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

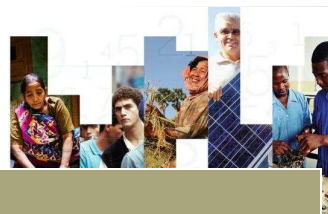## ILO Labour Migration Branch

---

Contents

1. Current situation – ILO tools and other international sources

2. Concepts and Definitions

3. Relevance of Labour Migration Statistics for policy making

4. What type of data is needed?

5. Towards better statistics

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.
- Estimate updated in 2007 and 2010.
- **A new estimate need to be prepared based on sound methodologies.**
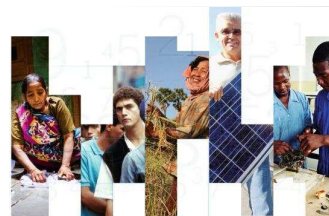
---

1. Current situation

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
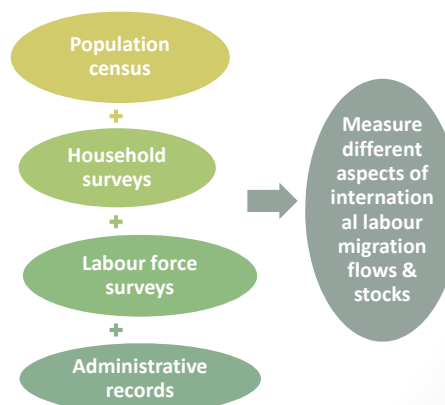   UNHCR

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
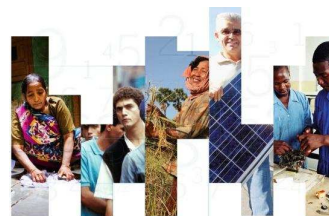
  No internationally accepted statistical definition

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

Population census
+
Household surveys
+
Labour force surveys
+
Administrative records

→ Measure different aspects of international labour migration flows & stocks

---

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.
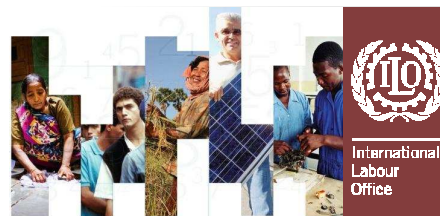
Also needed:

- 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.*