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DRAFT NOTES FOR UNITED NATIONS POPULATION DIVISION EXPERT GROUP MEETING IN NEW
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(1) Experiences from demographic data collection, analysis and utilization concerning the Millennium Development Goals

As with fertility, migration is hardly mentioned in the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), nor are there any indicators linked to migration, nor have data on internal or international migration or analyses thereof figured in analyzing the experiences of countries in achieving (or not) MDGs by 2015. However, internal migration and international migration both doubtless assisted many countries in making progress on most of the indicators (MDGs 1-5, especially), as noted below concerning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus the proportion urban of the world's population changed from 43 to 54 in the period 1990 to 2015, and is projected to reach 60 in 2030 (and 66 in 2050). 96 per cent of the net addition to the global population in 2015-2030 is expected to be urban population growth in developing countries.

(2) Key challenges of existing data sources to meet the needs of the new Sustainable Development Goals (scope of topics, indicators, reliability, frequency, data...)

As with the MDGs, there are no explicit goals or even quantitative targets with respect to either internal or international migration in the new SDGs. However, migration will continue to play an important indirect role in the achievement of many goals and targets, and there is one explicit migration 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 Western Asia, most seeking refugee status in Europe. So far, this process is evidently neither orderly nor well-managed, but the focus in this note is instead on long-term, voluntary migration and its relation to the SDGs. Nevertheless, as there are no relevant Goals of any kind, what can be said about the few targets?

In terms of where and how migration may affect the achievement or not of any SDG goals or targets, the effects are multiple but mostly *indirect*, regarding both internal and international migration. First, internal migration in the form of rural-urban migration has many important *effects* via moving populations from rural areas characterized by poor infrastructure, little access to services, and low incomes to urban areas, where infrastructure, access to services, and incomes are much better, in virtually all developing countries. This is due to the prevailing "urban bias in development policies" (cited by Michael Lipton, (1977), which unfortunately continues to be alive and well in the policies of developing countries, the World Bank and other global aid programmes. Thus those who move from rural to urban areas have much better chances of escaping poverty and hunger; obtaining more and better quality education, including for girls; better access to health care, including pre- and post-natal care and hence lower infant-child-maternal mortality; and a better environment in which to live by most measures, such as far better access to potable water, electricity and improved sanitation. Thus, while there are no specific migration goals, the internal migration of individuals and households "making decisions with their feet" will continue to be an important determinant of the achievement of progress in meeting the SDGs, as it was in attaining MDGs. This is clear for SDGs 1-9, regarding targets 1.1-1.4, on ending poverty; 2.1-2.2, on ending hunger; 3.1-3.2, 3.7, and 3.8 on access to health care and reproductive health services; on 4.1 and

4.5 on education, as discrimination against girls and women, with impunity, continues to be far greater in rural than urban areas; 5.1-5.6, and 5a-c on discrimination against females in terms of access to land and employment on equal term with males, sexual violence, and lack of access to reproductive rights and health are generally greater problems in traditional, rural societies than urban communities; 6.1-6.2 on access to safe water and sanitation; and finally 7.1 and 7.2 on access to clean, modern and healthy sources of energy, in contrast to the use of firewood, charcoal, coal and biomass in rural areas; 8.2 to 8.5, 8.8 and 8.10 on improving access to better employment and conditions of work, access to financial services, labour protection, etc.; 9.1 on access to better infrastructure to support economic development. Furthermore, targets directly linked to reducing inequality and improving socio-economic and political opportunities are also linked to urban versus rural residence, vis-à-vis, 10.1-10.3, and 11.1 on access to improved housing.

In the case of a few SDG targets, rural-urban migration may worsen progress, such as by increasing the size of the urban population and slums, 11.1, in the absence of sufficient space, resources and good planning; 11.7 by pulling people from green rural areas to cement and paved-over cities; by increasing the storage, waste and transport cost resulting from longer distance movement of food from rural producing areas to urban consuming areas for a greater proportion of people; and 12.8, reducing lifestyles in harmony with nature, especially of indigenous and other populations living outside the urban, market economy. The results are mixed on indicator 12.5 on waste generation and recycling, as limited human/organic wastes can be simply absorbed by nature if the human population density is low, but in contrast, modern chemical fertilizers, pesticides, etc., are poisonous to nature and humans, and plastics and other modern solid wastes are increasingly scattered especially all over the developing world and oceans by now (with little recycling), but easier to deal with as human populations concentrate in urban areas.

With respect to international migration, there is no doubt that there was some heated discussion among government representatives about how to deal with it in the SDGs, with generally opposing interests and opinions from developed and developing countries. In the end, it is not mentioned at all *except* in two targets, one being 10.c (the other is target 10.7, discussed above) to reduce to 3 per cent the cost of migrant remittances (about half the current mean). Nevertheless, international migration is playing a powerful role for millions of families in reducing poverty in many developing countries via the transfer of population (fewer mouths to feed) to developed countries and especially via the huge remittances being sustainably sent back to origin households and communities in developing countries from developed countries, surpassing \$400 billion now according to the World Bank ([see worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)). It is well known that this is improving the lives of receiving households and communities, reducing poverty, sometimes increasing school attendance and changing consumption and production patterns. This is further discussed below in section 3.

Apart from the indirect effects of urbanization described above, and the weak target 10.7, there is virtually no discussion of the potential role of migration *vis a vis* any SDG much less as a goal in itself, and migration has many other forms besides rural-urban, including rural-rural, urban-urban and (rarely) urban-rural, as well as inter- and intra-provincial/regional, etc. Migration is usually closely, if not intimately, tied to the whole process of socio-economic development, both contributing directly to development and being stimulated by it. A strong case could therefore be made to develop policies to *increase* internal migration as a means to foment more economic growth, apart from its role in improving the lives of migrants (especially via rural-urban migration) by bringing them to places where they tend to have better access to education, health and other services as well as better and higher paying work. This is also returned to in section 3.

Some of the proposed activities called for in the indicators of the new SDGs are likely to have effects on migration. For example, policies which improve agricultural technology (2.3-2.5, 2a-c) should increase

incomes of farm populations, reducing incentives to leave. Similarly, policies to restore degraded rural environments (targets 15.1-15.5) should reduce out-migration from rural areas, where the populations depend on natural resources (not only farming). There exist a few studies (for example, Massey and others, 2010 on Nepal) showing areas with more deforestation and higher time/money costs of acquiring fuelwood have more out-migration. On the other hand, to the extent to which the world develops policies to reduce fishing to control marine pollution, nutrient pollution, overfishing and illegal exploitation of fresh and salt water species, this would for a time further reduce the economic viability of fishing and lead to out-migration from coastal areas, as is needed anyway with global warming (indicators 13.1-3, 13.b, 14.1-14.6; as well as in terrestrial ecosystems (15.1-15.5).

In addition, policies to price resources at their real values including environmental degradation and depletion (target 12.c) should lead to more sustainable use of resources and higher incomes for the rural poor who depend on these resources that are being degraded and made less productive.

The topic of forced labour, human trafficking, and child labour, and more generally protecting labour rights as human rights, is mentioned in targets 8.7-8.8, “including migrant workers, in particular women”, which deals with terrible exploitation and human tragedies. But this is not viewed as a migration issue, and in fact the many times more numerous refugees and asylum seekers do not seem to be mentioned in the SDGs, nor are undocumented migrants who are also usually exploited by employers.

Now what are the existing key sources of existing data on migration and challenges to their use for monitoring the achievement of the SDGs?

The short answer is that migration is not taken seriously in the new SDGs anyway, as was the case with the MDGs, so why should we care? First, why has it not been taken seriously? Part of the explanation is due to doubts about the efficacy of policies to alter internal migration within countries short of direct controls, as used to be the case in centrally-planned states through compulsory and enforced registration. Similarly, international migration is a hot potato, so it is also essentially ignored in the SDGs. And yet both types of migration play important roles in the achievement of a host of SDG indicators and goals. Migration also can have negative effects, conflicting with other goals: For example, there is considerable research on the effects of recent migration (especially internal) advancing the agricultural frontier into tropical forests and other ecosystems causing vast deforestation and other forms of ecological degradation, habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity. Nor is the role of creating protected areas to keep migrants out mentioned as a proven way of protecting resources and ecosystems. But not a word vis-à-vis goals 14 and 15. Nor is the role of international migration followed by remittances mentioned in the discussion of the need to mobilize resources in goal 17. So now what?

First, a brief review of existing sources of data on migration is in order. The main sources are censuses of population and continuous population registers, at the national level, overseen by governments, plus household surveys. For international migrants (immigrants and emigrants), data from administrative sources such as registers of foreign workers (with work permits or not), and from admissions/border statistics and passenger surveys are sometimes useful complements, but rarely if ever can they be main sources. All these existing sources are deficient in terms of data on migration, but have potential to be improved. For internal migrants, in the vast majority of countries without high-quality continuous population registers, decennial census data become out of date over time between censuses, so one important step to having more current data could be to undertake a large-scale national survey between censuses. This could be via a national labour force survey, or a large essentially continuous survey, which updates data each year for part of the population between censuses, such as the United States American Community Survey (though its questions on migration are minimal, and do not reach the United Nations “census minimum” as mentioned below—see below).

In appraising the usefulness of existing sources of data on migration in a country, several questions need to be addressed:

- What is the sample size and geographic coverage? Numbers of migrants, households with migrants, and representativeness of the sample of migrants?
- 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 migrants and others (age, sex, education, marital status, employment and occupation, etc.)?
- Are any data collected to identify internal or international migrants? What data are collected on their characteristics?
- Are any data collected on the situation of migrants at or prior to the time of migration?
- Are any data collected on the situation of non-migrants at or prior to the time of usual migration?

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 (few developing countries, so not discussed further below). And most censuses have only data for each person on the place/country and date of birth, that is, the foreign born population: This continues to be the source used by the United Nations Population Division for about two thirds of the countries (see International Migration 2013 Wall Chart or excel files). This provides only lifetime migration, which is of little interest for the SDGs, since it says nothing about recent migration flows in or out of the country.

Other sources of data on both internal and international migration are household surveys. The majority of countries now undertake regular, national labour force (LF) surveys, while about as many developing countries undertake Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), somewhat fewer Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), and dozens of countries Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS). Most of these collect no data on migration beyond the question on place of birth. LSMS surveys, in contrast, do collect some basic data on internal migration, on last change of residence. As far as is known, only a few DHS surveys (including Colombia and Ecuador around 2005) and a few LSMS surveys (notably Albania and Tajikistan) collect anything on international migration, with only the latter two obtaining more data than a census could and should collect (for example, as recommended since the 2008 United Nations Statistical Office expert meeting and still “in press”), vis-à-vis data on 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 five years ago, to identify emigrants from households enumerated in the census. 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 found none collecting more than a trivial amount of relevant data (vis-à-vis the latter often asking about value of monetary remittances received). A few countries such as Brazil have an annual very large multi-purpose survey, which still contain only census-type questions on migration—place of birth, previous residence or residence at a fixed time in the past, and possibly reason for migration (the above and below draws on Bilsborrow, 2015).

Without a focus on migration, moreover, virtually all of these existing surveys suffer from two serious shortcomings for purposes of providing useful data for measuring, monitoring or analyzing

migration: (1) a sample size insufficient to yield data on enough “rare elements” (for example, migrants in the previous five years) to be useful; and (2) a questionnaire which is not designed to obtain data on migrants (and non-migrants) at the time of migration, that is, retrospective data, in the past. A normal household survey does not obtain this kind of data. Unless the questionnaire is structured to do this, the data collected will not be of much use for studying either the determinants or consequences of migration. And unless the sample size is large (especially for international migration), or is altered to oversample migrants, and/or the prevalence of migrants of interest is high, the rare elements problem would ensure that there will not be enough migrants for the survey to even provide useful data on the characteristics of migrants, or changes in them.

A further note on LF surveys is desirable. Since these are the most common (in over 100 countries), regular, nationally representative, implemented by the government, cover a topic integral to much migration (employment), and usually have the largest sample size of any household survey in the country, they may offer the best option for a vehicle to collect migration data across many countries. Most already have detailed data on employment and unemployment, hours of work, income, fringe benefits, occupation, etc., as well as a household roster listing members of the household including basic demographic characteristics similar to those in a census, including place/country of birth. But that is as far as most go in collecting migration data on foreign-born. So, first, the census-type questions need to be added, at minimum, on place of previous residence (within the country or outside) of all household members (or residence five years ago), when arrived, and reason for migrating. To this should be added census-type questions on emigration, asking if any member of the household left in last *x* (for example, five) years, and if so, name, sex, age when left, reason and destination (if possible, education and marital status at departure as well, and certainly in a labour force survey, employment situation). Further information on migration intentions and collection of data on non-migrants (see 3 below) would be desirable as well. Migration modules for both mainly sending and mainly receiving countries (15-20 additional questions for each) were developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and incorporated on a pilot basis in national LF surveys in Armenia, Thailand, Egypt and Ecuador around 2004-2008, and led to useful data, though it is not known if any careful or comparative evaluations of the experience took place. While it is not known if this experience has been replicated in any of those countries, it is known that something similar has been done more recently in Ukraine and Moldova (on the latter, see ILO, 2013).

This leads to the question on whether there are specialized surveys on internal or international migration in many countries. Referring only to developing countries, there certainly have been many such surveys over the years, although most are not national surveys since they are rarely financed by countries out of their own resources, and most are done by university or NGO research centers, “off the grid”, as it were. On internal migration, developing countries have implemented specialized surveys on migration covering large regions of the country, beginning with the Sierra of Ecuador (1997-98) and Ludhiana district in India (1997)—two surveys covering both origin and destination areas and funded by the ILO. These led to the Bilborrow and others (1984) book on the methodology of designing household surveys on internal migration in developing countries, including the value of collecting data in both areas/households of origin and destination. Other countries with specialized surveys on internal migration, albeit rarely covering both origins and destinations, include Sierra Leone (see Byerlee and Tommy, 1976), Mexico (various surveys in different decades), Malaysia, Pakistan, Nepal, Thailand, Kenya, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Egypt, Brazil, Ecuador (1994-95, focusing on employment and migration), Brazil, Guatemala, etc. More recently (drawing on Bilborrow, 2015), a type of very useful, multi-topic, longitudinal survey (including migration) first implemented in the Malaysia Family Life Survey in 1976 has been replicated since the 1990s in Indonesia and Mexico, which is providing grist for many Population Association of America (PAA) papers and theses. But apart from the latter, most of these do not have national coverage, nor are they implemented by the National Statistical Office (NSO). Moreover, they are *sui generis*, unique surveys carried out independently, mostly by investigators with

external research funding, rather than as a part of a national strategy to, for example, collect migration data for policy analysis. There is no coordination and little comparability of methods or analyses, although some provide useful models to learn from.

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 (see Bilsborrow, 2015). A few developing countries have done surveys on emigrants (for example, Mexico, Morocco, Philippines). But the hugeness of remittance flows has awakened international institutions to the potentially enormous role international migration and subsequent remittance flows back to origin countries and 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. These include the “push-pulls” project of the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Institute (in The Hague) in 1997-98 to implement independent household surveys on international emigration from five developing countries and surveys on immigrants from those countries to Spain and Italy (see Schoorl and others, 2000), funded mainly by Eurostat; smaller-scale, lower budget household surveys funded by the World Bank on emigration and internal migration in six sub-Saharan Africa countries (see World Bank website), and a separate ongoing project in three Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries (thus far); the Migration from Africa to Europe (MAFE) project of the French Institute for Demographic Studies (Institut National des Etudes Demographiques—see MAFE project on INED website) on surveys of migration from three African countries to five West European countries; and finally, the ongoing programme of MEDSTAT-MEDHIMS to design and conduct household surveys on emigration in eight developing countries of the Mediterranean region (Egypt and Jordan finished so far; no results yet), funded by the European Union, UNHCR, etc. Each of these multi-country projects has collected comparative data, making possible many intra-project comparisons across countries. There are similarities as well as differences in the methodologies used across projects, which should provide some basis for comparative appraisal of approaches, questionnaires, etc., in the future.

(3) Recommendations on how to strengthen evidence base on migration and actions required

Embedded in the discussion above are recommendations on how to reasonably improve population censuses and labour force surveys to include key questions to identify internal and international migrants, as well as their basic characteristics. The experience of the ILO modules on immigrants and emigrants in piloted in LF surveys should be assessed. Censuses have inherent limitations of space and format precluding their use in obtaining more detailed data, so that it is household surveys that are needed to investigate adequately the determinants or consequences of migration. The requirements of such surveys are indicated above, including a sample size and design which produces a large number of migrants and a questionnaire design that collects retrospective data on migrants and non-migrants. The sad truth is that very 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 specialized sampling methods to oversample migrants (stratification, disproportionate sampling and two-phase sampling (see Bilsborrow and others, 1984, on internal migration; and Bilsborrow and others, 1997, on international migration). Adequate quantity and quality of data can be produced from specialized surveys incorporating these methods, and then analyzed to yield results useful for guiding policy-makers to increase, decrease, alter, migration flows and their consequences. Besides the altering of these flows themselves that could contribute to macroeconomic and regional development, environmental benefits, and reduce per capita costs of achieving various SDGs, studies on the determinants and consequences of remittances also can yield results useful for improving policies to reduce poverty and contribute to development.

Up to now, there are few examples of such surveys actually feeding into and altering policies, due to the recent nature of many of these survey projects, but also the lack of funding for detailed analysis is a

problem, even when there are funds for innovative data collection via surveys. Thus much remains to be learned about migration, especially international migration, from specialized surveys and analyses. There is also a crying need for consistency in definitions and use of “appropriate comparison groups” in analyses of determinants or consequences of migration, which continues to be rare in the field, weakening the value of empirical studies.

Hopefully this will be remedied in the coming years so that migration can find a seat at the table when the third round of development goals for the world is formulated in 2030. In any case, there is no doubt that the evidence base of data on migration needs improving and is going to be considerably improved in the near future.

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