in socio-economic change and policy debates through the twenty-first century. And yet data on the international migration of people is said to be much inferior to that of goods and capital, amounting to “an enormous blind spot” (CDG, 2009, p. v). This limits our knowledge of not only the facts of migration flows and stocks but also of how to utilize data to “maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of migration for sending and receiving countries ... and has stunted global understanding and domestic political discourse on a critical development issue” (*ibid.*). Governments have yet to agree, at the global level, much less implement, actions and measures to improve data on international migration.

For some decades, UN and other international organizations, many governments, and other stakeholders in many international fora have recognized deficiencies in the data and understanding of international migration and its relationships with development, leading to many recommendations, but it is sufficient here to focus on the past three years as there has been much fruitful discussion.

For example, in a Resolution on International Migration and Development adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2014 (UN, 2014), the Assembly referenced previous resolutions since 2003 on the topic, including noting the important and complex inter-relationships between migration and development, the frequent vulnerability of migrants including trafficked women and children and other human rights violations, the importance of remittance flows for recipient households' welfare and reducing poverty, the high costs of sending remittances, the challenges of irregular migration, the need to reduce fees paid to labor recruiters, and the importance of recognizing the contribution of international migration to helping countries meet the Millennium Development Goals (though it was not mentioned in the MDGs), and hence to be taken into account in the ongoing development of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Resolution also directly addressed the issue of data inadequacy and its relationship to policy as follows:

...*Emphasizes* the need for reliable, accurate, disaggregated, nationally relevant and internationally comparable statistical data and indicators on international migration, including, when possible, on the contributions of migrants to development in both countries of origin and countries of destination in order to facilitate the design of evidence-based policymaking and decision-making in all relevant aspects of sustainable development, and

in this regard invites the entities of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations and multilateral institutions, in accordance with their mandates and as appropriate, to assist Member States in their capacity building efforts in this matter (Paragraph 27).

Following this, in the UN (2015) Declaration from the meeting on Financing for Development, in Addis Ababa, the final declaration stated:

We recognize the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development in countries of origin and transit and destination countries. Remittances from migrant workers, half ... women, are typically wages transferred to families, primarily to meet part of the needs of the recipient households... We will work to ensure that adequate and affordable financial services are available to migrants and their families in both home and host countries...towards reducing the average transaction cost of migrant remittances by 2030 to less than 3 per cent of the amount transferred... We will support national authorities to address the most significant obstacles to the continued flow of remittances, such as the trend of banks withdrawing services, to work towards access to remittance transfer services across borders. (para.40) .... High-quality disaggregated data is an essential input for smart and transparent decision-making, including in support of the post-2015 agenda and its means of implementation, and can improve policy-making at all levels. (para. 125) ... We will seek to increase and use high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by sex, age, geography, income, race, ethnicity, migratory status ... (para. 126)

While there is no mention of (either internal or) international migration in development in the MDGs, in the new SDGs there are several places where the importance of international migration is noted, in target 10.7, under Goal 10 to reduce inequality within and among countries: “Promote orderly, safe, regular (meaning “legal”, presumably) and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.” Currently in Europe and elsewhere, the world is searching for a successful and humane way to manage the huge numbers of asylum seekers displaced from Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East, most seeking refugee status in Europe. Target 10.c states that a goal is to “reduce to 3 per cent the cost of [sending] migrant remittances” to developing countries (compared to the mean cost of 7.5% in 2015). The other place where international migration is specifically mentioned is with respect to the topics of forced labor, human trafficking, and child labor, and more generally protecting labor rights as human rights, as mentioned in targets 8.7-8.8, “including migrant workers, in particular women”.

It is well known that international migration has been a powerful mechanism for millions of families in developing countries to improve their lives through the remittances sent back to origin households and communities from household members migrating to developed countries, with such total transfers reaching \$432 billion in 2015 (worldbank.org, cited in UN, 2016). This reduces

poverty and often also increases school attendance and improves health, consumption and production patterns and changes gender roles (e.g., Assad, 2010). But perhaps because international migration continues to be a hot potato for many developed countries, this benefit is not recognized in goal 17 of the SDGs, in the discussion of the need to mobilize resources for development.

The new SDGs, targets, and indicators (much expanded from the MDGs) require a vast increase in global efforts and therefore capacities to measure and monitor progress towards meeting them. Thus with respect to migration, governments and international organizations will need to measure and report on progress in implementing “well-managed migration policies”, to enhance the well-being of migrants, combat trafficking, and reduce remittance transfer costs and labor recruitment costs. But given the key role of international migration widely recognized in development, much more and better data will be needed on the numbers and characteristics of international migrants, their origins and destinations, reasons and mechanisms for moving, the determinants of migration, and the multidimensional consequences of migration for the migrants and their households, communities and countries of origin and destination.

These challenges are highlighted in the 2016 report of the UN Secretary General on *International Migration and Development*, in sections C and D titled “leveraging migration for development” and “improving migration data and research”, respectively. Section C describes the joint role of UNDP and IOM “to mainstream migration in national development plans and strategies...to strengthen the role of local governments, migrants and other actors...and linking remittances to financial services ...to maximize the development impact of remittances...and the role of diaspora investments in creating employment opportunities”. Section D notes that UN DESA and IOM presented a handbook on migration and development prepared by the Global Migration Group, with support from KNOMAD (Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development), and mentions efforts to improve migration data in Africa and the work of ECE in seeking to harmonize concepts and definitions for measuring migration and its impacts across Europe, including circular migration.

Data issues will continue to receive additional attention leading up to the creation of a ‘global compact on migration’ set out in the 2016 *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*. This declaration states:

We are determined to address the root causes of large movements of refugees and migrants, including through increased efforts aimed at early prevention of crisis situations based on preventive diplomacy ... (para. 12) ...The implementation of all relevant provisions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will enable the positive contribution that migrants are making to sustainable development to be reinforced. At the same time, it will address many of the root causes of forced displacement, helping to create more favorable conditions in countries of origin. Meeting today, a year after our adoption of the 2030 Agenda, we are determined to realize the full potential of that Agenda for refugees and migrants (para. 17). In addition, “we recognize the importance of improved data collection, particularly by national authorities, and will enhance

international cooperation to this end, including through capacity-building, financial support and technical assistance. Such data should be disaggregated by sex and age and include information on regular and irregular flows, the economic impacts of migration and refugee movements, human trafficking, the needs of refugees, migrants and host communities and other issues” (para. 40). Migrants can make positive and profound contributions to economic and social development in their host societies and to global wealth creation. They can help to respond to demographic trends, labor shortages and other challenges in host societies, and add fresh skills and dynamism to the latter’s economies. We recognize the development benefits of migration to countries of origin, including through the involvement of *diasporas* in economic development and reconstruction. We will commit to reducing the costs of labor migration and promote ethical recruitment policies and practices between sending and receiving countries. We will promote faster, cheaper and safer transfers of migrant remittances (para. 46). We commit to strengthening global governance of migration... and welcome the agreement to bring the International Organization for Migration (IOM), an organization regarded by its Member States as the global lead agency on migration, into a closer legal and working relationship with the United Nations ... which will assist and protect migrants more comprehensively, help States to address migration issues and promote better coherence between migration and related policy domains” (para. 49).

Thus there is much to be done, and much under way, which we now review.

## **II. Existing Sources of Data and Their Inherent Limitations**

First, a brief review of existing sources of data on migration is in order. The two main traditional sources of comprehensive demographic data in countries are national censuses of population and continuous population registers, overseen by governments, usually the government census and/or statistical office. For international migrants (immigrants and emigrants), additional data sources may also provide useful data, first, administrative sources such as (a) registers of foreign workers (with work permits or not) or of foreigners (taken as non-citizens usually) living in the country; and (b) admission/border statistics to review people entering and leaving the country by crossing the border or entering/departing from a land crossing or sea or air-port. These existing sources have shortcomings in their coverage of persons entering/leaving, the data they collect on those persons, or both, but have much potential to be improved (see UN recommendations including UN [1998] and Bilsborrow et al. [1997]). In addition, data could be collected from household surveys, either existing ones by adding questions on international migration or new, specialized surveys. This is discussed below.

For most countries in the world, the main data sources on international migration are population censuses, again along with continuous population registers in the minority of countries which have them. Most censuses have data for each person only on the place/country and date of birth, i.e., the foreign born population: This continues to be the main source used of necessity by the United Nations Population Division for about two thirds of the countries it compiles data for (see International Migration Wall Charts, 2006, 2009, 2013, 2015, and excel files). This provides only *lifetime* migration stocks, which is of limited interest for government policy and the SDGs, since it says nothing about recent migration flows in or out of the country. It was *recommended* at the UN Expert Meeting in 2006 on International Migration Data and repeated by CDG (2009, p.2),

that countries in the 2010 round of population censuses collect data on all three aspects of international migration: country of birth, country of citizenship, and country of previous residence (including whether arrived in current country within the past x years, or date of arrival: see UN Statistical Office, forthcoming).

The CDG also made *four other recommendations*: better exploit existing administrative data sources, from population registers to registers of foreigners or foreign workers; compile data from existing Labor Force Surveys in a harmonized data base; (have governments) provide public access to micro data files on individuals and households, while protecting confidentiality; and create and insert special modules on migration in existing household survey programs, including Labor Force Surveys.

The CDG noted some significant advances in data on international migration already under way at that time at various organizations, including the UN Population Division's creating a Global Migration Database, originally with estimates of the stock of international migrants by not only total persons (as in its periodic Wall Charts) but broken down by sex, age and country of birth; more recently, the UNPD has developed estimates of annual migration flows between countries, which must involve considerable modeling and guesstimating, given the many countries still without basic data. Other organizations compiling better and harmonized data for their countries/region include the OECD for its member countries, UNHCR on refugees, Eurostat, the UN ECLAC for Latin American countries, the Migration Policy Institute's MPI Data Hub, the World Bank, and the University of Sussex's Global Migrant Origin Database.

With respect to the five recommendations of CDG, some progress was already being made at that time and has continued since. Regarding censuses, for example, in the 2000 round of censuses, conducted by around 90% of the world's countries (between 1995 and 2004), 79% of those collected country of birth, 55% country of citizenship, and 36% country of previous residence five years ago. Certainly there has been some increase in these percentages, which must be available now for the 2010 round of censuses (2005-2014) from the UN Statistical Office.

With respect to administrative data, improvements usually need to begin, at the country level, with better data sharing and collaboration in methodology and definitions between the Ministry of Interior (and others involved with data on immigrants) and the National Statistical Office, which is occurring but slowly. Regarding recommendation 3 on labor force surveys, some developing countries have had added modules of questions on international migration, beginning with four countries incorporating experimental modules around 2006: Armenia, Egypt, Thailand and Ecuador. Data for the first three were analyzed and published, yielding interesting findings, but in Thailand fewer than 1% of the households in the sample had a recent emigrant, too few for much analysis (Bilborrow, 2008). Other countries have since tried expanded modules, including Moldova and Ukraine (ILO, 2013a,b), and the EU has developed a common set of questions included in all member countries' labor force surveys leading to an annual updated data base.

With respect to the fourth CDG recommendation, there continues to be progress in countries making micro data files available, with most developed countries and countries in Latin America making census samples or whole census files publicly available, as well as data from labor force and other government-sponsored surveys in the case of Latin America through DOCPAL and then

SOMEDE, based at CEPAL, Santiago, Chile. However, China, most countries in the Middle East and Africa, and many other primarily developing countries still do not make micro files available, even when funded by external sources and even to other government agencies or scholars or universities in their own country. Evidently funding sources should insist on the data being made public as a condition of providing funding. For example, the World Bank took much longer than DHS (started by its predecessor, the World Fertility Survey, in 1967-83) to make data files available from its Living Standards Measurement Surveys, mostly since around 2000; and in a project in 2009-2011 to fund the collection of data on migration in six Sub-Saharan African countries, the Bank committed to make all the data publicly available on its website as a condition of supporting the data collection institution in the country, which was facilitated by the fact that in all cases the institution was not a government agency but rather a private survey firm or university center. In Nigeria, for example, it was impossible for the collaborating university to even obtain special tabulations on the distribution of international migrants by state, much less a sample of the most recent 2006 census of population to develop the sample frame. Finally, in recent decades micro data files for 82 countries (277 censuses) have been collected and harmonized from censuses of population by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series-International (IPUMS-I) project at the University of Minnesota (USA).<sup>1</sup> Still this is less than half the countries administering censuses in the last two rounds.

The last CDG recommendation was to “include migration modules on more existing household surveys”. Such modules could be for immigration, emigration, return migration, and/or remittances. This could include a core module for all countries plus optional modules to add according to country needs and interests. Adding modules to existing surveys evidently has a huge advantage in terms of cost, as it involves only the small marginal cost of adding questions to an ongoing survey program already funded. This implies some small increase in the length of the questionnaire (a bit more paper, and/or programming time to program the questionnaire in a tablet), in time for interviewer training, a few minutes more to conduct the interview, and in the time to enter, clean and analyze the additional data. Summing all these gives the total marginal cost of adding questions, which seems unlikely to exceed 5% of the total survey cost. Nevertheless, to do this, to assess the usefulness of adding questions on migration to an existing household surveys, several questions need to be asked first, relating to the peculiar characteristics of international migration, especially the rareness of international migrants (“rare elements”: see Kish, 1965; Sudman et al., 1988), particularly recent immigrants or emigrants, in a country’s total population. Thus, the UNPD 2009 Wall Chart on International Migration estimated 214 million persons lived in a country other than that of their birth, 3.1 % of the world total). This is the total accumulated stock, a stock which was 10% or 20% or more in some of the major developed countries of preferred destination. But how many of these, what % of the country total, would have come (or left, for countries mainly of emigration) *recently*, say, within the previous five years? The UN data show how small this is: Thus only 3 countries (with over 1 million population) in the whole world had a net annual immigration rate as high as 1% in 2005-2010, and only two a net annual emigration rate over 1%. Thus using the preferred census five year reference period means that there are very few countries (particularly of emigration) where a random sample will find more than, say, 2% of the population to be *recent international migrants* within the previous 5 years, or say one in 60 households. Thus in a typical household survey of 10,000 households, only 167 households will have one or more migrants. This is rather small for the usual desired

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<sup>1</sup> Website accessed November 23, 2016.

disaggregation by age, sex, education, province/state/city of destination, or major countries of origin or destination, as the case may be (for immigrants or emigrants), much less for cross-tabulations based on more than one of these variables.

Hence to evaluate whether it could be worth adding questions on international migration to an existing household survey, several questions should first be asked, including:

- What is the sample size, the geographic coverage, and the prevalence of migrants of interest in the country or region of study? The first and third together determine the likely number of migrants/households with migrants to be found in the usual random selection of households used in surveys to represent the population. Will the survey produce enough data to justify the cost? National coverage is desirable for most surveys, but since migrants tend to be concentrated in particular regions/cities, selecting a random sample does not lead to efficient data collection in the field for studying migration.
- What is the focus of the survey, and hence the availability already of *other* data useful in the study of migration, such as the main demographic characteristics of people including immigrants (age, sex, education, marital status,), economic situation such as employment, occupation, wages, or income from all sources which may already include remittances? This tends to make labor force or other economic surveys more useful than surveys focusing on fertility, health, nutrition, political issues, the environment, etc.
- Are any data already collected in the survey questionnaire to identify international migrants? This increases the possibility of convincing the survey implementers to accept additional questions, and a probable locus in the questionnaire to insert them. Thus if the questionnaire covers country of birth/citizenship, duration of residence in the current house of or date of arrival, or if it covers key events that may trigger migration (marriage/divorce, education), this provides an entre.
- Are any retrospective data collected on individuals/the household? What is desired is data on the situation of migrants and their household of origin or destination *at or just prior to the time of immigration/emigration?* With such retrospective data, and data on key events as noted above, simply adding questions to fully identify migrants of interest could provide useful data to assess the circumstances of migrants and non-migrants near when migration decisions are made and changes in the situation of the migrant and his/her household from that time to the time of the survey. However, it makes more sense to do this from the outset, in a specialized survey on migration (see below).
- Are any data collected on the *situation of non-migrants* in the sample household in the past, viz., at or prior to the time of out-migration of the person who left? While this is almost never done, see the item above.

There are several commonly administered types of surveys that can be considered potential candidates for adding questions on international migration, the largest being national surveys following or linked to the most recent census or to a population register, such as a sample of a recent census (but it should be soon after a census, to reduce the time for migration post-census to vitiate the representativeness of the census-based sample). In the United States, a new kind of survey has been initiated by the US Census Bureau to replace the census “long form”: a large, continuous survey with a questionnaire similar to that of the long form sent to one in six households up to the 2000 census, called the American Community Survey, which samples 300,000 different

households each month, or 3.6 million households per year (with around 2.4 million completed households, or about 1 in 38 households in a year). This provides statistically reliable updated data each year for areas with modest population sizes and for areas with populations as small as those of census sectors cumulated for five years using a moving average. It updates all data on population characteristics annually between the decennial censuses. However, its questions on migration are minimal, and do not reach the United Nations “census minimum,” having only place/country of birth and place of residence 12 months ago.

There are several common types of household surveys governments (with the focus on developing countries) undertake, often with samples of 5-20 thousand households. Most countries undertake regular, national labor force (LF) surveys, while about as many developing countries (over 90) undertake Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) since 1983, and since more recently Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS). The World Bank has supervised Living Standards Measurement Surveys (LSMS) in over 40 countries. The vast majority of LF, DHS and MICS surveys collect no data on migration beyond place of birth. LSMS surveys, in contrast, collect some basic data on internal migration, on last change of residence. Only a few DHS surveys (including Colombia and Ecuador around 2005) and a few LSMS surveys (including Albania and Tajikistan) have collected any data on *international* migration, with only the latter two mentioned obtaining more than a census could realistically collect, such as country of birth, citizenship, and previous place/country of residence five years ago, to identify fixed period immigrants, and whether any member of the household left to live abroad since 5 years ago, to identify emigrants from households. Many countries also undertake other types of national household surveys of potential interest, including nutrition surveys and household budget (in most of the CIS countries) and income-consumption surveys. Reviews of the content of most of these surveys up to around 2010 (e.g., Bilsborrow and Lomaia, 2011, 2012, on CIS countries) found none collecting more than a trivial amount of relevant data (*viz.*, value of monetary remittances received). A few developing countries such as Brazil also have a large annual multi-purpose survey (110,000 households, since 1967), which still contain no more than census-type questions on migration.<sup>2</sup>

In the absence of a focus on migration, however, virtually all of these existing surveys suffer from two serious shortcomings for purposes of being able to provide data useful for measuring, monitoring or analyzing migration: (1) a sample size insufficient to yield data on enough “rare elements” (e.g., migrants in the previous 5 years) to be useful for the main disaggregations and analyses; and (2) a questionnaire which is not designed to obtain data on migrants (and non-migrants) at the time of migration, i.e., retrospective data, in the past. That is, acquiring data on the situation of both migrants and non-migrants *prior to migration* is necessary to pool to formulate migration functions to study the determinants of migration: The *population at risk of migrating* comprises migrants and non-migrants in the country of origin. To study the consequences, data are similarly needed for the same two population groups, viewed from the country of origin: the emigrants, and the non-emigrants (and their households). This is so the consequences for the migrant and his/her household can be compared with those of non-migrants *remaining in the country of origin*. Household survey questionnaires are not structured this way unless their focus is on migration. Unless the questionnaire is specifically structured to do this, the data collected

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<sup>2</sup> Other examples of countries designing and administering their own surveys which include a significant component on international migration are cited in Bilsborrow (2008), with a few also in CDG (2009, p.19).

are of little use for studying either the *determinants or consequences* of migration (discussed in detail in Bilborrow et al., 1997).

A further note on LF surveys is desirable. Since these are the most common (carried out in around 120 countries), on a regular basis, nationally representative, implemented by the government, cover a topic integral to much migration (employment), and usually have the largest sample size of household surveys carried out regularly by a government agency, they appear to offer the best existing option for a vehicle to collect migration data across many countries. Most already collect detailed data on the current main economic activity, employment and unemployment, occupation, sector of work, hours of work, earnings, fringe benefits, etc., as well as a household roster listing members of the household with their basic demographic characteristics as in a census, including place/country of birth. But that is as far as most labor force surveys go in collecting migration data, on the foreign-born. So first the census-type questions would need to be added, at minimum, on citizenship and place of previous residence of all household members (or residence five years ago), when the person arrived, and reason for immigrating. For emigration, questions should be asked (to any adult in the household) on whether any member of the household has left in the last x (e.g., 5) years, and if so, some basic characteristics, such as sex, age when left, reason, and destination (if possible, also education and marital status at departure as well, and certainly in a labor force survey, work status and occupation prior to departure). Migration modules for both mainly sending and mainly receiving countries (15-20 additional questions for each) were developed by the ILO and incorporated on a pilot basis in national LF surveys in Armenia, Thailand, Egypt and Ecuador around 2006, and proved useful, though it is not known if any careful or comparative evaluations of the experiences have been carried out. While the extent to which this experience has been replicated in additional countries is not known, it is known that something similar was done more recently in Ukraine and Moldova (on the latter, see ILO, 2013 a,b).

Censuses as well as the other traditional government data collection systems have inherent reasonable limitations of space and format, precluding their use for obtaining detailed data on migrants, so that it is household surveys that are the main candidates to collect data that makes possible investigating the *determinants or consequences* of migration. The requirements of such surveys are implied by the bullets above, including a sample size and design which produces a substantial number of migrants and a questionnaire design that collects retrospective data on migrants and non-migrants. The unfortunate truth is that few existing surveys will yield an adequate number of *recent* migrants, or will accommodate a module on retrospective data. Therefore, in general there is no alternative but to design a specialized survey on migration. This will involve stratification of the country according to the prevalence of migrants, use of specialized sampling methods to oversample migrants, and two-phase sampling in micro areas at the last stage (see Bilborrow et al., 1997<sup>3</sup>; Groenewold & Bilborrow, 2009). It has been demonstrated (see

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<sup>3</sup> It is desirable to have a recent sampling frame to use to undertake a specialized household survey on international migration, whether of emigrants, immigrants or return migrants. Ideally, this would be a recent national population census in which the census-minimum questions (or more!) have been included. This can provide data on the distribution of households with immigrants or emigrants (but not of whole households emigrating), which can be used to create strata based on the prevalence of migrants in different parts of the country so stratified sampling can be used to oversample areas with more migrants. This will make fieldwork much more efficient in obtaining data on migrants than results from the usual random sampling methods. See Bilborrow et al. (1997) for a general, detailed discussion; for applications in the NIDI push-pulls project, see Groenewold & Bilborrow (2008); and for the recent sample designs for Egypt and Jordan in the MEDHIMS project, Bilborrow (2013).

projects described below) that adequate quantity and quality of data can be obtained from specialized surveys of migration using these methods, and then analyzed to yield results useful for policy-makers. Besides the altering of the migration flows themselves that could contribute to macroeconomic and regional development, provide environmental benefits, and reduce per capita costs of achieving various SDGs, studies on the determinants and consequences of remittances can yield results useful for improving policies to reduce poverty and better contribute to development.

#### **IV. Ongoing Multi-country Efforts to Improve the Collection and Production of Better Data on International Migration based on Household Surveys**

On international migration, some countries including the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom and many other developed countries, undertake national, government-sponsored surveys of immigrants living in the country. A few developing countries have done their own (i.e., not part of international programs) surveys on emigrants (e.g., Mexico, Morocco, Philippines). But the huge and growing size of remittance flows has awakened international institutions to the large role international migration and subsequent remittance flows back to origin country households can play in development and reducing poverty. This has led to several multi-country efforts to design and conduct single-round household surveys on international migration, funded mostly by multilateral donors. The first of these was the “push-pulls” project of the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute in 1997-98, to design and support the implementation of specialized household surveys on international migration (focusing on emigration) from five developing countries (Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, Ghana and Senegal) linked to surveys on immigrants from two of those countries each to Spain and Italy (Schoorl et al., 2000), funded by the European Commission/Eurostat.

This has been followed by a number of other multi-country programs of household surveys on international migration, including lower budget household surveys implemented by non-government organizations funded by the World Bank on emigration and internal migration in six Sub-Saharan Africa countries in 2009-2011 (see World Bank website); a separate World Bank-supported MIRPAL project for countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), to coordinate surveys in countries of origin and destination (the latter being mainly the Russian Federation); the Migration from Africa to Europe (MAFE) project of the French Institute for Demographic Studies (Institut National des Etudes Demographiques—see MAFE on INED website) involving surveys on migration from three African countries to five West European countries; and finally, an ongoing program of MEDSTAT-MEDHIMS (Farid et al., 2015) to design and conduct household surveys on emigration in eight developing countries of the Mediterranean region (Egypt and Jordan completed so far), funded by the European Union, World Bank, UNFPA, UNHCR, the Arab League, etc. Each of these multi-country projects has collected comparative data on its participating countries, making possible intra-project comparisons across countries. There are some significant similarities as well as major differences in the methodologies used across these projects. A careful assessment of the similarities and contrasts in the purpose of the survey, the target groups of persons/households of interest, the methodologies of data collection (sampling and questionnaire design), as well as the results would provide a strong basis for a comparative appraisal of the different approaches and questionnaires to learn from for planning future household surveys on international migration.

## V. A World Migration Survey?

Is it possible to think of developing a common approach that could be used to collect comparable data on international migration from larger subsets of the world's countries, including major ones of emigration and immigration—or even something approaching a “World Migration Survey”, akin to the World Fertility Survey and its successor, DHS? This is a topic that has been raised informally over many years, but perhaps first explicitly brought up at an international fora by Cris Beauchemin of INED (2013, 2014).

### *The Case for It*

The case for a larger-scale (involving many more countries than the existing multi-country experiments) coordinated approach to collecting and then analyzing data on international migration begins with reference to its increasing importance in the world as measured by the stock and flows of international migrants, the size of remittance transfers and their impacts especially on households and on development in developing countries, and the inability (and impracticality) of using existing data collection instruments to collect the appropriate data for the important persons and households.

The justification for a World Migration Survey of some sort arises out of the fact that many important policy questions pertaining to international migration cannot be answered from existing sources of data. Some of these questions below have been compiled by the Commission on Migration of the CDG (2009), and have to do with the causes or determinants of migration, their consequences, and the effects of policies. This list is adapted and expanded in the following illustrative, non-comprehensive list:

1. What are the stocks of expatriates (citizens living abroad) from each country? Most countries do not know this very well, much less their characteristics: age, gender, education, school attendance, occupation, incomes, living conditions, intentions to return or not, sending of remittances, and so on.
2. What are the recent flows of migrants in and out of countries, and their demographic and socio-economic characteristics?
3. What are the differences in general in the characteristics of those who leave countries and those who go back? Of those who emigrate and who do not emigrate, and of those who choose one destination vs. others? What are the implications for policy, and policy options?
4. How much temporary and short-term international migration is there? How much circulation? How much return migration? As Beauchemin (2013, p.3) states, these three types of migrants are often seen as a “triple win scenario”, benefitting themselves and their origin and destination countries. But how often does this actually occur?
5. How common is return migration, what are its consequences in different origin countries, and how can these be harnessed better for development? Do return migrants bring back additional skills and education acquired abroad, and then use them after they return? Could this be

enhanced? How often do they return and set up business entities that create new employment opportunities? In general, and for any specific country, should return migration be encouraged and how?

6. What are the major causes of individual and household migration, apart from massive displacements due to natural disasters, civil wars and wars between countries? How dominant really are economic factors such as differences in wage and income levels? What is the relative importance of them compared to differences in living conditions and amenities, geographic propinquity, migration networks, access to information, government visa and other policies and restrictions, practices of recruiting agencies, etc.?
7. What are the factors that determine the *timing* of migration, that is, triggering events for individuals/households, such as losing/gaining a job, marriage/divorce, seeking/completing education, retirement, etc., and macro-triggering events such as significant changes in employment/unemployment, wage levels, inflation, etc.? What is the relative importance of these factors in migration in general compared to those listed above?
8. What are the effects of *diasporas* on origin countries? How much is due to transfers of money and goods, vs. visits, vs. entrepreneurship and investment? Can this be improved in terms of its impacts on development?
9. What are the characteristics of refugees vs. of asylum seekers denied refugee status, and is it possible or desirable to better integrate them in host/destination countries, or to improve their lives through work and other activities more than is currently occurring? What happens to refugees and asylum seekers over time, how often do they return? Do they gain any education or work skills or language ability, and does this serve them well later? How can this be realistically enhanced?
10. How do government policies and practices affect and shape immigration and emigration? Temporary vs. “permanent” migration, return migration? Do they sometimes make migration go underground, become undocumented? How does the status of irregular migrants compare with documented migrants?
11. Can international migration policies help countries better cope with ongoing demographic changes, such as aging (“replacement migration”) and population decline or surplus?
12. What are the likely current and future effects of climate change on international migration (beyond those resulting from the disappearance of entire country-state islands, apparently underway)?

Two kinds of data and analysis are necessary to provide a far stronger basis for improving policies that maximize the benefits of migration to a country relative to its costs. First, more reliable data are needed on the numbers, characteristics and timing of movements into and out of countries. Most of this must come from existing sources (in the absence of discussing Big Data). Second, we need much more detailed data on migrants and non-migrants to assess the determinants and consequences of migration for the migrants and their households, communities and countries of origin and destination, which requires more intensive data collection from surveys. It appears that this must come from household surveys. This is elaborated below.

Progress is being made in improving existing national data collection systems, as recommended by several of the international organizations mentioned at the beginning of this paper and who are participating in this conference, although much more needs to be done in many countries. Nevertheless, these data sources (censuses, continuous population registers, registers of foreigners and work permits, and certain administrative records) provide, at best, data on the stocks and flows of the main types of mostly “long-term” migrants moving from one country to another to change their residence, as well as some of their basic characteristics, while data (from admission/border statistics) is often available on the huge quantity of people crossing borders every day, to enter countries for shopping, tourism, work, visiting, etc. But these traditional systems cannot easily go beyond collecting data on the basic demographic characteristics of persons, such as age, sex and nationality, and perhaps date of entry/exit. They usually do not obtain data on any previous migration of the person or other household members, migrant networks, reasons for migration and for returning, mechanisms and financing of migration, employment and occupation, country of choice/destination/origin or of previous residence; nor on the consequences of the migration, real or perceived, gains in education or skills acquired while abroad and whether utilized after return, just to name a few key aspects of the consequences. Such information is needed by governments to determine who is coming, who is leaving, why, and how does this hurt or help the country. This in turn has policy implications. People, of course, move to improve their own situation (although sometimes they are forced to move) without regard to the effects on their country. Can the former be better linked to positive consequences for the country?

Existing knowledge on the links between migration and development is limited and based mostly on general macro-level studies, which may not correspond to the realities one can learn from data obtained directly from migrants. How can micro-level data from individuals and households help us to better understand these linkages, in different country settings, and how can such an understanding lead to improved policies? Addressing these issues requires collecting much more detailed data on migrants and non-migrants through household surveys. Given the issues described above briefly with respect to the limitations of adding modules of questions on migration to existing surveys (for more details, see Bilborrow et al., 1997), this ideally requires specialized surveys on international migration.

The goal is thus to encourage governments of at least many major sending and receiving countries to work together with international organizations to develop a larger (than the ones mentioned above) multi-country program of specialized household surveys on international migration. Common definitions/concepts and survey methodologies, including sampling approaches and questionnaire modules, could be developed and agreed upon to ensure consistency in definitions, so that, e.g., data on emigrants from countries of origin can match that on immigrants arriving in countries of destination. Only such specialized surveys can produce the detailed data to facilitate understanding the determinants and consequences of migration, the linkages between migration and development, and accordingly, policy implications (see Bilborrow et al., 1997, pp. 11, 237-8; Bilborrow, 2008; CDG, 2009, p.22; Beauchemin, 2013).

### *Some Major Obstacles*

The major obstacles are primarily funding, institutional responsibilities and coordination, and divergent country interests, though there will also certainly be challenging albeit manageable technical issues. To begin with, properly designed and implemented surveys require secure funding, and many developing countries, the major beneficiaries of the new knowledge, will plead poverty, and resist allocating government funds to share the cost, though hopefully most will make personnel and facilities available, and sample frames.

Achieving coordination across international organizations with their own mandates and different interests will be a second challenge, to assign responsibilities to staff up a responsible center to coordinate global efforts and provide technical assistance (with national and international consultants).

A third is the prevailing, well-known divergent interests of most developing countries (of net emigration) and most developed countries (of net immigration). The former want their citizens to be able to live and work and earn more freely in the latter, anywhere in the world, and to send or take money and goods back at minimum cost; while most developed countries tend to want to restrict immigration, and/or accept only certain kinds of immigrants. But this divergence should not necessarily be linked to opposition to collecting more and better data, and to better understandings of the determinants and consequences of international migration and their links to development and poverty reduction.

There are several ongoing and recently completed projects (cited above) of multi-country surveys which are yielding or soon will yield much useful information and results. Results from these surveys need to be evaluated and compared, and more intensive studies carried out on the determinants and consequences of migration from these new, rich data sets, to inform the development of a World Migration Survey program. This will help considerably in the development of the survey methodology, and minimize problems in sampling, questionnaire design, training, fieldwork, data cleaning and processing, analysis, publication of results, and deriving inferences for policy (the focus continuing to be on developing countries). Still, there will be different opinions and interests of countries, experts, and international organizations that will need reconciling, which may require multiple international workshops, discussions, and sharing of documents, which involves some (up front) costs. Also, many developing countries still lack adequate sampling frames due to the lack of a recent population census or register with data on the location of households with migrants. Finally, many (of the same) countries lack the capacity to properly administer the household survey, process the data, and/or collaborate in its analysis and interpretation. Therefore, there will need to be a training component, which could be primarily south-south to keep costs down.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The objective of the Second High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (2013) was to identify “concrete measures to strengthen coherence and cooperation ...to enhance the benefits of international migration for migrants and countries alike and its important links to development” (UN Resolution A/RES/67/219, cited in Beauchemin, 2013, p.4). The next year a UN General Assembly Resolution (2014) recommended holding a Third High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development by no later than 2019, to review follow-up from the Second High-level Dialogue (2013), and to advance the discussion on the multidimensional aspects of international migration. Perhaps by then, there will be some constructive further thinking about this topic if not even progress toward some pilot experiments of A World Migration Survey.

Certainly progress is ongoing and can be strengthened to improve existing government data collection instruments, and adding migration modules to existing large-sample surveys. But only specialized surveys can provide the rich data that, widely shared and well analyzed, can tell us so much more. In the case of the demographic variable fertility, data, theory and understanding of fertility and how policies can affect it have taken a *quantum leap* with the WFS and DHS programs since 1967, while the field of migration continues to limp in the Middle Ages. With all of the current and growing interest in migration and its linkages to development, is it not time to take a step in the same direction for migration, towards a Renaissance in the field, half a century later?

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