Improving the collection of labour migration statistics to better inform policy making

ILO Labour Migration Branch

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1. Current situation

1.A. ILO Tools/instruments

**ILO international Labour Migration module**
- flexible tool, can be attached to LFS, tailored to specific country needs.
- 2006-2009: pilot-tested in Armenia, Thailand, Ecuador, and Egypt
- 2011-2012: Ukraine and Moldova
- **Useful insights at national level but lack of comparability at international level**

**ILO Labour Migration Database (ILM)**
- Based on a joint questionnaire EUROSTAT/UNSD/UNECE
- the only global statistical database on ILM
- 94 countries, 13 basic tables containing estimates of demographic stocks/flows and labour migrant stocks/flows, mostly disaggregated by sex and by age
- Information needs updating--latest data 2006--difficult to compare data at global level

**Global and regional estimates of migrant workers**
- ILO estimated economically active population among the total migrants (based on UN est. total stock of migrants) at global/regional level in 2000.
- **A new estimate need to be prepared based on sound methodologies.**

1.B. Other international sources, databases

- **UN Population Division:** Collects statistics on international migration flows and on the stock of migrant population
- **Eurostat migration data:** Comprehensive, harmonized labour force data of 28 EU countries and 5 other countries
- **OECD:** Annual series on migration flows and stocks, and comprehensive information on labour market characteristics of immigrants living in OECD countries
- **World Bank:** Bilateral migrant stocks (1960-2000), by gender, and based on the foreign-born concept. Bilateral remittance in- and outflows since 1970

Other Reports:
- IOM – World Migration Report
- UNHCR
2. Concepts and Definitions

Who is an international migrant worker?

- **Legal definition** UN (ICMW), 1990: “A migrant worker is a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.”

- **Statistical definition:**
  - Attempts to translate legal definition into a statistical definition to conduct studies at country level

  *No internationally accepted statistical definition*

Definition differs
- across countries
- across sources within countries
- in scope, coverage & methods:
  - In comparable global data

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3. Relevance of labour migration statistics for policy making

- **ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration** (2006)
  “Knowledge and information are critical to **formulate, implement and evaluate labour migration policy and practice** and therefore its collection and application should be given priority.” *Principle III – Global Knowledge base*

UN High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (2013) has called for more data on international migration to facilitate links to development – labour migration data is key to this link.

**Effective labour migration policies are needed to:**
- Respond to labour market needs in origin/destination countries (facilitate job/skills matching)
- Ensure the protection of migrant workers
- Tackle brain drain/de-skilling
- Increase social returns of investment in education
- Facilitate migrant workers integration in destination countries and reintegration
- Ensure that labour migration is harmonized with employment and national development plans (including social protection policies, etc.)
- Fight racism, xenophobia, stereotyping against migrant workers
- Evaluate the contribution of labour migration to development (UN HLD 2013).
3. What type of data are needed?

**To develop effective labour migration programs and policies** statistical information is needed on flows & stocks of **international labour migrants** over time and labour market characteristics:
- Number of labour migrants as a proportion of all migrants
- Demographic characteristics, inc. countries of origin and destination
- Occupations and skills
- Working conditions (working hours, wages, resting period, contractual conditions etc.)
- Labour force participation (formal/informal economy)
- Social security coverage
- Labour market needs by sector/skills
- Migration status (documented / undocumented)
- Reasons for migration
- Length of stay(s)
- Remittances

**Data quality issues**: Availability, reliability, accuracy, comparability, timeliness and frequency.

4. Towards better labour migration statistics

- Comprehensive official national statistics on the economically active migrant population is still lacking, as are regional and global level statistics.

Also needed:
- Improved capacity to collect and analyse labour migration statistics and apply to labour migration policy;
- Better coordination between users and producers of labour migration information, involving social partners;
- Key migration-related questions for inclusion in census and surveys; and
- Priorities for data collection and a coherent work plan for ILO’s focus in short, medium and long term.

**Main obstacle to the comparability and collection of labour migration statistics** is the **lack of international statistical standards and common methodologies**.

*The ILO has a key role to play in promoting the development of international standards, common methodologies and approaches on labour migration statistics.*
Conclusion

Participants in the Conference are invited to express their views as to:

(a) whether this topic is of interest or a policy priority in their country;
(b) whether they consider that it should be discussed in depth at the next ICLS, with a view to promoting the development of methodologies and common approaches to statistics that can inform labour market and migration policy; and, if so,
(c) whether they may volunteer to form part of a working group coordinated by the ILO that would discuss a workplan for defining international standards on labour migration statistics, start its development and present a report to the next ICLS.