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25

The Case for a World Migration Survey

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The Case for a World Migration Survey

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This Policy and Research Paper is part of work of the IUSSP Scientific Panel on International Migration: Strengthening the Knowledge Base for Policy (2018-2021) chaired by Ellen Percy Kraly (Colgate University) and its members composed of Guy Abel (Asian Demographic Research Institute, Shanghai University); Mariama Awumbila (University of Ghana); Marcela Cerrutti (Centro de Estudios de Población), Philippe Fargues (European University Institute), Bela Hovy (United Nations), Marie McAuliffe (International Organization for Migration), with IUSSP Council member Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi (University of Tehran) acting as liaison. The paper greatly benefited from input from Panel members as well as from participants in various sessions focusing on the prospects for a world migration survey which the Panel organized at a series of conferences in 2019 and 2020 including the Second Asian Population Forum (Shanghai, October 2019), the African Population Conference (Entebbe, November 2019), the International Forum on Migration Statistics (IFMS) (Cairo, January 2020), the Online African School of Migration Statistics (December 2020) and the IX Congress of the Latin American Population Association (ALAP) (December, 2020). The authors would like to especially thank Ellen Kraly and the IUSSP President Tom LeGrand for their insightful comments and careful editing of prior drafts.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Addressing the significant knowledge gap on international migration

Research and evidence-based policymaking on migration are currently held back by a severe lack of knowledge. Two years after a vast majority of states adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), most of the data needed to monitor its implementation and impacts are missing. Moreover, the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic which has affected all corners of the globe and radically changed migration patterns, raises new questions and challenges in the intersecting domains of migration and public health. Traditional demographic data collection tools (censuses, surveys, registers, administrative records) overlook significant dimensions of migration processes, and innovative approaches based on social media and other sources of big data are still in their infancy.

The proposed World Migration Survey (WMS) will generate comparative information with the aim of informing a wide range of policy-relevant debates on the levels, characteristics and dynamics of migration, its causes and consequences, particularly across the global South.

Rationale for a World Migration Survey

Every country is both an origin and destination for migrants, although some tend to be net senders and others net receivers at different points in time.

The WMS is thus designed with the potential to capture both outward and inward migrant stocks and flows of the countries it covers.

The WMS intends to:

- Use a similar instrument and a common comparable methodological approach in all countries, whether predominantly places of migrant origin, destination, or transit;

- Gather retrospective and biographical information from respondents that can be used to reconstruct more complex migration trajectories;
- Provide an empirical foundation for adjusting national administrative data in order to yield continuously updated knowledge on migration and migrants;
- Generate information that traditional migration data sources fail to fully capture, such as emigrant stocks and flows; return migration; two-way migration occurring between two censuses; temporary migration, which is a dominant pattern in several parts of the world, etc.
- Collect information from both migrants and non-migrants to better understand migrant selectivity, that is, why certain people emigrate and others do not; and why certain emigrants return and others stay abroad;
- Yield statistically representative results at a national level, with the ultimate aim of providing a global representation of international migration patterns and characteristics, causes and consequences.

Collecting evidence to address the causes and consequences of migration

With a view to serving both research and informed policymaking, the WMS will collect data covering the following six areas:

- Individual push factors
- Root causes or contextual factors
- Opportunities and linkages at destination, or pull factors
- Migration, gender and the life cycle
- Migration and change in origin countries
- Migrant inclusion in destination countries

Four population groups will be distinguished:

- Non-migrants (including second-generation)
- Immigrants
- Emigrants
- Return migrants

The WMS questionnaire will have a modular structure to adapt data collection to a variety of migration patterns.

The WMS sample will be stratified and clustered to ensure representativeness while keeping to a manageable size.

In order to analyse contextual factors (push and pull) of migration, additional databases on income per capita, poverty, human development, governance, rule of law, violence, environmental threats, etc. will be compiled from various external sources.

Challenges and Going Forward

The WMS will call for significant institutional, financial and operational resources. A critical early step will be to set up a lead organization to design the administrative infrastructure for the project. National statistical offices would be best positioned to oversee WMS implementation in each country.

The WMS should be launched with a pilot study. Due to the current scale of intra-regional South-South migration we propose that two pilot surveys be conducted in pairs of countries or corridors, one in Africa and the other in Latin America. A pilot survey in Africa will enable us to explore the specificities of African migration (seasonal and other forms of short-term mobility), and to gather migration data on more elusive groups (youth, trafficked persons, refugees). It would also provide quality data for the African Union to monitor and evaluate its 2018–2030 migration policy framework. In Latin America, the migration corridors that have emerged in recent years would lend themselves to a pilot survey to shed light on mass movements of forced and irregular migration. Finally, as the ultimate goal is to conduct a WMS that covers the whole world, additional pilot surveys should be considered in Asia, Europe and Oceania.

INTRODUCTION

In the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, the attention paid to international migration and refugee movements gained unprecedented momentum among policymakers. At the end of 2018, the world's governments almost unanimously adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), thereby recognizing for the first time that migration is not only a matter of national sovereignty but also of multilateralism and universal principles. Shortly afterwards, one after the other, governments responded to the pandemic by erecting barriers to human mobility with the aim of stopping the transmission of the disease. New migrant flows and migrant circulation were certainly reduced. But COVID-19 did not diminish stakeholders' concerns about specific public policy challenges related to migration. On the contrary, it added new ones: Are migrants particularly exposed to the disease and ensuing vulnerabilities? And what about the host communities?

Echoing the increased involvement of state and non-state actors as well as the concerns of the greater public, international migration and refugee movements have become a popular topic of multidisciplinary research at the crossroads of sociology, economics, law and political science. Dozens of specialized international peer-reviewed journals have emerged in the last decade. Empirical, statistical and demographic knowledge has lagged dramatically behind, however. Far from making it possible to address burning questions with immediate public health ramifications, migration statistics do not reveal anything about migration in real time. And what they do disclose comes long after the facts and is just the tip of the iceberg.

It is increasingly recognized that traditional demographic data collection tools (censuses and surveys) and registers (border-crossing records, residence/work permits, education/health statistics, etc.) miss significant dimensions of migration processes and do not provide adequate critical insight into migration

dynamics, that is, the determinants and consequences of human migration. At the same time, despite the development of more innovative and promising approaches to capture human mobility patterns, based on social media and other sources of big data, results are generally not representative.¹

A need for timely, reliable and comprehensive data on international migration has been expressed not only by experts and researchers but also by national and international policy makers and organizations. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly included migrants as a subpopulation to be taken into consideration. Even though SDGs are not legally binding, countries are expected to commit and implement measures for achieving them. The pledge of *Leaving no one behind*, including international migrants, implies commitments to achieving orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people and ensuring their access to rights. Furthermore, protection of migrants' rights is implicit in most SDGs aiming to end abuse and exploitation, reduce inequality (including gender inequality), and improve access to health, education, and decent work. The most problematic aspect of all these indicators is that they require disaggregated information, so there is a pressing need to improve data on international migration. In the same vein, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration has clearly stated that its first objective is 'to collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies'.

Since early 2020, the spread of a pervasive pandemic has affected most areas of social life and driven many people to poverty and despair. The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has impacted all corners of the globe and radically changed not only migration decision-making and migration propensities, but also migration routes, patterns of settlement, return intentions, and migrant wellbeing (Gamlen, 2020). Unfortunately, little is known about these processes and patterns, since

1. In recent years, considerable advances have been made in the use of big data to estimate and characterize migration trends and patterns. While these estimates are subject to bias and are not usually representative, they are a growing source of innovative and complementary migration data (see among others, Zagheni, Weber and Gummadi, 2017; Alexander et al, 2020; Spyrtos, 2020, Palotti et al, 2020).

limited information has been produced, (with the exception of mobility estimates using big data). This situation has made the need for accurate, relevant and representative migration data even more crucial. Moreover, while COVID is a communicable disease and therefore linked to people's mobility, very little is known about differentials between migrants and non-migrants in terms of exposure to, prevalence and outcome of the disease. Case studies in various contexts have revealed a COVID-19 mortality disadvantage among migrants, for example, in France (Papon & Robert-Bobée), Sweden (Drefahl, Wallace, Mussino, et al.) and Kuwait (Hamadah, Alahmad, Behbehani, et al, 2020). But other studies have found no mortality differentials by migration status, for example, in Italy (Canevelli & al, 2020.). While differentials, if they indeed exist, should become a matter of specific policies, daily statistical updates on new cases, recovered cases and deaths worldwide contain nothing on migration.

In this paper, we advocate for the development and implementation of a World Migration Survey (WMS) to generate international comparative information on these significant and unrevealed aspects of the international migration process, migration selectivity and differentials, and the specific characteristics of migrants. We propose a conceptual framework that drives a specific methodological approach to information gathering. Further, we suggest piloting this survey in country dyads in Africa, but also in Latin America and Asia.

Data collected through a WMS will inform a wide range of policy-relevant debates on the levels, characteristics and dynamics of intra-regional and emerging migration within the global South. These include:

- migrants' contributions to both origin and destination countries;
- linkages between migrants' integration in host countries (migrants' access to rights) and migration regulatory frameworks;
- specific demographic patterns among migrants;
- health conditions and the occurrence of diseases including COVID-19;
- impacts of climate change and environmental shocks on actual and planned migration.

Moreover, in many countries, a WMS will serve as an excellent baseline to monitor both how migration indicators evolve, and how new mobility patterns arise in relation to epidemiological, climate and environmental changes. Combined with data from other sources on these topics, it will increase the accuracy and reliability of demographic projections in crisis situations.

Needless to say, under current COVID-19 conditions, surveys of individuals and households through questionnaires and interviews will only be possible if the spread of the virus has been effectively controlled, and obtaining the necessary authorizations will be a lengthy process. That said, moving forward with a pilot world migration survey holds the potential to shed light on the consequences of the pandemic on migration and mobility patterns, migrant well-being and intentions for future moves.

RECURRENT DEMAND FOR A WORLD MIGRATION SURVEY

The argument for a WMS is not new but has gained new momentum in recent years. In 2004, George Groenewold and Richard Bilsborrow, analysing the benefits of multi-sited surveys for the study of migration determinants and impacts,² suggested that a WMS would be highly valuable for generating data on out-migration that would provide scope for comparisons across all countries of both destination and origin.³

In 2013, Cris Beauchemin, representing the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP), advocated for a programme of surveys on international migration (SIM), similar in nature to the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) or the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS). Since then, the arguments for developing a WMS have been developed further, and the idea has attracted interest from international organizations, particularly the International Organization for Migration (IOM).⁴

In an article published in *Science* in 2016, Willekens, Massey, Raymer and Beauchemin argued in favour of a World Migration Survey as a means to better understand key migration phenomena and to inform policymaking:

We advocate a comprehensive approach to the study of migration that involves (a) better measurement, (b) greater insight into factors and actors that either initiate migration flows or perpetuate and reinforce flows, (c) greater insight into the emergence of migration systems, i.e. systems linking people, families and

2. Design of Samples for International Migration Surveys: Methodological Considerations, Practical Constraints and Lessons Learned from a Multi-Country Study in Africa and Europe, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Boston, Massachusetts, 1-3 April 2004.

3. And a few years later, Richard Bilsborrow reiterated the same idea at the Conference on Comparative and Multi-sited Approaches to International Migration (INED, Paris, 12-14 December 2012).

4. See, for example, Global Compact Thematic Paper: International Migration Statistics.

communities in different countries, (d) greater insight into the consequences of migration for the individual, communities and society at large, and (e) much better performance in predicting migration flows and migrant characteristics. The lack of knowledge creates huge systemic risks and uncertainties and frustrates the formation of effective policies.

And in the same year, Billsborrow made a more explicit case, stating many of the pressing issues that could be examined via a WMS:

- stocks of expatriates (and their characteristics);
- migrants flows (outward and return) and their characteristics;
- migrant selectivity (including return migration);
- temporal aspects of migration processes (permanent or long-term versus short-term or temporary migration, circularity, return);
- return migration (and benefits associated with this type of migration);
- general causes of migration and their incidence;
- timing of migration and push factors (from a life course perspective);
- contributions of diasporas to origin countries;
- situation of refugees and asylum seekers denied refugee status;
- role of migration policies (in shaping specific flows);
- regular and irregular migrant situations.

In 2017, at the 28th International Population Conference in Cape Town, the IUSSP Ad Hoc Panel on Strengthening Migration Data, Research and Training convened to prepare an intervention for the consultative process of the Global Compact on Migration, recommending that “Governments and other stakeholders should consider launching a World Migration Survey, which would be a timely initiative”.⁵ In 2018, Ellen Percy Kraly argued likewise in her paper on International Migration: Initiatives and Goals presented at a United Nations Expert Group Meeting.⁶ That same year, Philippe Fargues reiterated in

5. <https://iussp.org/en/iussp-statement-strengthening-migration-data-research-and-training>.

6. Presented in the United Nations Expert Group Meeting for the Review and Appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its Contribution to the Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

an IUSSP Research Paper that “the community of migration scholars should design a World Migration Survey that would enrich knowledge at a given point in time, and also provide benchmarks for adjusting existing data and producing continuously updated knowledge out of administrative routines.”⁷

7. Fargues P. 2018, Advancing Knowledge on International Migration: Data and Research Needs, International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP), *Policy & Research Papers* # 24.

RATIONALE FOR A WORLD MIGRATION SURVEY

The world is not divided into countries of origin of international migrants on one side, and countries of destination on the other. Indeed, without exception, every country is both an origin and destination for migrants, although some tend to be net senders and others net receivers at different points in time. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the contribution of migrants to inclusive growth and acknowledges that migration is a key factor in the development of countries of origin, transit and destination. Developing comprehensive responses and policies toward migrants and migration calls for a good understanding, based on solid empirical evidence, of these processes and relationships. The relevance of the WMS for sustainable development goals and policy is embodied in its analytic goals and research design.

Taking into consideration this complexity, and with a focus on specific migration corridors, a WMS will sample the population of origin and of destination at each end of the migration process. The WMS is thus designed with the potential to capture both the outward and inward migrant stocks and flows of a country. The guiding principle is to complete the entire origin-destination matrix of the world's migration stocks and flows. In practice, however, cells for many countries will remain empty, given that the corresponding migrant stocks and flows are small relative to total population, making it impossible to obtain a sample of reasonable size.

One of the strengths of the proposed WMS is its use of a similar instrument and a common comparable methodological approach to gather migration information in countries of origin, destination, or transit. Sharing definitions on how to measure migration, who is a migrant, a returnee, or a descendent of migrants is crucial in order to produce comparative estimates and to better understand migration processes on a global scale. This principle is consistent

with current efforts by the United Nations Statistical Office to develop new recommendations on common definitions of international migration statistics.⁸ Likewise, the WMS will gather retrospective and biographical information from respondents that can be used to reconstruct more complex migration trajectories. For this reason, it is important to reach agreement through open international dialogue on the type and scope of this retrospective information on international movements and migration, duration of stay, reasons for outward and return migration.

The WMS seeks to expand existing data and generate additional information that traditional migration data sources are unable to provide. International migrant stocks are currently measured through national population censuses and surveys. However, these sources have several well documented limitations. For example, immigrants may be counted but emigrants are missed; only a portion of return migration is measured; and two-way migration that takes place between two censuses is not measured. As a consequence, temporary migration, which is a dominant pattern in several parts of the world – such as the corridors linking South Asian origin countries to Persian Gulf destination countries that currently host more than 30 million migrant workers – cannot be accurately observed.

Critically, results of censuses and surveys cannot monitor the situation in real time: migration is a continuous and dynamic process and, in the case of forced displacement (or, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, forced immobility), can evolve rapidly.

Another limitation of national censuses and population surveys relates to the undercounting of some specific groups (e.g. migrants in irregular situations).

The challenges of measuring emigration flows and stocks illustrate well the limitations of population censuses for the analysis of international migration.

8. See Expert Group Meeting on International Migration Statistics: Concepts, Definitions, Data and Indicators, 2020 Draft Report on Conceptual frameworks and Concepts and Definitions on International Migration.

Emigrant stocks can only be measured by summing all immigrants from a particular country of origin who are enumerated in all other countries of the world. This is usually a broad and imperfect estimation, dependent on national definitions of origin (e.g. country of birth, last residence, citizenship, etc.), concurrency of census dates, accuracy of census enumeration and availability of disaggregated data on international migration characteristics. To estimate emigration, some countries include a census question about (former) members of the household who currently reside abroad. While valuable, the resulting numbers can overestimate emigration, as some emigrants may be reported by several households and therefore counted more than once, while others may be omitted if the entire household has emigrated.

Another source of international migration data derives from public administrative data systems. These systems may count specific categories of migrants (e.g. those counted by schools and universities, hospitals and medical centres, housing offices, etc.) and collect individual characteristics (Manoharan, 2019). These types of data can also be linked to survey data or other registers. Data linkage, however, can be affected by privacy issues; a unique identifier is needed for each person, and linkage operations are costly (Künn, 2015). Use of administrative data is also constrained by issues of data format, file structure, and accessibility. Moreover, because countries maintain and modify unique record-keeping systems, administrative data are not amenable to aggregation and international comparison over time.

The WMS will benefit from the analytic experience gained over the last decades through a wide range of specialized migration surveys in different regions of the world. These include ethno-surveys, binational and multi-sited surveys that have significantly contributed to generating knowledge about international migration processes as well as methods of reliable and representative data collection. Specialized migration surveys have generally been designed to capture characteristics of migrants and their families that cannot be obtained through traditional sources (census, registries, and multi-purposed surveys), and collect information in countries of destination, origin or both (binational

or multi-sited surveys). An important methodological feature of many of these surveys, as is also the case with the WMS, is the collection of information not only from migrants themselves but also from non-migrant populations to better understand the determinants and consequences of the migration process. Research results have been crucial for shedding light on complex aspects of the migration process, particularly in relation to links between migration and development, factors associated with outward and return migration, the role of social networks, temporal aspects of migration and the situation of migrants' relatives left behind in origin countries, among others.

Specialized migration surveys are non-probabilistic, however, as their scope is often restricted to very specific regions (or communities). This means that survey results are not comparable across settings, not only because definitions and questions are not consistent, but also because sample designs differ significantly. One of the critical strengths of the proposed WMS would be to produce comparable information. This would be achieved not only by using shared definitions of key aspects of migration and common questionnaire modules to collect data in very different settings, but also by sharing similar representative sampling designs. The WMS should yield statistically representative results at a national level (and at a regional level if possible), and also provide a global representation of international migration patterns and characteristics, causes and consequences.

SOCIAL DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF MIGRATION

International migration brings together two (or more) countries at different moments in time. Table 1 schematizes a standard analytical framework of the causes and consequences of migration at individual level as well as at country level in each of the origin and destination countries. We discuss each cell of the table in relationship to the development and implementation of the WMS.

Table 1: Analytical framework of the causes and consequences of migration			
Level of analysis	Migrant Individual	Population of Origin	Population of Destination
	(I)	(II)	(III)
Causes of migration	Individual/household behavioural and motivational factors	Contextual dynamics	Linkages and opportunities
	(IV)	(V)	(VI)
Consequences of migration	Changes in the life cycle and life chances	Migration and development	Inclusion of migrants

1. Individual push factors

In most countries, international migrants are a small minority. Most individuals never depart from their countries of birth, and the UN estimates that international migrants constitute just 3.5% of the world’s population (UNDESA, 2019). In all countries, international migrants are not randomly selected: those who leave

their country are predominantly young people⁹ and usually among the fittest, both physically and intellectually.¹⁰ Migrant selectivity operates in different ways depending on both origin and destination countries. Understanding how migrants are (self-)selected, that is identifying the factors, including motivations, that drive migration among some but far from all members of a community or household, is fundamental to migration research. It is also key to informed policymaking on issues such as the over-emigration of highly educated individuals and its possibly negative consequences for origin countries.

Forced, as opposed to voluntary, migration is another issue. International law makes a distinction between refugees who flee persecution, conflict or war and cross an international border to seek protection in another country, and voluntary migrants moving for the purpose of work, study or family. In reality, however, the distinction is not always possible. Close to half of the world's refugees have found shelter in countries that are not party to the Refugee Convention. In these countries, refugees are often considered as migrants, in a regular or irregular situation, for lack of a proper refugee status. Moreover, individuals' motives for moving may change in the course of their journey, from voluntary to forced or the other way around, according to specific circumstances in the countries they cross (IOM, 2020). Finally, with the passing of time, any refugee is liable to become a migrant worker because he or she needs to earn a living.

Unravelling the complex web of causes of migration at individual and household levels is therefore a core objective of the WMS.

2. Root causes or contextual factors

Root causes of migration impact the whole population of a region or country and as such they do not differentiate between individuals. While the emigration of a minority cannot be explained solely by circumstances that apply to all or at least to a majority of their fellow citizens, root causes are contextual factors

9. The mean age at first international migration is around 25 with no significant variation across space or time.

10. In this sense, they are 'exceptional' people (Goldin & al. 2011).

affecting the action of individual factors. For example, education, which is a universal individual correlate of migration (migrants are on average more educated than their population of origin), operates differently in different contexts: two equally educated persons may not have the same propensity to emigrate depending on whether they belong to a post-industrial or a least developed country.

Emigration is related to factors operating at the macro-level, such as levels of economic and social development, crises of governance or political conflicts, violence and war, environmental change and threats, etc. In their effort to reduce unsafe and disorderly migration, policymakers (particularly in destination countries) pay much attention to mitigating the so-called “root causes” of emigration. For example, international cooperation or aid to development policies implemented by high-income (and migrant destination) countries often pursue an objective of directly, and indirectly, curbing migration through foreign policy and aid.

Climate change may soon create another kind of root cause. According to models and projections of environmental factors, such as heat, rainfalls, sea level elevation, etc., vast territories are destined to become increasingly hostile to human settlement, and eventually uninhabitable. Will adaptation and resilience prevail, or will people be forced to emigrate? Given the unprecedented nature of ongoing patterns of climate change, the answer cannot be convincingly anticipated by solely looking at past experiences of environmental shocks. Understanding how individuals contemplate the future is important. The WMS intends to collect data on individuals’ strategies in areas most exposed to environmental hazards.

Migration is a significant feature of a globalizing world and also operates at intra-regional scales, among developing as well as industrialized countries. A critical goal of the WMS is to understand the contexts and drivers of international movements among different geographies through the use of a common methodology and definitions, and shared dimensions of comparison.

3. Characteristics of destinations: opportunities and linkages (pull factors)

Migrants are motivated by opportunities to improve life chances for themselves, their relatives and often for households and family members remaining in communities of origin. Therefore, job prospects, family circumstances, levels of income, education, the rule of law and other dimensions of security and wellbeing in countries of destination are direct drivers of migration. Moreover, migration policies of destination countries, which can either facilitate or hamper immigration, are factors on their own. In addition, pre-existing linkages between countries of origin and destination (e.g. geographic proximity, a shared history and a common culture, language or religion) can favour migration. The presence of migrant communities of the same origin in the destination countries is another facilitator of migration. Transnational networks of friends and relatives may be able to provide pre-departure information on job opportunities and post-arrival help that reduces the cost of migration. The WMS will collect data to understand the interaction of factors at destination, including labour market conditions, state policies on migration and migrants' social capital, making it possible for state and non-state stakeholders to evaluate the efficacy of their action.

4. Migration, gender and the life cycle

International migration is a significant event in the course of an individual's life. Migration often corresponds to critical changes in personal status affecting crucial dimensions such as family and reproduction, economic activity, security and health, social position, etc., and changes in personal circumstance and experience may be both cause and consequence of migration. Migration affects both the timing and the sequence of social demographic life-course events, for example, fertility and marriage; accordingly, successive migration movements of an individual may be conceptualized as dimensions of the life cycle and of human development. Comparing the life histories of men and women will make it possible to capture the critical gendered dimensions of the migration process. Understanding the differential effects of gender on the drivers of migration and the modes of immigrant incorporation in host societies is a key goal of the WMS.

5. Migration and change in origin countries

Migrants are agents of change in origin countries. Emigration has multiple impacts on economic, social and political developments in the origin country, through migrants' actions, including, for example, remittances (in money or in-kind), direct investment, external voting and political participation, etc. There are also more indirect effects of migrants' experience abroad, such as ideational remittances (values and experiences migrants are exposed to in the host society, which they share with or communicate to communities of origin), or expanded social capital (e.g. business and occupational networks). Such effects are consequential beyond migrant family and households of origin, impacting broader communities and regions of origin. Diaspora policies developed by states and non-state actors in countries of origin to foster ties with expatriate nationals can also play a role in orienting or modulating the impact of emigration. The WMS will collect data on emigrants' involvement in their country of origin and the links they maintain with the family and community of origin, thereby providing useful information for assessing diaspora policies.

6. Migrant inclusion in destination countries

Migrants contribute in multiple ways to the economic, social, cultural, political, demographic fabric – and to their evolution – in destination countries. Over time and through different trajectories, migrants may acquire membership in the society of countries and communities of settlement. Migrant inclusion, integration and incorporation are multifaceted processes combining economic, social, cultural, and legal dimensions. The pace and pattern of inclusion are an essential focus of migration studies, recognized as a process of mutual adaptation: individual migrants adapt to the receiving society and the society adapts to migrants. These processes may span generations. The WMS will collect data to measure similarities and differences in the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of migrants and natives and on the interactions between them.

CONSTRUCTING EVIDENCE TO ADDRESS THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF MIGRATION

The generation of knowledge on the causes and consequences of international migration is a critical contribution of the WMS. The above analytical framework has several implications for research design and data collection through a World Migration Survey. From a demographic perspective, it is essential to measure migrant *selectivity*, that is, why certain people emigrate and others do not; and why certain emigrants return and others stay abroad. Accordingly, the WMS must provide information on non-migrants, outward migrants and return migrants. For this, the sample will include not only non-migrants and immigrants, but also emigrants and returnees, and will record the same individual characteristics among each of these four categories.

In order to assess *determinants of return and return selectivity*, information on current migrants and returnees from the same country of origin will be needed. Analysis of *returnee re-integration processes* will require information collected in origin countries. The WMS must provide representative, unbiased information on individuals who emigrate so that they can be compared with the non-migrant population in the country of origin to determine if and how they differ from those who stay behind. Information on emigrants (their number and characteristics) must be collected from non-migrant members of their household of origin, or other respondents in cases where the whole household has emigrated. Yet, misrepresentation of complete households that have settled permanently at destination may introduce considerable biases if the characteristics and migration patterns of migrants with no respondent and those with more than one respondent differ with respect to those with one and only one respondent (Parrado, McQuiston and Flippen, 2005).

Questionnaires designed to capture the drivers and impacts of outward and return migration as well as processes of migrant inclusion and incorporation in host countries need to be conducted in **origin countries**, with the collection of retrospective information on a range of social demographic variables via a life history approach.¹¹ Retrospective information (dated events) on significant life-course events can be further linked in the analysis with migration timing. Also, collecting the same information for non-migrant groups as well as returnees will shed light on how gender, family and life course affect migration decisions. The retrospective biographical (life history) approach, of which migration is a potential component, may be affected by critical recall biases (Liu, Creighton, Riosmena and Baizán Muñoz, 2016, Bilsborrow et al., 1997), but there is increasing agreement on the relevance of such data, despite the challenges to reliable data collection.

Social networks are critical to understanding migration intentions of individuals, and have implications for study design and sampling methods. Because migrants are socially and spatially clustered (most places have few migrants while a few places have most of them), samples are often implemented in places with large migrant populations, and the network effects of migration may be overstated as a result. For example, a common question in migration surveys is whether an individual wishes or intends to migrate. However, the desires or intentions of two persons with similar individual characteristics will differ depending on whether or not they have links with former migrants in countries of destination. People living in places with high levels of emigration have, on average, a higher exposure to migrants, and consequently a higher propensity to migrate themselves (network effect). Consequently, only sampling regions with high emigration rates results in over-estimation of the overall propensity to migrate. In order to provide unbiased estimates for the whole population, regions with a low rate of emigration must also be included (although regions

11. A large number of bi-national and multi-sited international migration surveys have been conducted across the world: Migration between Africa and Europe (MAFE) survey; Household International Migration Surveys in the Mediterranean countries (MED-HIMS); Mexican Migration Project (MMP), Latin America Migration Project (LAMP); NIDI project, among others.

with a high rate can be over-sampled to limit the sample size). An unbiased estimate can be obtained by applying weighting factors inversely proportional to the sampling fraction.

Impacts of migration at the household level can be assessed by gathering information on remittances, business formation, and other forms of investment. Systematic comparisons between socioeconomic variables of non-migrant households and those affected by migration will shed light on the micro-level effects of migration in origin countries. To analyse micro-level changes linked to migration in families and migrants' local communities of origin, retrospective data must be collected among non-migrants.

The study of immigrant integration processes (including second generation) will require information collection in **destination countries**. To assess the level of immigrant economic inclusion (or integration), similarities and differences between immigrants and natives must be measured according to all the relevant economic variables. To determine the speed of the process, levels of immigrant inclusion can be compared by duration of stay.

However, assessing immigrant social (and cultural) inclusion calls for a diversified approach that the survey alone cannot provide. For example, the question of whether immigrants and natives live in the same neighbourhoods (where they can socially interact) is best addressed using population censuses. At best, the survey can provide additional information on spatial segregation by asking both natives and immigrants about their social relationships.

Finally, assessing the process of inclusion from first- to second-generation migrants requires a particular questionnaire for non-migrant sons and daughters of migrants.

To summarize, the WMS will generate information on:

- a. Migrant profiles and motivations
- b. Determinants of emigration and migrant selectivity
- c. Intentions to migrate

- d. Consequences or impacts of migration
- e. Migration dynamics
- f. Migrant integration at destination
- g. Determinants of return
- h. Returnee re-integration at origin
- i. Second generation.

In order to capture these processes, the WMS will collect data on four population groups:

- i. Non-migrant population (including second generation)
- ii. Immigrant population
- iii. Emigrant population
- iv. Returned migrants

Since countries are either predominantly sending or predominately receiving countries, sampling will need to be adapted accordingly, with over-sampling in the main regions of origin in the first case, and in regions of destination in the second case (see section below on approaches to sampling).

We propose a modular structure for the WMS questionnaire including:

- I. Core survey questionnaire (including non-migrants) to be applied in every country (origin and destination);
- II. Specific emigration module (for predominantly sending countries);
- III. Specific immigration module (for predominately receiving countries);
- IV. Returnee module (applied in predominately sending countries);
- V. Module for [adult] children of immigrants (second generation).

Determining the respondent pool for each of these modules is a critical analytical and methodological decision. The experience of prior research projects that applied a retrospective research design will be highly instructive in this regard. Shared agreement on this aspect of survey implementation is critical for effective comparison of national results for each of the questionnaire modules.

For the analysis of migration determinants, contextual factors (push and pull) will be considered by designing complementary databases with regional- and national-level information. Using information from various official sources, complementary data bases should include time-dependent (preferably annual) data on indicators of the main contextual factors (e.g. income per capita, poverty, human development, governance, rule of law, violence, environmental threats, etc.), that will be used to model the effects of contextual factors on (first-last) emigration probabilities.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONCEPTS AND COMMON DEFINITIONS

For common measurement and comparative analysis of the dynamics of various international migration streams it is imperative to achieve consensus on how to define an international migrant, for example, by their country of birth versus country of citizenship, and what constitutes a “migration” (including return) using the same criteria regarding time/length of stay or absence, and distance/crossing of national borders. Terms such as short-term migration, repeat or circular migrants, or even returnees, are elusive and ambiguous concepts. Sharing a common definition and collecting migration histories will shed some light on how common these forms of mobility are, as well as on their drivers and impacts. Recommendations on definitions of international migration issued by the UN Expert Group on International Migration Statistics will provide relevant guidance, including operational definitions and data collection tools.

It is not feasible to collect exhaustive information on all migration and mobility events, particularly for people with complex migration trajectories. An effective strategy is to gather more information on the first and last migrations, including questions on intentions, reasons for staying or leaving, and desire and/or intention to remigrate.

Moreover, the concept of household must be critically redefined in the context of international migration. Migration can involve the movement of an entire household or of just one individual who leaves his or her household in the origin country (and who may even join or form a new household at destination). In the case of emigration, it will be necessary to define the concept of last household at origin and agree on a way to determine former household membership.

KEY METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES: QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

We anticipate that reaching a consensus on operational definitions of key concepts to be included in the questionnaire will call for timely debate among scientists and statisticians with expertise in migration survey research. A significant stumbling block in this process is the temptation to include too many questions in the survey. There will need to be a trade-off between the desire to cover a wide range of aspects and the feasibility and practicality of a WMS. A guiding principle, therefore, should be to start with a precise identification of policy and theoretically relevant questions and to design the questionnaire accordingly.

Again, the outputs of the UN Expert Group on International Migration Statistics regarding key indicators of international migration and migrants will be useful to the process of developing and selecting survey items. But given the existing experience in specialized migration surveys, a preliminary definition of survey items based on prior research is a feasible option.

1. Core questionnaires should contain information on household characteristics, household members and selected informants:

- a. Household composition and main characteristics of household members (kin relationships, education, marital/union status, childbearing, labour force participation, country of birth and citizenship)
- b. Variables to identify household members who are never-migrants, emigrants, immigrants, returnees, and second generation (household members living abroad, prior place of residence, parents' country of birth).
- c. Household assets and sources of income (including remittances and pensions)
- d. Dwelling materials and type of neighbourhood
- e. Access to education and health of household members

For selected informants:

- f. Life course events (union-marriage-childbearing-mobility)
- g. Employment history
- h. Current occupation and labour force activity
- i. Migration networks
- j. Life satisfaction/perceptions of wealth
- k. If non-migrants: Intentions to migrate, probability of migrating, and main reasons
- l. If immigrants: Expected duration of current migration (return intentions)
- m. If returnees: Re-emigration intentions

II. Module for household members identified as emigrants:

- a. Socio-demographic characteristics (sex, age, education)
- b. Current residency
- c. Year of first departure and if more than one migration, time of arrival at last destination
- d. Number of visits (last visit), frequency of contacts
- e. Remittance behaviour
- f. Current legal status in destination

III. Module for immigrants:

- a. Characteristics of local origin areas
- b. Migration trajectory
- c. Reasons for first migration (and last if more than one move)
- d. Assistance received to migrate (including grants, etc.)
- e. Number of visits to origin country (last visit), frequency of contacts.
- f. Remittances (form of transfers, recipients, frequency, intended use)
- g. Current legal status (and status at entry)
- h. Current labour participation and employment conditions

IV. Module for returnees:

- a. Characteristics of local origin areas
- b. Migration trajectory

- c. Expected duration of stay (last migration)
- d. Assistance received to migrate (including grants, etc.)
- e. Number of visits to origin country (last visit), frequency of contacts.
- f. Reasons for last return
- g. Assistance received to return
- h. Social and economic networks
- i. Last legal status (and status at entry)
- j. Access to education, health and housing (last migration)
- k. Remittances (form of transfers, recipients, frequency, intended use)
- l. Savings brought
- m. Pension from abroad

V. Module for second generation:

- a. Country of birth (for foreign-born parents)
- b. Citizenship (for foreign-born parents)
- c. Year of arrival (foreign-born parents)
- d. Level of education (foreign-born parents)
- e. Current (or at time of death) legal status

KEY METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES: SAMPLE DESIGN¹²

A significant challenge of a WMS is to draw samples that yield representative and unbiased results for immigrants and emigrants, as well as for non-migrants and return migrants, at a national level (and at subnational level if possible).¹³ However, the difficulties of designing representative samples of migrants are widely known. For example, large population samples are needed in order to reach a small number of migrants. This is why most multipurpose household surveys and labour force surveys are not appropriate alternatives for modules on migration. These surveys were generally not designed to this purpose and sample sizes are not large enough to draw representative estimators for migrants from specific countries of origin, or other critical characteristics. Because many if not most migrants are spatially concentrated, it has been proposed to over-sample places where migrants tend to reside (see for example, European Commission 2000). Results from this sampling strategy, however, may overstate selected network effects of migration (see discussion above).

In the same vein, a higher-than-average sampling fraction might be applied in regions particularly exposed to environmental shocks and climate change, in order to accurately anticipate possible responses of the population and assess the likelihood of migration.

Particular groups of migrants present specific challenges for sampling theory and design. Migrants in irregular situation, transit migrants and asylum seekers will be even more difficult to sample. For these and other potentially vulnerable migrant populations, specific strategies will need to be developed

12. We would like to thank Diego Iturralde for his insightful comments on this section.

13. While the main goal of a WMS will be to provide data that are representative at a national level, sub-national estimates might also be useful (although more costly) in certain contexts.

and implemented. Similarly, seasonal migration, which can be concentrated in specific rural or urban areas, might require ad hoc procedures.

Another option would be to use either population or foreigners' registers¹⁴ to draw a representative sample, and to complement this sample with another one that represents non-migrants (as well as returnees and emigrants). Although this is a very good choice since it provides a basis for drawing sample units or elements within a certain domain of interest, in most countries these registers are not available.

Since the sample elements of the WMS will be households with and without members with migration experience, a promising strategy is to obtain a sample frame from a recent population census. Ideally, the WMS would be conducted very soon after the census in order to take advantage of the census as national sampling frame. Even though this would be the best alternative, the main difficulty is to ensure both the inclusion of questions to capture emigration and return migration, and the consistency of operational definitions of key concepts related to international migration.

We already have international examples of the use of population censuses to draw a sample frame of immigrants, and, critically, these methods could also be used to identify households with returnees or emigrants. One national example was the *Encuesta Complementaria de Migraciones Internacionales in Argentina 2002-2003* (Complementary Survey on International Migration in Argentina), which used the 2001 population census to identify households with migrants. The census provided the sampling frame for a subsequent specialized survey yielding nationally representative results.

Since information on exact addresses is not available in many countries, another method employing national census information is proposed by Bilborrow et al. (1997) using geographical information systems (GIS) analysis. Information for small geographic units can be used to establish a sample frame. Areas to be

14. See Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes 2007 (Spain, INE).

included in the sample are selected based on the proportion of immigrants in each unit, and probabilities of selection are assigned based on those proportions.

Using population census information to draw a sample frame for the WMS also entails other significant decisions about the type of sampling procedure. Depending on the characteristics of each location, the size of the migrant (immigrant, returnee or emigrant) population and its geographical distribution, each country will decide on the most appropriate sampling design. Samples should be based on some kind of two or multi-stage design that is stratified (for example, province, metropolitan, rural/urban) and clustered to make sure that high concentration areas are adequately covered – or at least not missed.

When other alternatives are not available, the use of population censuses to draw a sample frame seems to be a suitable option at the present time, since many countries are still preparing for the current and upcoming census rounds. However, there are significant requirements for adopting this census-based approach as the lynchpin to sampling design. The first is a common definition of international migrants (preferably by country of birth). A second significant requirement is the inclusion of another relevant variable for this purpose, namely, place (and country) of residence five years prior to the census, to enable identification of recently arrived immigrants and returnees. Other important variables include duration of stay and migration background, specifically country of birth of the father and mother, to capture second-generation migrants.

Misreporting or coverage errors, particularly in the case of immigrant populations, pose key problems when using population census data to draw a sample frame. These problems should be carefully considered as they may introduce distortions in the results (for example, in cases where migrants in irregular situation are not consistently covered by the census, or where specific groups are undercounted).

PILOTING A WMS: OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

A WMS will undoubtedly demand not only technical expertise but also significant institutional, financial and operational resources. There are no inexpensive or simple alternatives for gathering comprehensive information on international migration. The international scientific community is ready to discuss, agree on, design and analyse a World Migration Survey. If the strategy to use population census information to establish national sample frames is widely accepted, then, as we enter this new decade, it is critical to launch the project as rapidly as possible.

Beyond the active expertise of the international scientific community, successful implementation of the WMS will depend on the commitment and participation of key policy leaders in areas of national and international migration governance. A critical early step will be to set up a lead organization to organize the administrative infrastructure for the project. Given the scale of work required to collect nationally representative data and the expected use of national population censuses to obtain sample frames, it would make sense for national statistical offices to take charge of WMS implementation in each country. National statistical offices have the institutional capacity to undertake, *and ideally sustain*, this endeavour.

The WMS should be launched with a pilot study. Due to the current scale of intra-regional South-South migration,¹⁵ we propose that two pilot surveys be conducted in two countries (one predominately a country of origin, and one predominately a country of destination) in Africa and in Latin America. An alternative strategy would be to consider major migration corridors.

15. According to UN-DESA estimations, in 2019, 44% of the 272 million international migrants worldwide lived in less developed regions.

Africa has a long history of international population movements, with migrants moving within as well as beyond the continent. In 2017, it was estimated that 14% of international migrants in the world originated from Africa and that an estimated 12% of international migrants in Europe came from that continent. (UNDESA, 2018). While this share may be low compared to that of migrants from Asia (41.0%) and Europe (23.7%), the stock of African migrants in the world increased by 46% between 1990 and 2015. Roughly half of these migrants remained within the continent, illustrating the scale of intra-African migration. (UNDESA, 2018). For populations throughout Africa, migration has always been a critical livelihood and survival strategy, and a dimension of sustainable development at the national, regional, community and household scales.

The WMS pilot will provide information on general dimensions of international migration in Africa while also recognizing the specific characteristics and dynamics of intra-regional migration systems that are often missed by existing data sources. These intra-regional mobilities make up 67–73% of migration flows in Africa (UN DESA, 2018). Many migrants are workers moving to take advantage of job opportunities elsewhere in the sub-region, but they also include entrepreneurs, Africans moving to other African countries for investment purposes and, increasingly, young people moving to take advantage of educational opportunities. These intra-regional migration flows are a huge resource for the sustainable development of the region, and yet have received little attention to date in the migration literature, partly due to lack of comparable and reliable data.

Furthermore, temporary, seasonal, cross-border and other forms of short-term international mobility are a key component of population movements in Africa and are particularly critical for the diversification of livelihoods. Seasonal and other forms of short-term mobility are especially important in Africa, where many migrants are likely to be relatively vulnerable once they move to other regions, and in need of specific social protection policies. By running a pilot survey in Africa, we should be able to explore these specificities of African migration,

and to gather migration data on more elusive groups including youth, trafficked persons, refugees, and internally displaced persons. Additionally, Africa is fast becoming a growing destination for both Africans and international migrants from outside the region.

These migration realities and changing dynamics make a pilot WMS survey in Africa particularly timely. Despite the growth and complexity of migratory flows in and out of the continent, and the improved governance frameworks, basic migration data continues to be weak and unreliable in many African countries. Migration data are key to mainstreaming migration into policy and planning frameworks and development initiatives, and essential for developing effective, evidence-based migration policies and programmes. Yet existing sources of data such as household surveys and labour force surveys do not consistently include questions on the drivers and impacts of migration, nor do they capture the specifics of African migration such as circular and seasonal migration. Even when available, survey data are collected using different methodologies, definitions and questionnaires in different countries, making international comparisons difficult.

In Africa, the two largest immigrant receiving countries are South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire. According to the Preliminary Report on the Status of Country Preparedness for the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Census in Africa,¹⁶ the next population census in South Africa will take place in 2022, and in Côte d'Ivoire in 2024. Main immigrant groups to these countries are from Mozambique and Zimbabwe in South Africa and Burkina Faso and Mali in Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁷ Nigeria and Ghana are also attractive candidates for a pilot survey: the Nigeria-Ghana corridor has a great diversity of types of migration and mobilities, and both countries are source and destination countries for migration from within and outside West Africa. The methodology will draw on the experience of previous regional migration surveys, in particular the

16. African Centre for Statistics, United Nations Economic Commission.

17. UNCTAD, 2018. Economic Development in Africa Report 2018. Migration for Structural Transformation, and United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division (2019). International Migrant Stock 2019 (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2019).

Mediterranean Household International Migration Survey (MED-HIMS) conducted in Egypt and Morocco.¹⁸

Reflecting these migration dynamics, the African Union (AU) migration policy framework for Africa (2018 – 2030) offers a strategic framework to guide Member States and RECs in the management of migration. In addition, the AU's Agenda 2063, Africa's development strategy for the next half-century, advocates for continent-wide economic integration through the implementation of the AU Free Movement of Persons Protocol and the Continental Free Trade Area as frameworks for managing migration and mobility on the continent. The Intra-Regional Forum on Migration in Africa (IRFMA) also provides a space for interregional cooperation on migration and a unique platform for Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to share information and discuss regional policies for better regional migration governance (Carciotto and Ferraro, 2020). These policy initiatives require improved data for better understanding, monitoring and evaluation of migration policies and will be served by the results of a pilot survey which, alongside its substantive results, will also include the lessons learned from survey planning, implementation and field operations.

In the South American sub-region, potential destination countries are Argentina or Chile, for which emigration countries could be Bolivia or Paraguay (as well as the most pressing case of Venezuela). In the Central American sub-region, Nicaragua-Costa Rica as well as Guatemala-Mexico are both key country dyads for the pilot. If the pilot were to be extended to Asia, it could cover one or two of the many corridors linking major countries of origin (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka) with the six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council,¹⁹ the second largest destination for global migrants after North America. India-Saudi Arabia, Pakistan-Kuwait, Kerala-UAE or Nepal-Qatar would also be good candidates.

18. See iMED-HIMS Manual 1, Model Questionnaires, and Manual 2 Survey Design & Organization. MEDSTAT III, 2013.

19. GCC includes the following states: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

While studies of international migration processes have grown exponentially over the last thirty years, critical gaps persist in our understanding of this multifaceted dimension of global, regional and local change, and of the human experience. Arguments for establishing a programme of World Migration Surveys are compelling, and given the global geography of international migration, increasingly so. And, despite the importance of international migration in discussions of global sustainable development, essential data on international migration are extremely scarce in much of the world. Inconsistencies in definitions and measures of migration are an obstacle to comparative research on bilateral and multilateral population flows. The lack of nationally representative data limits our understanding of the determinants and consequences of migration at national, regional and global levels.

To implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration there is an urgent need for accurate and disaggregated data to better understand international population flows, and to implement effective, evidenced-based migration policies. The moment to realize the ambition of a World Migration Survey has arrived.

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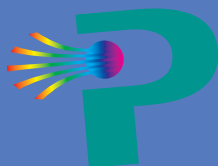
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